

FRONTIER SHELBY COUNTY

An account of the early pioneer settlements, the naming of creeks, Indian incidents and atrocities, Squire Boone's Painted Stone Station, the Long Run Massacre, Floyd's Defeat, and other topics for those with morbid local historical curiosity

What stories we could learn if we had an opportunity to interview and question Shelby County's pioneers! We might know the details of Indian incidents and atrocities which are now only vague general romanticizations based on television westerns. We might learn who named our creeks and why. We could learn what ancient buffalo, Indian or pioneer trace crossed or gave rise to this road or that we drive today. We could learn the names of those who risked (and many who gave) their lives to settle this area when it was a hostile wilderness. The things we might learn about the county we live in!

The opportunity was never lost! The early pioneers were interviewed and questioned. The records are preserved today in courthouse depositions, in the Draper Manuscripts and in many private collections. The stories in this sketch have been pieced together like a puzzle from the incidents as related first hand by those who lived them.

We are fortunate that it was a favorite pastime for old timers to give their testimony or deposition in the early land suits which seemed to be the rage for the first thirty or forty years of Kentucky's statehood. I spent more than four weeks in 1974 and 1975 reviewing case by case the old law suits of the Shelby County Circuit Court from the first court case in 1795 through 1825. A century's dust had collected on most of the 200-some bundles. Much of this history had apparently lain forgotten since the suits were filed away 150 years ago. Seven depositions from Squire Boone and five each from Bland Ballard and Benjamin Vancleve were found along with eight from George Yount and six from Robert Tyler both early settlers of Painted Stone. Hundreds of depositions in all were read.

We are also fortunate that Lyman C. Draper traveled extensively in the early 19th century interviewing early Kentucky pioneers collecting their reminiscences, letters and documents. Draper had extensive interviews with Moses, Isaiah and Enoch Boone, sons of Squire Boone. The notes from his interviews are preserved in the Draper Manuscript Collection at the State Historical Society of Wisconsin. The events related to Draper by the Boones are in many cases supported by the Shelby Circuit Court depositions. These two sources taken together provide most of this story.

Shelby County's frontier or pioneer era began a good 200 years ago—about 1776. That trying era lasted about 20 years—the end can roughly be dated as General "Mad" Anthony Wayne's victory over the Indians at Fallen Timbers on

August 20, 1794. What follows is a glimpse from those twenty or so years of Shelby County's frontier era.

There were without a doubt white men in Shelby County long before 1776. At least a few of the early hunting, surveying or exploring parties must have crossed the county. One of the great buffalo roads from Drennon's Lick dipped into northeastern Shelby County and was probably followed by frontiersmen in the early days. Richard Burk, for whom the Burks Branch neighborhood is named, claimed he was in the Guist Creek area in 1775 with six other men ("Smith vs Lynch" Bdl. 61). Squire Boone more than once claimed he made his improvement at Painted Stone in the summer of 1775 ("Swan vs Miles" Bdl. 105). He was perhaps referring to some improvement made the year before the one on which he based his legal claim. At any rate when he went before the commissioners November 22, 1779 to claim the 1,400 acre settlement and preemption for the Painted Stone tract he based his claim upon improving the tract and raising a crop of corn in 1776. Moses Boone also said it was 1776 when the improvement was made (Draper Mss. 19C26).

Be it 1775 or '76, whenever the Painted Stone improvement was made, 1776 was the big year for Shelby County. This was the year that future settlers began wholesale to make the feeble "improvements" on which they would later base their land claims. An improvement might consist of no more than cutting a few bushes and deadening a tree or two— just enough to mark the land as claimed.

The Painted Stone

From the beginning Squire Boone's Painted Stone apparently was the favorite camping ground in the Shelby County area. John Porter said he went with several others in January or February 1776 to make improvements near the Painted Stone ("Thomas vs Collier & Parker" Bdl. 68). Boone's Painted Stone was located directly on Clear Creek about midway along a stretch of the creek flowing due west between the Eminence Road and the Burks Branch Pike. The spot is shown in a plat contained in "Breckenridge vs Shackelford" Bdl. 16. Exactly what was this marker of Squire Boone's so widely known even today as "The Painted Stone"? Squire Boone's own words given to the County Court on November 28, 1796 (and recorded in Deed Book B, No. 1, page 294) best describe "The Painted Stone":

In the summer in the year 1775, I this deponant came to the place where Boone's Station on Clear Creek was since built. I then made a small improvement, about one quarter of a mile North of where the Old Mill at said Boones Station now stands. In the spring of the year 1776, I came again to the same place, and took a stone out of the creek, and with a mill pick, picked my name, in full, and the date of the year thereon, and with red paint, I painted the letters and figures all red. From which stone this Tract of land took the name of "The Painted Stone" tract. The said stone was about one inch thick and eighteen inches long and wide. The place which I now show about one hundred yards above the said Old Mill, bank of the creek, is the place where I marked it as

aforesaid and left it there until it was (about three years afterward) carried away by some person; and further saith not.

Guist and Tick Creeks Named in 1776

Naming of places was a favorite pastime in frontier days and it began here in 1776. In March of that year Squire Boone and Thomas Daggerty made an improvement on the small branch of Guist Creek which heads just below Old Christiansburg. They mistakenly thought this was the head branch of the main creek. About a mile below the place at a buffalo crossing near the junction of the two branches heading below Old and New Christiansburg the men saw the sign of David Guess cut on a tree. Guess' mark was a capital "G" cut inside a design like an upside-down heart about the size of the palm of a man's hand. Guess was one of Daniel Boone's men in 1775 and well known to brother Squire so the creek was named Guesses Creek. The name stuck and by the fall of 1776 Guesses Creek was well known ("Smith vs Lynch" Bdl. 61). Just how the name was corrupted into the present Guist Creek is a mystery. When Daggerty's preemption claim was filed on November 22, 1779 the creek was named as Gists. The spelling was probably always at the mercy of the writer. On a 1916 map of the county it was called Guists Creek. Sometime in the next fifty years the ending "s" was dropped.

One of the larger branches of Guist Creek also got its name in 1776 when Benjamin Vancleve in company with several others were traveling from Harrods Town to the Painted Stone. They camped the night before their arrival on the branch along which a buffalo path ran. They found the ticks so "excessively bad" that the next morning they christened the branch Tick Creek ("Troutman vs Cline" Bdl. 21). Benjamin Vancleve was a brother-in-law to Squire Boone.

Bullskin Camp

Patrick Jordan said that in 1776 he, in company with Col. John Floyd and five or six others, established a hunting camp on present-day Bullskin Creek. The camp was on the north side of the creek just above the cliffs where the creek turns from east to south above the Brunerstown Road crossing. The camp was distinguished by the fact that the men made it a practice to toss the skins of the buffalo they killed into the branches of the trees around the camp. The place was soon referred to as "Bullskin Camp"—apparently the buffalo bulls were predominant. In 1778 Harrods Trace passed across the creek not too far above Bullskin Camp and the travelers who found it a convenient stopping place soon named the creek Bullskin ("Simpson's heirs vs Shannon" Bdl. 105).

As an aside, Gen. Benjamin Logan later built a mill on Bullskin just below where the camp was located. This was Benjamin Logan the Indian fighter and frontiersman who in 1776 built Logan's Station or St. Asaph's at the present site of Stanford in Lincoln County. He is buried in the Logan Cemetery on the cliff above Bullskin below the Brunerstown Road bridge. That same cemetery also has another

famous resident in the form of Col. James Knox who led forty "long hunters" into Kentucky in 1770. It is one of the few known graves of a long hunter.

Fox Run, a large branch of Bullskin, was no doubt named for a fox (what else?) but by whom, when or why I cannot say. In April of 1776 Squire Boone was traveling alone from the Falls of the Ohio (Louisville) to Harrods Town. His only companions were two horses and some dogs. He killed some bears on Fox Run and stayed a few days to salt and dry the meat ("Booker vs Whitaker" Bdl. 117). This was the day of the solitary hunter.

Things were pretty quiet in Shelby County during the bloody year of the three sevens. Improving probably continued, but there are few references to visits to Shelby County in 1777. Squire Boone did claim he was back on Fox Run in October 1777 and saw Richard Burk's improvement ("Booker vs Whitaker" Bdl. 117). But apparently the activity in this part of the country was sparse that year.

Harrods Trace—1778

In 1778 Shelby County got her first man-made road—Harrods Trace. According to Wilson Maddox, Richard Rue and John Williams, the trace was marked around the first of June when Col. James Harrod led fifty or sixty men from Harrodsburg to the Falls of the Ohio intending to join George Rogers Clark for his fateful attack on Vincennes, Kaskaskia and Cahokia ("Haff vs Roberts" Bdl. 32, "Hall vs Whitaker" Bdl. 46 and "Simpson's heirs vs Shannon" Bdl. 105). Clark apparently decided it was unwise to concentrate Kentucky's forces under his command while leaving the settlements undefended. Of all the Kentuckians who met Clark on Corn Island in June 1778, Clark selected only sixty for his Illinois campaign which was launched June 24, 1778. Many of the Harrodsburg men must have returned shortly thereafter along the trace they had recently marked. Richard Rue said that he returned to Harrodsburg sometime that summer or fall along Harrods Trace ("Haff vs Roberts" Bdl. 32). John Williams, who apparently accompanied Clark, said he also returned from the Falls along Harrods Trace after the Illinois campaign ("Hall vs Whitaker" Bdl. 46).

Harrods Trace immediately became the "principal highway" from the Falls to Harrodsburg. The trace was followed by countless settlers who took the river route to the Falls and from there moved into the interior. John Miller and James Kelly told of being in a large company of not less than two or three hundred which in April of 1780 followed Harrods Trace from the Falls to Harrodsburg and on to Logan's Station where the land commissioners were meeting ("Todd vs Fry" Bdl. 80). Because of the importance of Harrods Trace to the settlement of Shelby County, and Kentucky for that matter, it may be worthwhile to indicate the exact route the trace took through the county. Sometime prior to June 1778 a trace had been marked north from Harrodsburg past McAfee's Station to Lillard's Cove Spring (McCall's Spring) just south of where the Blue Grass Parkway, now crosses US127 in Anderson County. From here Harrod's company in June 1778 extended the trace northwest along a route similar to that of the Southern Railroad entering Shelby

County a little south of the Shelby-Franklin-Anderson County corner. The trace continued a course similar to the Southern's through present-day Waddy on to Jephtha Creek. The trace followed along Jephtha Creek about a mile past where the Southern leaves the creek. The trace then turned northwest for a couple of miles until crossing Guist Creek. The Guist Creek crossing was about midway in the big bend of the creek due east of the junction of the Rockbridge Road and Mt. Eden Pike. The route of the trace through this area is shown in a plat contained in "Todd vs Fry" Bdl. 80. From Guist Creek the trace went approximately east to Clear Creek where it crossed a little below where I64 now crosses (plat in "Haff vs Roberts" Bdl. 32). From here the trace followed a course approximately the same as present-day I64 crossing Bullskin a little below the mouth of Little Bullskin (plat in "Simpson's heirs vs Shannon" Bdl. 105). After crossing Bullskin the trace went approximately due east to the Jefferson County line. At about the county line it took to the northwest meeting present-day US60 near Eastwood and from there followed roughly the same course as US60 (plat in "Finley's heirs vs Lynch & Blanton" Bdl. 63).

Jephtha

The trace followed Jephtha Creek longer than any other branch or creek—most creeks were just crossed. Including Waddy Branch, the trace ran along Jephtha waters for nearly six miles. As a consequence Jephtha Creek was known in those days as the Path Fork or Trace Fork of Guesses (Guist) Creek ("Todd vs Fry" Bdl. 80). The creek heads in the hilly country south and east of Jephtha Knob and the name apparently rubbed off on the creek sometime in the early 1780s.

Jephtha Knob was well known in the early days. William Stafford claimed he knew of it as Jephtha's Mountains as early as 1778 ("Todd vs Fry" Bdl. 80). But just how this geological curiosity came by its name remains a mystery to the writer. Perhaps it may have derived its name from Jephthah, one of the Judges of the Old Testament (Judg. 11:29-40). It seems this Jephthah made a vow to sacrifice as a burnt offering the first thing to come out of his house should he return victorious from battle with some heathen tribe or another. As you might imagine his virgin daughter was the first out beating the tamborine and dancing. He, of course, tore and rent his clothes, but a vow was a vow and so she was sacrificed. First however she was allowed with her girl friends to go up and down upon the mountains to bewail her virginity. This trip to the mountains to lament the daughter of Jephthah apparently became an annual affair for the daughters of Israel. Whether or not this story relates to the naming of our Jephtha's Mountain or Knob I cannot say. If indeed it does, it would be interesting to know the name of the pioneer Bible scholar and why he thought of Jephthah's virgin daughter when he looked at the knob.

You may have noticed that Clear Creek hasn't been named yet. Truth is, up till about 1780 it was just thought to be a continuation of the main branch of Brashears Creek, named after pioneer Marsham or his brother Richard Brashears, I know not which. Around 1780 it was realized that Bullskin contributed just as much to forming Brashears so the other creek ought to be given another name. It may

have been the sparkling waters which gave it the name, but I suspect it may for some reason have been named after George Clear who made improvements in Shelby County in 1776.

Ol' Squire Boone just couldn't stay away from Shelby County from the year he first saw it. William Stafford claimed he tripped through Shelby County with Squire and ten other men in November or December of 1778 ("Smith vs Lynch" Bdl. 61). March of the next year Squire was back with Mathias Prock and George Phelps traveling from Boonesborough to the Falls. Mathias Prock, by the way, was the German potter who supposedly hid under the bed and later in the well during the siege of Boonesborough in September 1778. How he found courage to make the cross-country trip the next spring I cannot say.

You have all probably read something of Squire Boone's Painted Stone Station. Well, a good story bears retelling, so if you plan to escape my observations you had better stop reading here.

Boone's Station Not Settled in 1779

To begin with, the Painted Stone Station was not settled in 1779 as is often claimed—even Kentucky highway markers can be wrong. In the spring of 1779 Boone moved his family to the Falls of the Ohio. He fully intended to settle his Painted Stone Tract, but, according to Moses Boone, the Indians were troublesome and so he postponed settlement that year. Instead he purchased some town lots in Louisville and erected a cabin on high ground near the mouth of Beargrass Creek. That year he took his oldest son, thirteen year-old Johnathan, to recently captured Kaskaskia, Illinois to live and learn French. The boy remained there four years (Draper Mss. 19C25-26).

The winter of 1779-80 was the legendary "hard winter"—turkeys frozen in the trees and all that. In the fall of 1779 Squire Boone went to his land on Clear Creek to make preparations to move there the next spring and got caught by weather. Isaiah Boone said the family had a hard time getting along at Louisville during that winter while his father was stranded in Shelby County (Draper Mss. 19C87). Evan Hinton was along with Boone in Shelby County at the time. Josiah Boone said that Hinton and Squire Boone hunted in the area and killed some meat, but he would not call their stay "settlement" ("Booker vs Whitaker" Bdl. 117). Indeed it appears to be stretching the facts to claim the station was settled in 1779 by two men stranded by the weather.

Squire Boone's Painted Stone Station was settled in the spring of 1780. Moses Boone said that as soon as the spring broke, his father started for Clear Creek with his and several other families accompanying him. They built a large station with the cabins picketed in nearly a square about an acre in size (Draper Mss. 19C27).

Location of Boone's Station

The station was not on the south side of Clear Creek, as stated in the 1880s by G.T. Wilcox, Squire Boone's grandson, and as repeated by historians ever since. The south side of Clear Creek, along the bend above Shelby Lake where the creek is flowing west, is a virtual cliff. To have obtained water for a station built above these cliffs would have necessitated either digging a very deep well or doing a lot of climbing.

Moses and Isaiah Boone, sons of Squire (eleven and seven years old at the time the station was built) both stated that the station was built on a small ridge on the north bank of the creek. The settlers dug a covered way to the creek to resort to for water in case of a siege (Draper Mss. 19C27,87). If you walk the north bank of Clear Creek today you will find stones stacked up in a fence near a small run about midway along the bend—perhaps the stones were collected some 200 years ago and perhaps the run served as the pioneers' covered way. The station is clearly shown on the north side of the creek in the plat in "Troutman vs Cline" Bdl. 21.

Original Settlers

Settlers that spring of 1780 besides Boone and his family were Marius Hansbury, old Mr. Yount and son, George Yount, William Hall, Abraham Vanmeter, Abram Holt, Robert Tyler, John Kline, Philip Nichols, old Robert Eastwood, John Vancleve and Evan Hinton all with their families. Also there were several young men without families, among them: George Holeman, Richard Rue, a brother of Philip Nichols, one Legget and others; also the widow Underwood and family (Draper Mss. 19C27). George Yount pinpointed his start from the Falls to settle Boone's Station, apparently with all the others, as April 12 or 15, 1780. He said Boone led Tyler and some others on to Harrodsburg shortly after their arrival ("Hall vs Whitaker" Bdl. 46 and "Thomas vs Collier & Parker" Bdl. 68). Tyler also said it was April when they moved to Boone's Station and the next month when he went to Harrodsburg ("Todd vs Fry" Bdl. 80). Tyler's family remained at Painted Stone, or at least returned, for they are frequently mentioned in the incidents of 1780-81.

Eastwood and Legget Attacked

Almost immediately there was an Indian incident. The very spring they settled the station, Eastwood and Legget were attacked by a party of Indians who stole upon them while they were making clapboards some distance from the fort. Legget was killed and Eastwood was wounded in the back but escaped and recovered (Draper Mss. 19C27). Perhaps the small village of Eastwood just over the Jefferson County line was named for this Robert Eastwood—I have never researched the topic.

Clark's 1780 Indian Campaign

Kentucky as a whole had a jolt in June 1780 when Ruddle's and Martin's Forts were captured by British Colonel Byrd's Indians and cannon. This was the first

time a cannon had ever been used against the log forts of Kentucky's wilderness. The cannon had been laboriously transported through the wilderness all the way from Detroit. The stations, being defenseless against such a weapon, had no choice but surrender. The captives, 470 men, women and children, were loaded down with plunder from their own cabins and driven on foot to Detroit, a distance of 600 miles. In retaliation, George Rogers Clark led an expedition across the Ohio in August which was successful in destroying the Indian towns of Chillicothe, Piqua and Loramie's Store. Squire Boone went along at the head of a company in that campaign (Draper Mss. I9C87). Many of the other men of Boone's Station joined him on the campaign. Colonel Harrod passed through Shelby County along Harrods Trace in July 1780 with about eighty men from Harrodsburg for the campaign ("Todd vs Fry" Bdl. 80).

An idea of the number of settlers at Painted Stone during the summer of 1780 is probably best gained from the size of its militia. Richard and Lewis Collins' 1874 History of Kentucky (vol. I, page 13) includes a partial list of the following twenty-three men stationed at Painted Stone and comprising Captain Squire Boone's Company at June 23, 1780:

Squire Boone	John Hinton	Robert Tyler
Alex. Bryant	Abraham Holt	Abraham Vanmeter
John Buckles	Morgan Hughes	Adam Wickersham
Richard Cates	Evan Hinton	Jacob Wickersham
Charles Doleman	John McFadden	Peter Wickersham
John Eastwood	John Nichols	James Wright
Joseph Eastwood	Peter Paul	George Yount
Jeremiah Harris	John Stapleton	

George Rogers Clark Papers (vol. I, page 454) contains the following payroll list of Captain Boone's Company which served from July 17 to August 17, 1780 in General Clark's Chillicothe campaign:

Squire Boone,	Privates:	Jeremiah Harris
Captain	Adam Wickersham	Richard Cates
John Stapleton,	Charles Doleman	John McFadden
Sergeant	Abraham Holt	Joseph Eastwood
John Hinton,	Peter Wickersham	James Kirkpatrick
Sergeant	Abram Vanmeter	George Yount

Privates were paid one shilling and four pence for each of the thirty-one days they were out. The payroll includes the notations that Richard Cates was killed on August 8th and John Stapleton was "killed lately" (the list is dated January 28, probably 1781). Cates' widow was paid only for her husband's service up through his death.

With the militia at Painted Stone numbering near twenty-five during 1780, the total inhabitants of the station surely exceeded 100 men, women and children.

Robert Johnson said that in August 1780 he and his brother Cave Johnson drove about twenty head of cattle from Bryant's Station to the Beargrass settlements. As they passed through Shelby County along Harrods Trace they discovered clothing strewn along the trail belonging to people recently killed by the Indians ("Hall vs Whitaker" Bdl 46). Indian-wise things remained quiet for the remainder of 1780 around Boone's Station.

Squire Boone acted as a justice of the peace in 1780 and 1781 and married several couples at his station in 1780 (Draper Mss. 19C47). These were no doubt the first marriages in Shelby County.

Sturgus' Hunting Camp

Boone and the Painted Stone settlers were not the only ones in Shelby County in 1780. In the fall of 1780 James and Peter Sturgus established a hunting camp on Clear Creek below present-day Shelbyville. The camp was on the east side of the creek, immediately above a high bluff. The spot can easily be located today as just off the Popes Corner Road where Clear Creek makes a sharp turn nearly touching the road about a half mile from where the road dead ends. A party of five men hunted there with the Sturgus brothers in the fall of 1780. The Sturgus brothers again camped there in March 1781 and with Jacob Hubbs surveyed the surrounding area ("Haff vs Roberts" Bdl. 32 and "Hall vs Whitaker" Bdl. 46). Peter Sturgus (or A'Sturgus) in the spring of 1780 had established a station on Beargrass Creek in Jefferson County not far from where the Oxmoor shopping center is located today.

The Beargrass Stations

The Beargrass Stations are frequently mentioned in the old Shelby County land suits. The Shelby County settlers traveled through these stations on their way to Painted Stone, some came from them. By the end of spring 1780 there were six stations on the Middle Fork of Beargrass Creek—Floyd's, Hogland's, the Dutch or New Holland Station, the Spring Station, A'Sturgus' and Linn's. Floyd's was the principal station of the area and was established in November 1779 by Col. John Floyd who had been acquainted with the Falls area (Louisville) since 1774. The other stations were all established during the spring of 1780.

Kentucky experienced a tidal wave of immigration in that spring of 1780. No less than 300 large family boats filled with settlers arrived at the Falls of the Ohio. Louisville was little more than a fort and a few cabins. The settlers swarmed into the Beargrass Creek stations east of Louisville in present-day Jefferson County. The Spring Station was on the west side of present-day St. Matthews. Hogland's, Floyd's and the Dutch Stations were southeast of St. Matthews inside the present-day Watterson Expressway. Sturgus', as I mentioned, was at the Oxmoor site. William Linn's Station was the furthest out—nearly two miles east of Sturgus' Station. It was located on Beargrass Creek just west of present-day Hurstbourne Lane less than a half mile south of US60. Letters from this period clearly prove that

the Beargrass stations were far from safe. They were continually subjected to Indian harassment.

If the Beargrass stations were not safe from the Indians, think of the Painted Stone Station's situation! Settled that same spring of 1780, it was twenty-one miles east of Linn's Station. There was no cluster of nearby settlements. It was literally all by itself in the middle of a hostile wilderness. I wonder what sort of men would subject their families to such exposure. They were surely very brave people who thought endurance of such dangers was the only way to win a piece of the frontier for their families.

Boones Trace or Wagon Road

Feelings of isolation must have been lessened somewhat in the latter part of 1780 when the first wagon was brought out to Painted Stone from the Falls. The event was described by Moses Boone in the Shelby County court case of "Hall vs Whitaker" Bdl. 46:

It was in the latter part of the year 1780 in cool wether that my father as I understood had the pulling of a waggon from the falls - they came near where Benj Hughs now lives and left the waggon and came into the station. I went along after the waggon and helped to cut a road for the waggon to come into the station and I understood they had to cut or open the way from the Falls, and I recollect to have seen fresh cutting a few Rods behind the waggon but as to from that to the Falls I do not know & as to my knowledge that was the first wheel carriage that came to Boons Station afs^d

The link between Boone's Painted Stone Station and Linn's Station on Beargrass was very important. Linn's was the closest point to which to flee should Painted Stone have to be abandoned. The trace the settlers followed in the spring of 1780 was undoubtedly blazed or marked long before the station was settled, perhaps as early as 1775 or 1776 when numerous "improvements" were made in the Painted Stone area. Moses Boone said that his father and George Phelps marked a trace in the fall of 1779 from Harrodsburg, "but it would have been difficult to find by a person who was not acquainted with the woods".

We are fortunate that several law suits arose over land claims in Shelby County laid along the traces—Harrods and Boones—between Harrodsburg and the Falls. The granddaddy of them all, "Hall vs Whitaker", generated over thirty depositions from a list of men that reads like a who's-who of frontier Shelby County. From these suits we can determine exactly what route these roads took through our county. The route of Harrods Trace has already been described. The trace known variously as Boones Road, Boones Wagon Road or Boones Station Wagon Road has yet to be described.

From the Beargrass stations, Boones and Harrods Traces were one-in-the-same at least as far east as Floyds Fork. While together, they followed

approximately the same route as present-day US60. After crossing Floyds Fork, Harrods Trace parted near present-day Eastwood, cutting off to the southeast. Boones Trace continued along the same route as US60 across Long Run until about a half mile east of the present-day Jefferson-Shelby county line. It then headed a little northeast crossing a branch of Long Run (the one which heads north of Simpsonville) at the same place Webb Road now crosses. From there the trace made a gentle rolling course east, until veering slightly northeast near Bullskin to catch the route of present-day Antioch Pike across Bullskin just below the mouth of Fox Run. It then headed a slight northeast until crossing present-day Highway 53 at approximately its junction with Locust Lane. The trace then ran almost due east a little over two miles, the last mile of which ran along the north side of Clear Creek. Boone's Painted Stone Station was half way along this stretch of the creek. The trace crossed Clear Creek about a half mile above the station then went a generally southeast direction. I'll describe the route east of Painted Stone later in this sketch. Suffice it to say now that at this period the trace east of the station was little more than a marked trail through the woods that eventually met again with Harrods Trace near Lillard's Cove Spring and then with it went on to Harrodsburg.

The settlers marked off the twenty-one miles between Painted Stone and Linn's Station with "mile trees", the first tree being nearest Painted Stone. Forty years later the nine-mile tree was still standing and was marked with a 9M over nine horizontal lines. Boones Trace itself ran about 13½ miles from where it forked off of Harrods Trace near Eastwood to Painted Stone. Most of this distance is shown in two Shelby County courthouse plats. About 5½ miles from about a mile west of Long Run to the eight-mile tree is shown in "Finley's heirs vs Lynch & Blanton" Bdl. 63-64. The same section and more, about twelve miles in total, is shown in several plats in "Taylor vs McCampbell" Bdl. 157. The plats in both suits, particularly the last, show several other interesting features.

Buffalo Meat Rots After Hinton's Capture

The citizens of Painted Stone did their best to aid in the defense of Kentucky and Jefferson County, which at that time included present-day Shelby County. During the winter of 1780-81 Evan Hinton had a contract to lay in and cure a large quantity of buffalo meat for the public service under George Rogers Clark. Hinton engaged a number of hunters and succeeded in taking in nearly 150,000 pounds of meat. Bland Ballard said he hunted on the waters of Guist Creek in the winter of 1780 for the Army ("Smith vs Lynch" Bdl. 61). Late in the winter Hinton along with Richard Rue and nineteen year-old George Holeman went to Louisville for salt to cure the meat. They returned through Linn's Station with a four horse team and wagon. On February 6, 1781 when camped within three miles of Painted Stone, a party of Indians stole upon them and took them prisoners. The horses were also taken but the wagon was left. The salt was either taken or destroyed by the Indians. The Indian party was headed by the renegade Simon Girty who favored Hinton because they had been acquaintances in Pennsylvania. Holeman and Rue were held captive for 3½ years ("Haff vs Roberts" Bdl. 32). Poor Hinton was either drowned or killed trying to escape by the Lakes. He left a widow and four children.

After Hinton's capture the meat was neglected, probably for want of salt with which to cure it. In the end, over 100,000 pounds spoiled, rotted and was thrown into Clear Creek below the station. Only 16,000 pounds was ever saved for use. The event was described by Moses Boone in his interview with Lyman Draper (Draper Mss. 19C28). Hinton, Holeman and Rue's capture is mentioned in at least three Shelby County lawsuits. Letters from James Sullivan and John Floyd to Clark and Thomas Jefferson also describe the episode which was apparently quite a blow to the war efforts (see Clark Papers, vol. I, pages 528, 531, 532, 542, 543 and 558). Floyd's letter to Clark of April 16, 1781 is an example:

...I shall mention to you first which I fear will embarrass and perplex you exceedingly. All the Beef which was laid in at Squire Boons except about sixteen thousand weight being entirely rotten & thrown away. The quantity I dont exactly know, but it was considerably more than One Hundred thousand, whose fault it was I know not... The Beef was to have been pickled at Boons, & poor Evan Hinton who was much engaged about it, was captured by the Indians with two other men as they were going from Lyns with a Waggon Load of Barrells for the purpose of saving the meat. This happened about the 6th of Feb^y

Demarees Captured

That same day two other men were also captured near Painted Stone, undoubtedly by the same band of Indians. John Demaree and his father, Peter, were serving as Indian spies in Capt. Hardy Hill's Company based at the Low Dutch Station on Beargrass. On February 6th they were fired upon by a band of Ottawas near Boone's Station. John's left arm was broken and both he and his father were captured. The long journey the Indian prisoners might undergo was described in 1832 in John Demaree's Revolutionary War pension application (W7004). John and his father were first taken to the Indian towns on the Auglaize River in Ohio. In May the Indians took their prisoners to Detroit where they were sold to the British and put in jail. In August they were taken down Lakes Erie and Ontario to Montreal and again put in jail. Late in October the Demarees were taken to Lake Champlain between New York and Vermont. Here at the south end of the lake they were at last able to make their escape after having been in captivity twelve months. They made their way to General Washington's camp where they were discharged to return home to Kentucky. [The Demarees' capture was actually February 6, 1782.]

Simon Girty Makes Boone's Shirrtail Fly

The year 1781 was starting out to be very troublesome Indian wise. Much worse things were yet to happen. In April 1781 Thomas Hansbury, John and Nathan Underwood, all young men, went out from the station early one morning about sunrise to clear ground for the spring crop. This was the first work done that spring. They had done a little work when they were waylaid by four or five Indians who fired and killed Hansbury. John Underwood was taken prisoner, but his brother Nathan escaped to the fort. Squire Boone and some ten or twelve other men of the station

seized their guns at the first alarm and took off after the Indians. They followed the pathway along the ridge toward where the fields were north of the fort. Squire Boone and William Peyton were both in their shirttails. Something like twenty or twenty-five Indians had screened themselves along the trail on both sides behind brushwood and logs skirting the path. As the whites approached, the Indians fired killing the young brother of Philip Nichols. Abraham Vanmeter was wounded in the hip and died three days later. Another man was wounded in the arm. There was nothing to do but retreat. Squire Boone looked around and saw that Alex Bryan had fallen behind and was closely pursued by the Indians. Boone wheeled around, fired and brought down an Indian giving Bryan time to escape. Almost at the same instant Boone received a shot which broke his right arm just below the elbow. He seized his gun with his left hand and turned to run. He had taken but a few steps when he received a second shot in his right side. He nevertheless made it into the station with his shirt all covered with blood. The Indians left without attacking the station. (Draper Mss. 19C28-29, 88-89).

The white renegade, Simon Girty, once again commanded the Indian party. He boasted gleefully, probably to his prisoners, that he had made Squire Boone's white shirttail fly. Boone was so badly wounded that some thought he would not recover. His wife, Jane Vancleve, was always his doctor when he was wounded. But the seriousness of this situation prompted him to direct George Yount to go through the woods along the eastern leg of Boones Trace to seek a doctor from Harrodsburg ("Hall vs Whitaker" Bdl. 46). The doctor apparently never came, but Boone did recover after several months. A ball had to be cut out of his side and his badly shattered arm, when it finally healed, was an inch and a half shorter than the other. The arm always remained partly crippled and ever after bone splinters would occasionally work out. (Draper Mss. 19C30)

Abram Holt Killed

Trouble was soon in reappearing. One night the next month, May 1781, a noise was heard like persons wading the creek near the station. It was suspected that it was Indians. Disregarding the warning of danger, the next morning Abram Holt went out from the station to drive his hogs away into the woods to range. He had gone about 150 yards when fired upon and mortally wounded. He wheeled and ran for the fort but fell before he made it. A dog who accompanied him covered his retreat by making a dash at one of his pursuing Indians. The Indian gave the dog a severe tomahawk wound in the shoulder, but Holt got far enough away that the Indians, two or three of them, could not take his scalp. Regretting this loss, the Indians sheltered themselves behind trees 100 yards off from the fort and proceeded to take potshots at the station. Old man Marius Hansbury, whose son Thomas was killed the month before, stood at the door of his cabin and shot at the Indians. Squire Boone had brought out a small iron swivel the spring before when the settlement was first made. This was loaded with grape shot bullets and fired. The swivel made a rattling where the Indians were, knocking off the bark and twigs from the trees. The Indians scampered off. Abram Holt was taken into the station and

soon after died. The faithful dog who can be credited with saving his master's scalp, you will be glad to hear, recovered. (Draper Mss. 19C30-31, 88)

It was only with great difficulty that the fort at Painted Stone was maintained at all during 1781. The Indians were troublesome the entire year. Hunters had to steal out at night, hunt by day and return by night with their meat. William Hall and Robert Tyler were among the best hunters of the station. Squire Boone was confined all spring and summer by his wounds. The loss of such men as Evan Hinton and Abraham Vanmeter was severely felt. Vanmeter had been a man of character and influence. (Draper Mss. 19C32-33)

Salt Party Attacked

Obtaining even the bare necessities of life became a perilous undertaking. Salt was one of those necessities and the closest and best place for obtaining it was at Drennon's Lick Spring some twenty miles northeast of Painted Stone in the northeast part of present-day Henry County. On May 22, 1781 John Floyd wrote to Clark that he was about to hire some hunters to go to Drennon's Lick to lay in some meat (Clark Papers, vol. I, page 557). A party was also raised to go and make salt. Squire Boone sent out three negroes from his station to help with the salt making. But the party was attacked by Indians and the negroes were taken and never recovered. One or two white men were killed along with a woman whose husband was in the party. The men fled from the attack but returned a few hours later and found a child the woman had been holding in her arms was unhurt. The mother had fallen dead on the child and it had crawled out from under her. (Draper Mss. 19C98)

Philip Nichols Killed

Death at the hands of the Indians was becoming a common occurrence around Painted Stone. In August 1781 Philip Nichols was killed near the station spring. He had gone to the spring which was about eighty yards from the station for water. He got the water, but returned a second time to the spring without telling anyone. It was conjectured that he had returned to get some firewood from a brush heap close to the spring. As he approached the brush he discovered some Indians concealed behind it. He turned to run but was shot down. The ball entered his back and came out his breast carrying out a part of the liver which was thrown out onto his breast. His scalp was taken and the Indians made off. (Draper Mss. 19C32)

The Long Run Massacre

(As told by Moses and Isaiah Boone,
Draper Mss. 19C33-36, 89-96)

The incidents of 1781 had been terribly discouraging to the settlers. In September numerous Indian signs were seen in the area of Boone's Station. The actual appearance of Indians fully alarmed the people. The Halls, Tylers, Younts and Klins were all intermarried. These families had been among the original settlers. They decided they had enough of the place and were determined to leave

Painted Stone for the relatively safer Beargrass stations. The prospect of this loss of manpower led to the decision to abandon the station on September 13, 1781 (several accounts say September 14). Some of the Jefferson County Militia were stationed at Painted Stone at the time, or at any rate were there to provide an escort for the evacuation. All of the families left the station except Squire Boone's and the widow Hinton's. They remained behind only because there were not enough pack horses. They were to be returned for the next day. Squire Boone gave permission for his son Isaiah to ride along with the fleeing families on one of the pack horses. Squire Boone was still so weak from his April wounds that he could barely creep about. He and his twelve year-old son Moses were the only men left to defend the station.

The fleeing families had agreed that in case of attack, the women and children were to dismount and shelter themselves behind trees while the men defended them. Unfortunately the families became much scattered along the trail as they proceeded. Their force was further weakened because ten of the militia guard fell behind on the trail to protect a man who had become ill. The ambush commenced soon after midday. Moses Boone told Draper that it started about the thirteen-mile tree and continued along for about a mile including the ford at Long Run. Boones Wagon Road actually crossed Long Run between the twelve and thirteen-mile trees, not thirteen and fourteen-mile trees (see plats in "Finley's heirs vs Lynch & Blanton" Blds. 63-64 and "Taylor vs McCampbell" Bdl. 157).

Robert Tyler, his family and a few other men were ahead of the scattered group with their cattle when the ambush began. At first fire Tyler at once dismounted. But John Kline and one or two others in front along with Tyler's family ignored the agreement to shelter themselves behind trees and make a fight. They cut loose their pack loads and darted off without making a stand. The remaining men might have handled the Indians had they not been weakened by this loss and the loss of their guard in the rear.

The other women and children dismounted as ordered and took shelter. The men acted bravely in their defense. George Yount, William Hall, Bland Ballard and particularly Thomas McCarty fought gallantly. But seeing that the horses were getting very alarmed and realizing that the Indians were too numerous, they concluded that they had better mount the women and children onto the horses and make a run for Linn's Station some eight or nine miles west. McCarty was very active in cutting off the packs and getting the women and children onto the horses. He threatened to shoot one cowardly fellow he caught in the act of driving a woman from her horse. The men were able to keep the Indians somewhat in check long enough to get the retreat moving, but most of those killed were shot as the retreat commenced and they ran along exposed. Packs were cut and families were remounted as they moved. The attack continued for a mile and the packs were scattered along the trail most of that distance. It had been only a few minutes after the first attack before the group started their run. As the retreat got underway, the Hansbury's old negro woman pulled up her coats ready for a good run and bawled out, "Every man for himself and God for us all." She made it safely to Linn's Station.

The running families had to cross Long Run as they were pursued by the Indians. The water was knee deep or more, swollen by recent rains. Young Isaiah Boone was one of the last to cross running along on foot. He stumbled and fell, or pretty much plunged, into the water getting himself and his gun quite wet. As he scrambled up the other bank he looked across the creek and saw an Indian on the opposite bank. The nine year-old boy instantly drew up his wet gun and pointed it at the Indian. The Indian dodged behind a small bank. George Young looked back and asked young Boone what his delay was.

“I’m pointing at an Indian that has been trying to kill me.”

“Why don’t you shoot him?” asked Yount.

“My gun is wet and won’t go,” replied Boone.

At that moment the Indian peeped up his head from behind the clay bank and Yount shot him through the neck. The dead Indian rolled into the water. Yount then shouted to Boone, “Now you, boy, throw away your gun and clear yourself.”

Young Boone did not want to lose his gun and so he continued to cling to it a little distance. Finally realizing it was retarding his progress he threw it away. Running along he also took off his fine shot pouch and held it by the strap in his teeth while pulling off his coat to throw it away. He dropped the pouch but picked it up. After awhile he threw it away too. Before reaching Floyds Fork he was placed on a horse behind a woman and her child. The horse stumbled and threw the three off and they had to remount. Boone took off his three cornered hat to whip along the horse, but it flew out of his grasp and he lost it. The hat had been sent to him by his brother Johnathan from Kaskaskia. Boone never recovered his gun, pouch or hat. One of the men in the fight the next day with Floyd’s party picked the hat up and put it inside his shirt saying it was little Boone’s and he would take it to him if he lived. Unfortunately the man was killed in Floyd’s Defeat.

Floyds Fork also had to be crossed by the fleeing families a little over two miles west of Long Run. The route throughout all this area followed almost exactly that of present-day US60. The waters of Floyds Fork were quite deep. Benjamin Vancleve, a ten year-old son of John Vancleve, seized hold of a horse’s tail and held on until safely across the creek.

The militia guard in the rear with the sick man were unaware that the attack had taken place. They had prepared a litter for the man and renewed their march after his fever had passed. They soon caught a horse running back toward Boone’s Station. Their worst fears were soon confirmed when they saw cattle running scared the same direction and discovered one with its horn shot off. They had just turned off the trail a few hundred yards when they came upon some Indians holding eighteen year-old Rachel Vancleve and her infant sister prisoners. The Indians fled away without their captives. Miss Vancleve, a niece of Mrs. Squire Boone, was overjoyed at the rescue. She begged the men not to pursue the Indians, as was

proposed. She explained that the woods were full of Indians describing the massacre that had just taken place. The girls were put on a horse and the group safely reached Linn's Station by keeping off the wagon road.

Most of the massacre's survivors straggled into Linn's Station by nightfall. Old Mr. Eastwood and his wife had both fled into the woods during the attack. Somehow they found each other during the afternoon and dodged about in the bushes until dark without making any progress toward getting away. They hid during the night in a sink hole. As morning approached, they discovered an Indian camp very nearby and quietly stole away. They finally reached Linn's that day.

The ambush of the fleeing settlers generally became known as the Long Run Massacre. It is occasionally referred to as "Boone's Defeat". Although Squire Boone was not present, it was obviously a defeat of his station. Arrival of the survivors at Linn's Station sent shock waves throughout the Beargrass Stations. It was one of the largest, if not the largest, massacres of settlers in Kentucky history. Few names of victims have been preserved, but eight or nine can be specifically identified. Joseph Eastwood's wife, a daughter of Mr. Hansbury, was horribly killed. Mrs. Eastwood was pregnant and her body was ripped open and mangled. Sarah Vancleve, a grown young lady, oldest daughter of William Vancleve, was killed. Two or three of the widow Holt's children were killed. John Vancleve's wife and two small children were killed. He later married the widow of Gerardus Riker, who died September 15, 1781 from wounds he received in the attack. It was Vancleve's daughter Rachel and her sister who were temporarily held captives. Moses Boone recalled no others being taken prisoner with a possible exception of one man. There may have been no more than about ten victims. Collin's statement that over 100 men, women and children were killed or taken prisoner during the massacre and Floyd's Defeat is pure exaggeration (Collins 1874, vol. II, page 710).

Floyd's Defeat

The night of the massacre the Indians camped on the east bank of Long Run beside a large spring. They were joined the next day by a larger Indian party—two or three times their size—making their combined strength 200 Indians. The Indians had gathered for an attack on Boone's Painted Stone Station, but concluded instead to wait and ambush the party they guessed would return to bury the dead and rescue those who remained at the station. (Draper Mss. 19C96)

The Indians hadn't long to wait. That day, September 14, 1781, the day after the Long Run Massacre, a party of twenty-seven men from the Beargrass stations rode out under Col. John Floyd. They rode in three lines and proceeded with great caution. Despite all their prudence, they fell into the ambush the Indians had set up. As they rode along the dividing ridge about midway between Floyds Fork and Long Run, near the site of present-day Eastwood, the Indians opened fire from both sides, their shot crossing up the hill. The Indians had laid in wait along a quarter mile stretch. They simply let Floyd ride through then closed in behind and had him surrounded. Floyd's men were setting ducks and most of the casualties were from

the initial fire. Captain Sturgus was in front. It was thought the first shot struck him. Although mortally wounded he plunged through the Indian lines and rode until he came to one of his men on foot. He helped him onto the horse and they rode until safely away. The other men also, those who survived the first fire, charged through the enemy lines, their only means of escape. The Indians could speak English and yelled, "Stop, and you shan't be hurt." No one accepted the offer. One man yelled back, "Go to hell!" All the while the Indians were shooting and using their tomahawks. The men fought bravely, killing nine or ten Indians, but the Indians were unquestionably the victors of the day. Of the twenty-seven men who rode out from Beargrass, seventeen were either killed or captured. Only ten returned that day, two of them wounded, Sturgus mortally. (Draper Mss. 13CC236-7, 15CC94)

Any description of Floyd's Defeat is not complete without mention of the magnanimous gallantry of young Samuel Wells who later founded his own station in Shelby County and distinguished himself as a colonel in the Battle of Tippecanoe. He was then about twenty years old, a little below average size, but active and brave. He had been on unfriendly terms with Col. John Floyd, in fact they had been personal enemies since Floyd had kicked him out of his station. But as the men retreated from Floyd's Defeat, Sam Wells saved Floyd's life by the timely offer of his own horse at the moment when the Indians were near and Colonel Floyd ran along on foot nearly exhausted. The act was hardly expected of Wells. The two men made amends and remained friends thereafter.

Again the Beargrass settlements must have been shocked by the new horror story told by the survivors as they came in that night. One woman later recalled Floyd's words to her father: "'Worse and worse,' said he to my father. 'Worse and worse, Mr. Campbell.'" (Draper Mss. 13CC87) Colonel Floyd immediately sat down and wrote to General Clark. The letter, dated "Friday 14th ½ past 10 O'clock", is in the Clark Papers (vol. I, page 604):

I have this minute returned from a little Excurtion against the Enemy & my party 27 in number are all dispersed & cut to pieces except 9 who came off the field with Capt Asturgus mortally Wounded and one other slightly wounded, I dont yet know who are killed M^r Ravenscroft was taken prisoner by [the side of] me — A party was defeated yesterday near the same place & many Women & Children Wounded. I want Satisfaction do send me 100 men which number with what I can raise will do. The Militia have no good powder do send some I cant write guess at the rest

An express went out to Louisville with the news. A day or two after Floyd's Defeat, 300 men from the Falls and Beargrass marched out and buried the dead in a great sink hole. The two defeats had occurred within a mile of each other. The men then marched on to Boone's Painted Stone Station not knowing what atrocities they might find there. Fortunately the Indians had not bothered for some reason to attack the defenseless station. But Squire Boone was in great suspense. A number of the cattle had returned to the station the very evening of the day they were taken. It was an unpleasant omen. Apprehensions increased when the party never arrived which

was to help the Boones and Hintons remove to Beargrass. The families of Boone and the widow Hinton were at last escorted away by the Falls troops. Much of the stock was also returned. As much of the plunder dropped by the fleeing families as could be salvaged was also taken back. (Draper Mss. 19C36-37)

The unsuccessful settlers of Painted Stone spread out into the Beargrass stations waiting for the Indian menace to subside. Squire Boone and his family spent the winter of 1781-82 at the Low Dutch Station. Boone bought out Albert Banta's crop. A Demaree man with a grown son and two daughters also arrived at the Dutch Station from the Long Run Massacre. Some of the family were presumed to have been killed. This man later taught school at the Dutch Station. (Draper Mss. 19C38, 96, 13CC 86-87) If he had earlier taught at Painted Stone then it surely was the first school in Shelby County.

Squire Boone's Mythical Nighttime Visit

I include the next story only because to omit it might lead some who read it elsewhere to take it for fact—it is one of those shopworn Boone myths which seem to take precedence over some real stories. Before I give it, I want just a few words about its original source, Enoch Boone, youngest son of Squire. Enoch Boone was interviewed by Lyman Draper in 1858. The notes from that interview reveal a rambling memory of incidents often in direct conflict with the interviews of Enoch's older brothers which were taken by Draper some twelve years earlier (in 1846). Moses and Isaiah lived through the events they described (Moses was born in 1769 and Isaiah in 1772). Enoch Boone had to get his recollections second hand since he was not born until 1777. Yet Enoch's stories fit the Boone legend a bit better and so they seem to find their way into "history." Anyway, here follows the story.

About two weeks after the Long Run Massacre, Squire Boone went out alone on horseback in the night to see whether the Indians had destroyed his station. He found it untouched. He rode back the same night stopping about midnight near where Floyd had been defeated. Quietly slipping off his horse and holding him by the bridle, he slept there until near daylight. When he awoke he discovered three Indians rising up at their camp a few rods away. He was tempted to shoot since he knew he could kill at least one of them. But his horse was rather timid and the shot might scare him away. He concluded to mount the horse and dash away. He ever after though spoke of the decision with regret and chagrin. (Draper Mss. 19C140-1)

What a difference two weeks can make! Moses Boone said that his father could barely creep around at the time of the Long Run Massacre because of the wounds received the previous April. Even if fit, why would anyone ride out alone over twenty miles after the events that had just occurred? Squire Boone can be credited with many heroic deeds, but occasionally the obvious legend can and should be shifted out. And that goes for Daniel too!

It would be over two years before Painted Stone would be resettled. The Indian threat had not lessened by the spring of 1782, and so Squire Boone, still

disabled by his wounds, resolved to leave the frontier. He first moved his family to Harrod's Station south of Harrodsburg. From May to December 1782 he served as a representative of Jefferson County in the House of Delegates at Richmond, Virginia. He had been elected before leaving the Beargrass area.

Although no politician, Squire Boone made an effective representative of Virginia's frontier. His unhealed wounds, backwoods manner and plain hunter's garb produced an eloquent appeal for aid to the western defenders of the state. In the winter of 1782-83, Squire Boone purchased a place east of Harrodsburg on Cane Run from Col. John Bowman and settled there temporarily. He went again to Virginia on land matters and returned in the fall of 1783 with his cousin Samuel Boone and several families.

Resettlement of Painted Stone

Squire Boone always had a great partiality for Shelby County. He at last concluded that the Indians would be less troublesome and it was time to make another settlement attempt. He started out in the winter of 1783 with six or eight families of the new emigrants he had brought out that fall. They moved in the winter in order to be settled in by spring planting time. The season was not well chosen. While moving, a heavy snow storm and cold spell overtook them and they were forced to stop and camp some time on Salt River. Upon finally reaching the old Painted Stone Station that winter, they found that all the old buildings had been burned to the ground, apparently by the Indians. They immediately went to work rebuilding it. (Draper Mss. 19C39)

The first nucleus of families was soon joined by other families from the Harrodsburg area. Moses Boone said he came with this second group. He remembered taking Harrods Trace by McAfee's Station and some distance further until Boones Trace split off to the right a mile or a mile and a half before reaching the waters of Benson Creek. The trail was very dim but had been freshly blazed by the families who had gone out before them. The trail went down South Benson to its fork with Benson, then up Benson and North Benson to White Oak Creek. The trail then went up White Oak Creek and its western-most branch. From there it crossed the dividing ridge, where the Buffalo Lick Church along Highway 395 is now located, to the head branch of Tick Creek. The trail then went down the branch and Tick Creek about three miles until turning northwest, crossing Mulberry Creek and on to Clear Creek which it crossed about a half mile above Boone's Station. The trail then followed west along the creek to the station. ("Hall vs Whitaker" Bdl. 46)

An exact description of the rebuilt station has not been preserved. It may not have been quite as large as the original station, for smaller stations with fewer families were being built in this period. Boone's Painted Stone Station was, nevertheless, to remain the principal fortress in the area for the remainder of the decade. In the latter part of the summer of 1784 Boone built a grist and sawmill on the creek and had an arbor built between the station and the mill under which he framed the mill timber and wheels. It was the first mill in Shelby County.

The settlers at Boone's Station in 1784 found large pigeon roosts a few miles off. Hundreds could be killed with guns and even clubs. But all was not well. The Indians were again very troublesome.

Two Boys Captured—1784

In the fall of 1784 two lads, Samuel Thorn and a boy named Boiling, were captured by Indians while out not far from the station. Young Boiling was terribly frightened by the Indians and kept pleading, "Don't kill me! Don't kill me!" He kept up the fuss until finally he was taken off to the side by a few of the Indians. In a few minutes they returned with his bloody scalp. Sam Thorn eventually escaped. While still a prisoner he had gotten poisoned. The Indians drew the poison out by digging a hole in the ground in which they put him and covered him up leaving only his head out. (Draper Mss. 19C40-41)

John (or Jack) Calloway returned from his Indian captivity in 1785. He had been taken as a young boy. Moses Boone went along with him from Painted Stone to his mother's house at Boonesboro. Jack could speak English but was quite an Indian. He settled in Shelby County and became a very respectable and prominent man. (Draper Mss. 19C41)

Allen Killed and the Purse Raised for Tague

John Allen held a 1,000 acre survey on the upper part of Clear Creek. In May of 1785 he borrowed a horse from John Tague (or Taig), a poor cripple, in order to go to Sunday meeting. When about two miles off he was shot and killed and the Indians stole the horse. Allen left a wife and children. A purse was made up by the people of Painted Stone and presented to Mr. Tague to cover the loss of his horse. Apparently a purse was not passed for Allen's widow which perhaps says something about the comparative value in pioneer days of a horse versus a husband. Then again, a widow might more easily get a new husband than a poor man might replace a horse. And Tague had other problems too. Moses Boone said that in a fit the unfortunate man had fallen into a campfire and burned off one of his hands and some of the fingers off the other hand. He had a large family to support. Squire Boone gave him 100 acres of fine land on Bullskin on which he did well. (Draper Mss. 19C42-43, 142-3)

The Aaron Collett Atrocity

In the autumn of 1785 a shocking atrocity befell the Collett family who lived at Squire Boone's Painted Stone Station. John and Aaron Collett, two grown young sons, had been out some two miles from the station hunting for hogs, cows, horses or something in the woods. As they returned, a party of three or four Indians met them within a mile or so of the station. The brothers made a run for the station and John escaped, but Aaron was shot and overtaken. Normally in taking a scalp the Indians cut only a large round patch from the top and back portion which included the crown of the victim's head. Unfortunately, Aaron Collett had an unusually long

growth of hair for a man and so his scalp represented a fine trophy. The young man's entire scalp was taken off and his lips cut from his face from beneath his nose to his chin—it was thought as evidence that the long-hair scalp was taken from a man. He was then tomahawked, stabbed in the back and left for dead. A party of men from the station went out and soon located Collett, a horrible sight, but still alive despite his terrible mutilation. He was taken back to the station where he lived three days until at last relieved by death from his sufferings. The dying young man's affectionate embrace of his sister and family was a moving scene. (Draper Mss. 19C41-42, 142)

Several Small Stations Founded—1784-85

The Indian menace may have quieted a bit from 1781, or the lure of the unsettled Shelby County lands may have been stronger. Whatever the cause, several small stations were formed in Shelby County during 1784 and 1785 leaving Painted Stone as the principal fortress for a cluster of settlements. The new stations were not so large, often formed by only three or four families. Such a station might consist of nothing more than a couple cabins with a stockade fence between them. They were not designed to withstand a prolonged siege, but only the quick surprise attack. The Indians had rarely shown any patience for prolonged sieges and the likelihood was lessened even more now that the stations were relatively less isolated.

Wells' station was located a little over four miles west of Painted Stone along Boones Wagon Road. The road, creek crossings and Wells' Station are shown in several of the plats contained in "Taylor vs McCampbell" Bdl. 157. The station spring is clearly visible today, enclosed by a concrete block structure out of which even today a healthy flow of water originates. It is just a little less than a half mile due east of the junction of the Harrington Mill Pike with the Scotts Station Road. This station was founded by young Samuel Wells who had distinguished himself at Floyd's Defeat by saving the colonel's life.

Almost three miles west of Wells' Station was Williams' Station located about a hundred yards south of Boones Wagon Road just east of its crossing of Little Bullskin. It is also shown in the "Taylor vs McCampbell" plats. It can be located today by taking Fields Road north from US60 about one and a third miles. Two stations were formed south of Painted Stone in the area of present-day Shelbyville. Brackett Owen founded a station on his land southeast of town, east of present-day Grove Hill Cemetery. Aquilla Whitaker built a station south of town 200 feet north of Clear Creek at an excellent spring on the east side of the small branch which heads in the west side of Shelbyville. It is two or three hundred yards west of the modern sewage disposal plant on Clear Creek. The old blockhouse of Whitaker's Station or "Red Orchard" as it was also known, was still standing in 1882 and is shown on the county atlas.

Two stations were formed northeast of Painted Stone on upper branches of Clear Creek. James Hogland's was located on the west side of present-day

Highway 241 a half mile northwest of its intersection at Cropper with Highway 43. Daniel Ketcham's was a little less than two miles south of Cropper near East Clear Creek. Both stations were on paths leading off from the great buffalo road from Drennon's Lick to Leestown. They were little more than cabins housing their namesakes' families. They however played an important role in the settlement of that section of Shelby County by the Low Dutch Company.

The Low Dutch Company

The Low Dutch Company is one of the most unusual groups to settle in Shelby County—in all Kentucky for that matter. Among their descendants in Shelby County are the Bantas, Bergens, Bruners, Brewers, Demarees, Monforts, Shucks, Terhunes, Vanarsdales, Vorises and many others. They were of Holland Dutch and French Huguenot background. Having come to New Amsterdam in the mid-seventeenth century, they migrated across the American frontier and settled together as a Dutch community for the next 200 years. I am in the process of preparing a detailed history of the Low Dutch in Kentucky, but will cut it short for this sketch.

The Low Dutch originally came to Kentucky in the spring of 1780 in two detachments. One, lead by Henry Banta, took the Ohio River route to the Falls and temporarily settled at the Low Dutch Station on John Floyd's land. The other group, lead by Banta's brother-in-law Samuel Duree, took the Wilderness Road route to Nathaniel Hart's White Oak Spring Station near Boonesboro. Early in 1781 the men from both groups met to build Banta's Fort on Muddy Creek in present-day Madison County. They built several cabins but never occupied them due to Indian troubles such as the Duree Massacre in March 1781 and the Dutch Defeat in the summer of 1781. Most of the group then settled near Harrod's Station where they built the second Low Dutch Station on James Harrod's land. Some, such as the Demarees, through in with Squire Boone and were at the Long Run Massacre.

The Low Dutch had come to Kentucky in search of a large tract of land which would enable them to settle together as a community for several generations. They seemed to have realized this dream in 1784 when they purchased 5,945 acres out of Squire Boone's 12,000 acre treasury warrant entered "...N^o East of the painted stone about 6 miles..." To this they added three 1,000 acre preemptions purchased from Richard Beard in 1785. This made a tract of nearly 9,000 acres still known today as the Low Dutch Tract. Over 3,500 acres lay in Shelby County and the remainder in Henry County. The tract included the present-day communities of North Pleasureville, South Pleasureville, Defoe and parts of Cropper and Elmburg. The ancient Leestown buffalo road came north down the Indian Fork of Six Mile and up the Dutch Fork into the Low Dutch Tract, passing through the tract and out the north corner along present-day Highway 22. The road passed on through present-day Bethlehem then along present-day Highway 1360 through Franklinton on to Drennon's Lick. After settlement began in the area the road was occasionally referred to as the Dutch Road. An extensive plat in "Jarrett vs Spriggs" Bdl. 110 shows the eighteen-some miles of the buffalo road south from Drennon's Lick

through all of Henry County and into Shelby County to the mouth of the Indian Fork of Six Mile. Six Mile derived its name from Boone's entry which described it as "the big creek running into Kentucky 6 miles above Drenon's Lick Creek." Several creeks in this area derived their name from the Low Dutch—the Dutch Forks of Six Mile and Benson, Bantas Fork and Demarees Branch of Six Mile.

The Dutchmen were determined to have a careful first-hand look at their purchase. In 1785 brothers Peter, John, Cornelius, Daniel and Jacob Banta with their brother-in-law Henry Shively and probably others took Harrods then Boones Traces from Mercer into Shelby County. Leaving the trace they traveled north to James Hogland's Station. They plunged into the wilderness and built a cabin about two miles northeast of Hogland's Station on what was afterwards known as the old Magruder farm. This, beyond doubt, was the first Dutch cabin built in the limits of the Low Dutch Tract. It was constructed of blue ash logs and stood as a landmark until after the Civil War.

James Westerfield joined the Bantas and also built a cabin probably nearby but outside of the Dutch Tract itself. The cabin was referred to as Westerfield's Station and was apparently a strong one. Some of the Bantas spent the summer at Westerfield's Station. But the position enjoyed that summer of 1785 did not last. One of those periodic storms of Indian wrath burst upon the frontier settlements, and the men wisely decided to concentrate their forces at Hogland's Station. The station proved to be poorly manned and provisioned, and was threatened daily with attack from redskins. So desperate did the situation become that the little garrison determined to send to the Dutch in Mercer County for reinforcements and provisions. Jake Banta, the youngest of the brothers, volunteered to perform the dangerous mission. The wilderness being full of prowling savages, he chose the darkness of night to pass through the "narrows" on the waters of Benson Creek near present-day Graefenberg on the Shelby-Franklin County line. But poor Jake never reached the Mercer County stations. As he crept silently and all alone in the darkness of night through the dreaded "narrows," the redskins pounced upon him from ambush and cleaved his skull with a tomahawk. They left Banta on the tragic spot with his own tomahawk buried in his skull and his flesh hacked to shreds as a token of their fierce vengeance. As soon as the troubles subsided the other men returned to Mercer County with a good report of the excellent quality of the lands.

On March 14, 1786 the Low Dutch organized themselves under a constitution of sorts. The tract was divided into 200 acre plantations assigned to individual families but legally held in common by the Low Dutch Company with Abraham Banta as trustee or agent. They agreed:

That we will subscribe to and support the Low Dutch reformed Church Socity by giving a Call and Invitation to a Regular Instituted Low Dutch minister to assosiate in said Church as much as in us lie and that we will indeavouer to have our children Taught and instructed in the Low Dutch Tongue so that they may Read the word of God and understand the Gospel when Preached unto them

The agreement, measuring forty-three inches long and thirteen inches wide is filed in the Shelby County court case "Bonta's heirs vs Bergen" Bdl. 190.

Despite the misfortune of the Banta brothers the summer before, the Dutch organized immediately to move on to their tract. Daniel Ketcham's Station became the headquarters of the settlement. Several families probably stationed themselves nearby at Hogland's. A few more venturesome families may have moved immediately on to the tract. But the foundations of their settlement had hardly begun to be laid when trouble with the Indians began again. It was a period of severe Indian depredations in this region of Kentucky and particularly in the immediate vicinity of the Dutch Tract. Hunters would later recall that in 1785 and '86 they kept to the woods when traveling to Drennon's Lick; they considered the marked trails as an invitation to death.

The Dutch were driven by the marauding Indians to consolidate their forces at Ketcham's. Here on May 4, 1786 Simon and Rachel VanArsdale's daughter Eleanor was born. On her ninety-second birthday Eleanor VariArsdale Banta would recall her parents' stories of 1786. The morning she was born one of her uncles was shot near the station and the woods around the station were full of Indians. When she was nine days old her mother with the other women and children were evacuated under the cover of night to Boone's Painted Stone six miles back, the nearest fortified settlement. The men stayed in the Dutch Tract area to fight for awhile, but it became apparent that the battle was hopeless.

The Dutch eventually moved their families back to Mercer County. Although a few Dutch families remained close to the Low Dutch Tract and made isolated attempts at settlement, it would be nearly a decade before the Tract could be safely settled. By then the community would have lost much of its unity with many of the families buying farms and settling in Mercer County where they built the famous Mud Meeting House in 1800. The families who eventually settled the Shelby-Henry County Low Dutch Tract built prosperous farms and founded the town of Pleasureville which was originally known as Bantatown. They spread throughout northeastern Shelby County. They continued to hold their Tract in common for nearly fifty years, not deeding it to individual families until the 1820s and 30s. The Minute Book of their meetings and their Account Book are still in existence.

Abraham Lincoln Killed

That same month the Low Dutch were driven from Ketcham's Station by the Indians, another incident occurred just over the county line in Jefferson County—the killing of Abraham Lincoln, grandfather of President Lincoln. The President himself would later recall the story as often told to him by his father, Thomas Lincoln. On May 19, 1786 the pioneer was surprised and shot from ambush while laboring in his field with his three sons, Mordecai, Josiah and Thomas. Josiah ran a half mile to Morgan Hughes' Station for assistance. The oldest son, Mordecai, hastily ran to the family cabin to prepare a defense. Young Tom Lincoln, then only eight years old, sat by the side of his dead father's body. Presently Mordecai spotted an Indian

stealing up to the body. He took aim at a silver crescent hanging from the Indian's neck and brought him down. The savages were soon dispersed by the men from Hughes' Station.

The Lincoln murder is memorialized by the plaques at the ruins of the historic Long Run Baptist Church less than a half mile west of Shelby County on Tater Run a branch of Long Run. Abraham Lincoln supposedly is buried on the site. Sometime after the murder, the widow and her five children moved to her relatives in Washington County leaving the log cabin untended. The abandoned dwelling was used by area settlers as a school and meeting house. Morgan Hughes' Station was a half mile northeast of the Long Run Church site.

Abraham Lincoln is mentioned in depositions in the Shelby County court case of "Taylor vs McCampbell" Bdl. 157. There he is remembered as Abram Linkhorn who formerly lived near Boones Wagon Road's ford of Long Run. This is almost the same spot where US60 now crosses, also where the Long Run Massacre had occurred in 1781. This conflicts with the Long Run Church site which is more than a mile and a half northeast.

Truman's Shelby County Ancestors

Shelby County also has presidential connections with Harry S. Truman. Both his paternal and maternal grandparents were married in Shelby County. All four later migrated to Missouri. Robert Tyler, one of the original settlers in 1780 of Boone's Painted Stone Station, was a great-great-grandfather of Harry Truman. It was Tyler's family who ran off without fighting at the Long Run Massacre. He later founded his own station on Tick Creek. Truman's great-grandmother, Nancy Tyler Holmes, supposedly was born at Painted Stone in April 1780. The story is suspicious, but if true she very likely was the first white child born in Shelby County. She is also said to have been scalped alive. She supposedly never made a cry and pretended to dead during the fiendish operation knowing she would be instantly murdered if the Indians realized she was alive. Harry Truman's great-grandfather, William Truman (1784-1863), is buried in the Christiansburg cemetery.

Painted Stone Sold to Lynch 1786

In early 1786 Squire Boone sold his Painted Stone Station property to Col. Charles Lynch and purchased Samuel Wells' Station where he moved his family (Draper Mss. 19C42). The Painted Stone Station eventually became known as Lynch's Station. Colonel Lynch moved the station to the south side of Clear Creek some fifteen feet above the creek and 100 yards from it on a beautiful bank. The move was perhaps made after the buildings of the old station began to deteriorate. Lynch's Station is shown on the 1882 Atlas of Shelby County.

Aquilla Whitaker's Indian Hunt

In the spring of 1787 four Indians came into the neighborhoods of Whitaker's and Wells' Stations to steal horses. Aquilla Whitaker raised a party of eight or ten

men and followed the Indians' trail several miles. They overtook the Indians in a beech bottom on Floyds Fork where the Indians had stopped to cook. The Indians fled and the men chose their targets to pursue. Moses Boone treed one and broke his arm with a shot. Nathan Garret, another member of the hunt, shot the Indian dead. One other Indian was killed. (Draper Mss. 19C51-52)

Major Whitaker's father was one of the earliest Baptist preachers in Kentucky. The Major was a good and brave soldier but rather overbearing and therefore not very popular with his men. He was one of the most important citizens of early Shelby County. Unfortunately in 1807 his quick temper got the best of him and he killed a man in an affray. He was indicted for murder, but fled the state. He died a miserable death in Louisiana. (Draper Mss. 19C54,111)

The Joseph Casman Atrocity

In the fall of 1787 Joseph Casman, Vincent Robbins and Aaron Vancleve from Shelby County went on a buffalo hunt. West of Drennon's Lick they unexpectedly met a small Indian party who fired on them. One of Vancleve's fingers was shot off and part of the breech of his gun was shot away. He and Robbins however escaped. But Casman, who was in the rear a little distance and probably wounded, was taken prisoner.

As soon as Vancleve and Robbins reached the stations on Bullskin and Clear Creeks, a rescue party was raised. Robbins conducted them to the spot where Casman was last seen and there they found blood on the ground. They followed the trail of blood about 200 yards to a camp recently abandoned by other buffalo hunters. There they found Casman's body shockingly mutilated. A leg and an arm had been hacked off and hung up in saplings along with articles of his clothing. The remainder of the body laid in a pool of blood; the head much mangled. The body was gathered up and buried. Casman was a very swarthy man with coarse heavy black hair. Some thought the Indians suspected him of having Indian blood and of having deserted them and joined the whites. He left a family including several grown children at Wells' Station. (Draper Mss. 19C53)

Major Brenton Killed

In December 1787 two more men were killed near Drennon's Lick—Major James Brenton and a neighbor by the name of Coleman. Major Brenton had settled on Fox Run near Wells' Station in 1786. (Draper Mss. 19C54)

The Tick Creek Massacre—1788

One of the stations settled in the 1784-85 period was Robert Tyler's Station on a small branch of Tick Creek a little north of present-day US60 a mile west of Clay Village and four and a half miles east of Shelbyville. Bland Ballard's family resided at the station. In 1788 his father's family moved some 200 yards out from the station to be close to a sugar camp he had set up. Early one morning Bland's brother Benjamin was shot when he went out from the cabin to get firewood. The

Indians, some fifteen in number, then attacked the house. The Ballards barred the cabin door and made a defense, but the father was the only man in the house. None of the men of Tyler's Station would go out except Bland Ballard. He got within shooting distance of his father's house where he used his rifle with good effect, killing one or two Indians. The Indians nevertheless succeeded in entering the house where they killed Ballard's father, his full sister and his half sister. They also tomahawked his youngest sister, a child, but she recovered. Ballard's step-mother tried to escape through the back door. She was pursued by an Indian who was shot by the step-son as he raised his tomahawk to strike her. The Indian was not killed in time to prevent the fatal blow. Five members of the Ballard family were killed. The Indians sustained a loss of six or seven. Bland Ballard's bravery and daring were much spoken of at the time. (Collins 1847, page 173; Draper Mss. 19C56,114)

Betsy Vancleve and William Cline Killed

Indian incidents at last began to occur less frequently, but they continued well into the 1790s. On Sunday May 23, 1790 Moses Boone, Captain James and Henry Hogland, William Cline, Miss Betsy Vancleve and Matthew Smock, one of the Low Dutch Company members, were attacked by Indians as they returned from preaching near the Painted Stone Station. Six or seven Indians lay concealed behind bushes and a log. They raised a yell and shot, mostly at random as their intended victims came within about thirty steps. The fire did no harm other than to scare the horses causing Boone and Miss Vancleve to be thrown. Boone remounted. The Hoglands and Cline who had guns attempted to keep the Indians at bay while all tried to get Miss Vancleve onto one of the horses. But the Indians reloaded and the men were forced to retreat without the girl. She ran nearly a quarter mile on foot before being overtaken and captured. Cline was shot and killed as he rode more than a quarter mile away. A few minutes later several others returning from the same meeting took up the Indians' trail and easily followed it through the pea vines. Within about a mile they came upon Miss Vancleve's senseless body—tomahawked and scalped. The girl died soon afterwards. (Draper Mss. 19C54, 144-145; "Holmes vs Merriwether" Bdl. 2)

Sarah Cozine's Captivity

On August 9, 1790, nine year old Sarah Cozine, stepdaughter of Samuel Demaree, and her twelve year old brother Daniel were pulling hemp about fifty yards from Ketcham's Station when six or seven Pottowattomie Indians came running at them from out of a cornfield. The Indians were without guns except one who fired at the children. They were chased to a fence where the boy's skull was crushed by a tomahawk. Sarah got over the fence but was captured by her pursuers who left the boy's dead body without scalping it.

Once safely away the Indians scalped the girl but spared her life. Sarah Cozine was a captive of the Indians for five years, being released September 14, 1795 after the Battle of Fallen Timbers. (Draper Mss. 16S176-7,180) She married and lived to be an old woman. Family legend records that she was regarded as

somewhat eccentric for following some Indian habits learned during her captivity. It seems she kindled her fires Indian fashion and preferred to live in a wigwam in the summertime.

Benjamin Roberts' Son Killed

Children were by no means immune from Indian attack. Capt. Benjamin Roberts resided about a mile from Painted Stone on Clear Creek. One day his son Willis, about five or six years old, went fishing with a young man in a backwater pond. They were shot at by two Indians. Willis was wounded, but he and the man dashed into the pond to swim away. The young man escaped. Willis could not swim, but was struggling in the water beyond the reach of the Indians. They shot and killed him with an arrow. (Draper Mss. 19C143) The branch of Clear Creek now known as Dry Run which runs along present-day Highway 55 was once known as Roberts Run ("Shannon vs Beall" Bdl. 19).

Isaiah Boone was fired upon by three Indians as he rode through a piece of woods near Painted Stone in 1792. They had concealed themselves behind a log some eighteen steps from the path. All three fired almost at the same moment and all missed their mark. Boone narrowly escaped. (Draper Mss. 19C109-110)

Daniel Ketcham's Captivity

Old Daniel Ketcham had played host to the Low Dutch Company and since 1784 had weathered the Indian excursions into northeastern Shelby County. Twice he had been compelled to abandon his station and seek protection for his family at Painted Stone. In 1792 his luck had a turn for the worse when he was captured by a band of eleven Ottawa Indians. They shot his horse from under him. He then ran forty or fifty yards until overtaken by one of the Indians tomahawk in hand. Ketcham raised his hands in surrender. He was taken on an arduous march north eventually to Detroit. After some months he escaped into Canada, made his way to his former home in Maryland then to Kentucky. He was back in Shelby County in time for the harvest. (Filson Quarterly, July 1948)

Smock Family Indian Troubles

Jacob Smock attempted to settle his family on the Demaree tract near Ketcham's Station in 1794. His daughter Lea Smock was captured by the Indians, scalped, escaped and later married and raised a large family. His son Matthew was killed. Jacob's fourteen and thirteen year old sons, John and Peter Smock, were captured by Pottowattomies in March of 1794. Family legend says the boys were kidnapped by Chief Winomac and ransomed for a keg of rum after General Wayne defeated the Indians. The boys were released June 10, 1795. (Draper Mss. 16S179,207)

End of the Frontier

As you can see, children who had been taken captive from Shelby County in the 1790s were being returned in 1795. This was the result of General "Mad Anthony" Wayne's decisive victory over Indians at "Fallen Timbers" August 20, 1794. Theodore Roosevelt in his famous history, The Winning of the West, said "It was the most complete and important victory ever gained over the northwestern Indians during the forty years' warfare to which it put an end." The Treaty of Greenville signed in the summer of 1795 put an end to Kentucky's frontier era. The men of Shelby County were well represented at the Battle of Fallen Timbers. Bland Ballard commanded a company under Major Aquilla Whitaker (Draper Mss. 19C110).

Shelby County and Shelbyville Created

The frontier had begun to come to a close for Kentucky and Shelby County even before Fallen Timbers. Kentucky was granted statehood in 1792. On June 28, 1792 the act was signed creating Shelby County, named for Isaac Shelby, the first governor (and the man who signed the act!). Shelby County was struck off of Jefferson County and originally included all that is now Shelby and Henry Counties and parts of Carroll, Franklin, Owen and Spencer Counties. Henry County was not struck off until 1798.

The first court in Shelby County was held in October 1792. On the second day the subject of fixing the location of the county seat came up. Some advocated the site of Lynch's Station (Painted Stone). But William Shannon, who owned the land where Shelbyville now is, argued that on account of the fine springs on his land, and the fact that he was willing to donate an acre of ground for public buildings and would lay off fifty acres for town lots, his location should be chosen. The justices selected his site. The town lots were laid off in January 1793.

William Shannon, the proprietor of Shelbyville, did not enjoy his position for long. In 1794 he was killed in front of the new town's tavern by John Felty, the tavern-keeper. They had quarreled at the dinner table but were separated by friends. Upon getting up, Shannon picked up a stone at the front door which he threw at Felty. At the same moment, Felty threw a dirk knife at Shannon instantly killing him. Felty was mortally wounded by the stone Shannon threw and he died a few days later.

Shelby County's frontier era had indeed passed with courts being held and town lots replacing forts and stations. And the Indian menace had passed sufficiently that white men now had the time to devote to killing off each other!

Vince Akers

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