

WESTERFIELD MASSACRE

WHEN AND WHERE WAS IT?

Vince Akers, The Westerfield Massacre, *Bluegrass Roots*, Part 1/3, Fall 2017, October 2017, pp 3-7; Pt 2/3, Winter 2018, January 2018, pp 3-7; Pt 3/3, Spring 2018, April 2018, pp 4-13.

and

Ronald Clay Belcher, Westerfield Massacre in Kentucky,
Bluegrass Roots, v38 n2, Summer 2011, pp. 30-37.

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Massacre articles extracted:
Akers Pts 1, 2, & 3 of 3
Belcher

with

CLEAR'S STATION AS A CANDIDATE SITE
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The Westerfield Massacre When and Where Was It?

Part 1 of 3
by Vince Akers

The Dutch Cousins of Kentucky¹ is an organization of descendants of Holland Dutch and French Huguenot families who came to the Kentucky frontier in the spring of 1780, seeking a large tract of land where they could settle together and retain their language and Dutch Reformed Church.² They called themselves “Low Dutch” to avoid confusion with the much more numerous German pioneers who were generally referred to on the frontier as Dutch.³

The Low Dutch eventually formed two major areas of permanent settlement in Kentucky. One was in the Mercer County area around Harrodsburg where they built the Old Mud Meetinghouse in 1800. The Dutch Cousins have been instrumental in raising the funds to restore this historic timber-framed building, the first Dutch Reformed Church west of the Alleghenies. The restored Old Mud Meetinghouse was dedicated during the 2015 Dutch Cousins Reunion. These reunions are held every other year in September and typically draw more than 100 cousins from throughout the United States.

The other area of permanent settlement was in and around the Low Dutch Tract in present-day Henry and Shelby Counties. This large tract of land was purchased in 1786 from Squire Boone but not successfully settled until after the Indian raids into Kentucky finally came to an end following General "Mad" Anthony Wayne's victory at Fallen Timbers in 1794 and the subsequent Treaty of Greenville. The first 14 years (1780-1794) of the Low Dutch experience on the frontiers of Kentucky were marked by an almost constant stream of Indian depredations as they searched for and tried to settle their Low Dutch colony.

Perhaps the most horrific of all the many Indian incidents involving the Low Dutch was the Westerfield Massacre. Research and articles by Westerfield

descendant Ronald Belcher published during 2011 in *Bluegrass Roots* have inspired a resurgence of interest in this event.⁴ The Dutch Cousins organization evolved from reunions of the Westerfield family. Those reunions included more and more of the other closely intermarried Dutch families until in 2005 the group decided to call itself the Dutch Cousins. The Westerfields still bring the largest family representation to the Dutch Cousins Reunions, including the gathering in September 2017. The Dutch Cousins at that gathering expressed a desire to commemorate and mark the site of the Westerfield Massacre during their reunion in 2019. This will require determination of the correct date and location of the event.

THE MASSACRE

The Westerfield Massacre occurred as families were moving from the stations on Beargrass Creek east of Louisville to the interior around Harrodsburg. Unfortunately, there are no known first-hand eyewitness accounts. There are, however, two second-hand accounts in the Draper Manuscripts from which a detailed and very gruesome description of the event can be cobbled together. The first is an interview by Rev. John Shane in 1842 of a woman in Cincinnati whose father was at the massacre.⁵ Her father, John Thickston, had never been to Harrods Town and wanted to see the place, so he and his cousin went along to help the families transport their belongings.⁶ The second account is from a memorandum and letter sent in 1865 to Lyman C. Draper by Hiram R. Stafford, whose mother, Leah Westerfield, was at the massacre.⁷ Two more accounts make brief, but very useful, references to the massacre.⁸

(continued on next page; endnotes on Page 7)

A large caravan of several families, including two Westerfield families whose patriarchs were cousins, left Floyd's Station on Beargrass Creek on a Monday morning bound for Harrod's Station.⁹ Camp was made the first night and about three o'clock in the morning John Thickston awoke to see three Indians looking at his gun, which reflected the light of the campfire. As an Indian reached for it, Thickston jumped up and seized the gun out of the Indian's hand. The Indian raised his tomahawk to strike, but Thickston knocked him down with the breech of the gun and ran off into the darkness. The Indians now all commenced firing with such a volley that Thickston thought it was a loud clap of thunder. He claimed 16 bullet holes were shot through his blanket as he ran off, but he sustained only a slight shot across the back of his neck. He kept running until he stumbled over a log. Here he looked back and could see the Indians throwing packsaddles and everything they could find into the fire to make a light. He heard the sickening sounds of plundering, cracking of skulls and screaming. He rose again and ran until, guided by the crowing of roosters, he came to Clear's Station near Bullitt's Lick. John's cousin William Thickston also escaped with only two slight wounds across the back of his hand.¹⁰

Some women and children also escaped, aided by the darkness, the surrounding forest, the noise, and the mass confusion. Mary Westerfield saved herself and three small children by hiding in a sinkhole, keeping one child in her arms and the other two under her clothes to keep them from crying. Her grown son Samuel also escaped into the night. Her teenage daughter Leah, Hiram Stafford's mother, also escaped and made it to a station but then had difficulty getting inside because the alarm that had been raised made guards reluctant to open the gates.¹¹

At the campsite the Indians apparently concentrated first on killing the men to subdue the group. Several fathers, cousins James and John Westerfield, James Swan, James McLaughlin and Thomas Pyburn, were all killed.

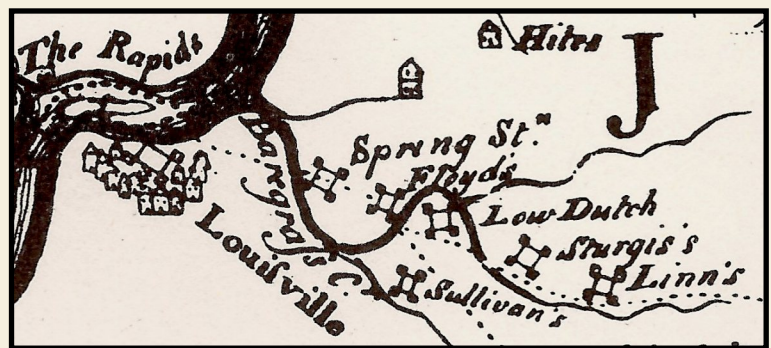
Thomas Pearce was badly wounded through the thighs in running off. Somehow he managed to conceal himself and keep quiet to avoid detection. He was rescued, but Thickston's daughter recalled he would later "haller most dreadfully" when his wound was dressed.¹²

Once the Indians had subdued and secured the campsite, the terror was far from over. Demented actions and cruelties of truly epic proportions were now played out. The Westerfield family patriarch, Jacobus or James¹³ Westerfield, was a large man. His grandson Hiram Stafford said his grandfather weighed 333 pounds. After killing Westerfield, the Indians seemed to think they had slain a giant. Three of them buttoned themselves up together in his great coat and danced around.¹⁴

In the post-attack mayhem, young Garret Westerfield was taken with a seizure or fit. This confused and upset the Indians terribly until at length one of them crept up close enough to the writhing boy to crush his skull with a tomahawk.¹⁵

Like fiendish ghouls, the Indians now rifled through the plunder taking a few items they could carry north and then ripping open the bedding and scattering the feathers. The terrified prisoners, consisting almost

(continued on Page 6)



Detail from John Filson's map showing the Low Dutch station on Beargrass Creek, one of two such stations in Kentucky in 1784. See Page 6 for the full map.



John Filson's 1784 map of Kentucky shows two Low Dutch Stations. The station on Beargrass Creek was built in 1780 on lands rented from John Floyd. The Westerfield Massacre occurred in April 1781 as families left the Beargrass area moving to the relatively safer interior where the Low Dutch were building a new station on lands rented from James Harrod.

entirely of women and children, huddled together helplessly watching the horrifying scene unfold while they awaited their fate, which came soon enough. One by one they were drawn from the huddle and tested to see if they were capable of keeping up with the Indians as they returned north across the Ohio. Those thought unfit to travel were tomahawked and scalped. One woman watched helpless and horrified as her children one after another were slain. When the Indians finally came to take her youngest infant out of her arms the distraught mother clutched it to her breast. While frantically screaming for its safety she was dispatched on the spot by a hatchet and scalped. The Indians then took the infant by the heels and beat its brains out against a tree.¹⁶

Three teenage girls were among these prisoners huddled at the campsite. Betsy Swan had just two days previously survived an attack on her and her father James near Floyd's Station. Their luck was short lived. Her father was killed in the massacre attack and she was wounded in the shoulder. The Indians thought she was wounded too badly and tomahawked her.¹⁷ The other two girls, Deborah and Polly Westerfield, were second cousins, daughters of James and John Westerfield. They ended up being the only prisoners not murdered. They were taken off as captives to Detroit where the Indians sold them to the British who used them as servants to the French inhabitants. They were ultimately exchanged and finally got home to their surviving families.¹⁸

As soon as survivors started straggling in from the massacre, the alarm was set and an express was sent to the stations on Beargrass Creek for assistance. The militia was sent to escort the survivors back to Beargrass after salvaging what was left of the property and burying the dead in a mass grave.¹⁹

(See Endnotes on the next page.)

About the Author . . .



For nearly 50 years, Vince Akers has been researching and writing about Kentucky's Low Dutch pioneers. His mother was a Demaree, born and raised on the Demaree farm in Henry County's Low Dutch Tract. His research has led him to delve deeply into the Draper Manuscripts, Haldimand Papers, Clark Papers, court records, and other primary sources of frontier Kentucky history. He is a frequent speaker on the Low Dutch and on pioneer-Indian engagements. He is a retired Cummins Engine Company executive and lives with his wife in Indianapolis.

In the Next Issue:

In Part 2, researcher and author Vince Akers continues his report about his Low Dutch ancestors, with a focus on determining the date of the Westerfield Massacre.

ENDNOTES

¹ Photos and other information are available on the Dutch Cousins of Kentucky website at www.dutchcousins.org.

² Vincent Akers, *The Low Dutch Company: A History of the Holland Dutch Settlements of the Kentucky Frontier* (a four-part series of articles originally appearing in the Holland Society's magazine *de Halve Maen*, 1980-81, and reprinted along with other related material in 1982).

³ [Read one view](#) of why the Germans became known as "Dutch."

⁴ Ronald Clay Belcher, "Samuel Westervelt (Westerfield) at Kentucky Territory in 1779," *Bluegrass Roots, Quarterly Journal of the Kentucky Genealogical Society* (Spring 2011), vol. 38, no.1, 25-28; and "Westervelt Massacre in Kentucky in 1780," *Bluegrass Roots* (Summer 2011), vol. 38, no. 2, 30-37. These will hereafter be cited as Belcher, *Bluegrass Roots*, with the page number.

⁵ Draper Mss. 13CC9-18. Rev. John D. Shane never names this woman, nor does he give her age. Presumably she was a child or teenager at the time her father was at the massacre. While Shane does not date the interview, a postscript indicates he took his rough notes on the same paper as the next interview (Draper Mss. 13CC19-22) with Mrs. Strong, also in Cincinnati, which he dated 1842. So presumably Thickston's daughter was also interviewed 1842—sixty-plus years after the events she so colorfully describes. Even Shane apparently doubted some of her stories as another postscript says "might have had another sitting with this lady, but she seemed of so lively an imagination, my confidence flagged." Ron Belcher's article on the massacre mistakenly refers to this interview as Mrs. Strong's interview, Belcher, *Bluegrass Roots*, 36-37.

⁶ Thickston's daughter, Draper Mss. 13CC11. Akers, *Low Dutch Company*, footnote 32, incorrectly referred to Thickston as being the party's guide. Ron Belcher's massacre article repeats the error, Belcher, *Bluegrass Roots*, 30, 33, 34.

⁷ Draper Mss. 24C145-145² is a three-page memorandum dated Carroll County, March 28, 1865, signed H.R. Stafford, enclosed with his letter of the same date to Lyman C. Draper (at 24C144); and Draper Mss. 24C148-148² is a three-page letter "Carrollton Carroll Co. Ky May 16th 1865" signed H.R. Stafford to Lyman C. Draper.

⁸ Rev. Shane's interview with Miss Campbell, Draper Mss. 13CC84; and the Revolutionary War pension file of John Ryker (R9129), affidavit dated November 11, 1834, Jefferson County, Indiana.

⁹ Thickston's daughter, Draper Mss. 13CC11, 12, gives the Monday departure, refers to the two Westerfelt family heads as John and Christopher Westerfelt and refers to their daughters as cousins. Stafford, Draper Mss. 24C145, 145¹, 145², 148, 148¹, refers to James and John Westerfield as the family heads and their daughters both as "cousins" and "distant cousins." Ron Belcher's family research indicates the fathers were first cousins, Belcher, *Bluegrass Roots*, 25, 32.

¹⁰ Thickston's daughter, Draper Mss. 13CC11-12.

¹¹ Stafford, Draper Mss. 24C145, tells the stories of his mother's and grandmother's escapes. Thickston's daughter, Draper Mss. 13CC12, tells of Samuel's escape. Rev. Shane's interview with Miss Campbell, Draper Mss. 13CC84, also refers to Samuel and his sister's return to Beargrass after the massacre.

¹² Thickston's daughter, Draper Mss. 13CC12 (except incorrectly referring to James Westerfield as Christopher).

¹³ The names Jacobus and James were interchangeable and James Westerfield seems to have used both. Dutch Americans considered Jacobus and Jacob as two distinct names, both referring to the Biblical Patriarch. Families might even have two sons, one named Jacobus and one Jacob. Eventually Jacobus became James, while Jacob remained Jacob. Fred Sisser, *The Monfoort Family of New York and New Jersey* (Somerville, N.J., 1969), 22.

¹⁴ Stafford, Draper Mss. 24C145-145¹.

¹⁵ Thickston's daughter, Draper Mss. 13CC11.

¹⁶ Stafford, Draper Mss. 24C145-145¹.

¹⁷ Thickston's daughter, Draper Mss. 13CC12.

¹⁸ Both Stafford, Draper Mss. 24C145-145¹, and Thickston's daughter, Draper Mss. 13CC12, refer by their names to the captivity of the Westerfield girls. The girls are on a British prisoner list in the Sir Frederick Haldimond Papers, Add. Mss. 21,843, page 289.

¹⁹ John Ryker pension statement, R9129; Thickston's daughter, Draper 13CC12.

The Westerfield Massacre

When and Where Was It?

Part 2 of 3: The Date by Vince Akers

(Part 1 of this article is in the Fall 2017 issue. The cited article by Ronald Clay Belcher appeared in the [Summer 2011](#) issue of Bluegrass Roots.)

Nearly 40 years ago this author concluded, after a good deal of head scratching, that the Westerfield Massacre occurred in the summer of 1780.²⁰ Ron Belcher's much more recent analysis found "credence for the Westervelt massacre to have occurred at 3:00 a.m. on Tuesday, 27 June 1780."²¹ This exact hour and day of the week was based on Thickston's daughter recalling her father leaving with the massacre caravan on a Monday morning and their campsite being attacked the first night about 3 a.m.²² The exact day—June 27, 1780—was then determined based on it being the "only one suitable Tuesday" on the calendar after June 21 and before July 1, 1780. June 21st was the first day of summer and also the day Jacobus/James Westervelt registered ownership of 400 acres along Silver Creek. The massacre where he died must have occurred after that date. At the other end of the small window of time, July, August and September were eliminated as possible dates for the relocation because of the extreme alarm and disruption that followed the British and Indian invasion of Kentucky and George Rogers Clark's resultant retaliatory expedition into Ohio in the summer of 1780.²³

A problem with the logic behind this short window at the end of June 1780 is its inconsistency with Thickston's daughter's own account that is the basis for the 3 a.m. hour and Tuesday. She very clearly says the event occurred *after* the 1780 expedition. Her interview with John Shane says, "My father was in Logan's campaign. Came to Kentucky in the year 1780. Landed at Louisville in the month of March...

After the campaign under Logan, he went to take some families up to Harrod's old town." She then continues with her graphic description of the Westerfield massacre. Lyman C. Draper made a marginal note that Logan's campaign was "Probably Clark's Campaign, 1780, in which Logan served as a Colonel".²⁴

The bigger problem with any 1780 date for the Westerfield Massacre is the preponderance of contemporary evidence indicating 1781. The most direct such evidence is from the British records of prisoners ransomed from the Indians at Detroit. The two Westerfield girls who ended up being the sole captives to be taken away from the massacre appear together on a "Return of Prisoners sent from Niagara & Arrived at Montreal this day 4 Oct 1782" listing "Names" along with "When and Where Taken". "Deborah Velt" is listed as taken "Apr 1781 Virginia" followed by "Mary Westerfield".²⁵ These are, of course, the cousins Debbie and Polly whose capture was described by both Thickston's daughter and Hiram Stafford.²⁶ Polly is a common nickname for Mary. Kentucky was, of course, part of Virginia at the time.

Ron Belcher's massacre article refers to the British prisoner list (*see next page*) but apparently misinterprets the April 1781 date as being when the girls "were likely taken to Ft. Detroit."²⁷ There can be no doubt, however, that the "When and Where Taken" column of the prisoner list means exactly that. The largest group of prisoners on the list was taken "24 June 1780 Virginia" which is the date Ruddle's Station was captured by the British and Indians.²⁸ Other

prisoners and dates can also be identified, clearly proving these are dates of their capture rather than their arrival at Detroit. For example, two were captured on August 24, 1781 at Lochry's Defeat,²⁹ one on March 10, 1782 when John Fitch was also taken,³⁰ and another June 5, 1782 being the retreat after Crawford's Defeat.³¹

Two other prisoners on the British list provide further evidence that the dates are indeed accurate records of when they were captured by the Indians. Seven names separate the Westerfield girls from Peter and John Demery [Demaree] taken "6 Feby 1782 Ohio Falls."³² When this author first saw the published lists 30-some years ago, the year in this date seemed to be a mistake. These two Demarees are a father and son. Peter Demaree's sister was the mother of Deborah Westerfield, so Peter was her uncle and John Demaree was her first cousin.³³ John Demaree lived long enough to qualify 50 years later for a Revolutionary War pension. His pension affidavit states that he and his father were taken prisoner near Boone's Station while serving as Indian spies out of the Low Dutch Fort "on the 6th day of February 1781."³⁴ This, of course, is one year earlier than the prisoner list date of capture, leading to the possibility that date for the Westerfield girls might also be off a year. However,

Montreal 11th October 1782.²⁸⁹

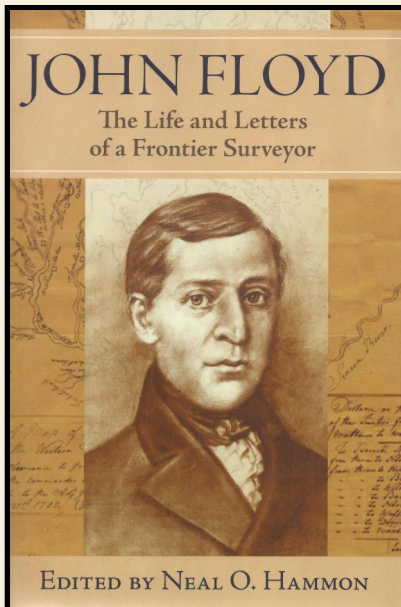
Return of Prisoners sent from Niagara & arrived at Montreal this day

Names	When & Where taken.	Names	When & Where taken.
Dutton Capt.	1782 Fort Vincennes	Ind: Mathias	} July 1782. York.
Isaac Riddell d.		Ind: Mathias	
Hannah Riddell		Ind: Phillips	10. March 1782. Virginia
John Riddell		Eben: Cox	2 July 1782. N. York C.
Elizabeth Riddell		Deborah Velt	April 1781. Virginia
George Riddell		Mary Westerfield	
Dosia Riddell		Sarah Menden	d ^o 1779 . . . d ^o
Sarah Riddell		Mary Neale	Aug 1780 . . . d ^o
Henry Duett		James Dunsouth	24 d ^o 1781 Ohio
Mary Duett		Ben: Hull	21. March 1780 d ^o
Sam ^r Porter		Thos Berry	24 June 1780 Kentucky
Elin: Porter		Wm Marris	24 Aug 1781 Ohio
Marg ^r Porter		Edw ^r Shenlock	2. April 1782 Fort St. Vrain
Hugh Porter	24 June 1780 Virginia	Peter Demery	6 Febry 1782 Ohio Falls
Sam ^r Porter		Ind: Demery	d ^o . . . d ^o
Brain ^r Berry		Sarah Collins	3 June 1782 F. Presky
Sarah Berry		Thos Edgington	1. April 1782 Ohio
Abigail Berry		George Robertson	20 Febry 1782 Kentucky
Lewis Berry		Henry Franks	22. Aug 1781. Ohio
Ind ^r Dougherty		Will ^m Boggs	20 July 1781. d ^o
Elin: Dougherty		Don ^r McKinny	23 Oct. 1780. d ^o Falls
Jeph ^r Dougherty		Adam Garlock	11 July 1782. Mich: River
Captain Gatliff		Peter Gardner	d ^o . . . d ^o
Rice Gatliff		Conrad Truleher	d ^o . . . d ^o
Corn ^r Gatliff		Christ ^r Stancor	
James Gatliff		N.B. Christ ^r Stancor taken prisoner of War, is a Soldier in a German Battalion. & is now given up to Brig ^r Gen ^r deSade	
Eric Arnest		Men	29
Henry Arnest	July 1781 Pennsylvania	Women & Child	28
Mich ^r Arnest		Total	57
John Showier			
Sarah Simier	16 April 1780 . . . d ^o		
Sarah Simier			

General Sir Frederick Haldimand was Governor of Quebec at the time of the Westerfield Massacre. The Haldimand Papers in the British Library, London, include this manuscript prisoner list indicating the massacre occurred in April 1781. Image courtesy of World Microfilms Publications Ltd.

Demaree also states that he and his father escaped in late October and then returned home after 12 months. Thus, unless the October 4, 1782 date of the prisoner list is itself also off a year, the Demaree's capture must have been in 1782 as the list has it.

Further proof of the prisoner list accuracy, at least with regard to the Demarees' capture in 1782, is found in contemporary letters. Historian Neal O. Hammon recently edited and published all the known letters of John Floyd, probably the most prominent citizen of the Beargrass settlements from 1779 until his death at the hands of Indians in 1783. On February 9, 1782, Floyd wrote to General George Rogers Clark, "Yesterday Peter Demiree & his son were (I'm just informed) captured by the Savages near Boons Station where they went to hunt."³⁵ Floyd may have been off a couple days, but John Demaree's memory was off a year when he made his statement 50 years later.³⁶



John Floyd's letters also provide contemporary evidence seemingly specific to the Westerfield Massacre. On April 10, 1781 he wrote to Captains John Overton and Nathan Reid, "The Savages continually infest our land and [have] murdered & taken away forty seven of the [inhabitants] of this County in the course of this Spring."³⁷ On April 16, 1781 he wrote to Virginia Governor Thomas Jefferson thanking him for the commission appointing him as colonel over the Jefferson County Militia. He then wrote these paragraphs explaining the dire situation of the county:

We are all obligated to live in forts in this county and not withstanding all the caution that we use, forty seven of the inhabitants have been killed & taken by the savages, besides a number wounded since Jan[uar]y last. Amongst the last is Major William Lynn.

*Whole families are destroyed, without regard to age or sex. Infants are torn from their mothers arms & their brains dashed out against trees, as they are necessarily removing from one fort to another for safety or convenience. Not one week passes & some weeks scarcely a day without some of our distressed inhabitants feeling the fatal effects of the infernal rage and fury of those execrable Hell hounds.*³⁸

The second paragraph is a striking reference to the same gruesome Westerfield Massacre story related to Lyman Draper more than 80 years later by Hiram Stafford as he had learned it from his mother and other close kin who had survived the massacre.³⁹

In two letters dated April 26, 1781, to Col. William Preston and to Gen. George Rogers Clark, Floyd repeated that 47 inhabitants of Jefferson County had been killed or captured since the first of January.⁴⁰ Taken together, Floyd's letters indicate 47 persons killed or captured between the beginning of 1781 and April 10, 1781 with apparently no more that month up through April 26th. If, as the British prisoner list dates it, the massacre occurred in April 1781, then it must have been before April 10th.

Yet another contemporary source narrows the April date down further. Jefferson County Minute Book A twice records that on April 4, 1781, the administration of the estate of John Westevall/Westovell was granted to Samuel Westevall/Westovelle.⁴¹ On April 18, 1781, Peter Demaria and others appraised "the goods, chattels, & estate of John Westervell lately slain..."⁴² These court references alone do not prove the massacre took place in 1781 versus 1780. The first session of the Jefferson County Court was not until March 1781, which could explain a long delay in opening John Westerfield's estate.⁴³ However, the reference to Westerfield as being "lately slain" makes much

more sense considering the other contemporary evidence indicating the massacre occurred in April 1781.

If the Tuesday 3 a.m. timing according to Thickston's daughter is reliable, then the massacre would have occurred early Tuesday morning, April 3, 1781. As a survivor and a young man, Samuel Westerfield then would logically have been among those who almost immediately headed back to the Beargrass stations to report the dreadful news and gather militia aid to bury the dead and escort the other survivors back to Beargrass. John Westerfield's estate was apparently opened in court on Wednesday as Samuel made that trip.

This brings us full circle back to my head scratching 40 years ago over the 1780 massacre date. That date seemed inconsistent with the basic timeline of the Low Dutch plans for settlement in Kentucky 1779-1781.⁴⁴ Samuel Duree had been sent to Kentucky in the spring of 1779 to scope out a location. He chose a site on Muddy Creek in present-day Madison County. As Ron Belcher's research shows, Duree was joined by young Samuel Westerfield who laid Duree's claim before the Virginia Land Commissioners meeting at Boonesborough,

December 29, 1779. Ron Belcher also documents that Samuel's father, James Westerfield, in 1780 entered a land claim on Silver Creek in present-day Madison County.⁴⁵ The Westerfields thus seem to have been "all in" with the Low Dutch plans to settle in the area. Those plans called for the Conewago group—including the Westerfield families—that came down the Ohio in the spring of 1780 to rent lands on Beargrass Creek east of the Falls (Louisville), raise a crop in 1780 and then in early 1781 join the rest of the Low Dutch who had come over the mountains to the Boonesborough area and together build a fort and homes on the lands in the area Duree had located. Due to dissatisfaction with the land quality, questionable title and some very severe Indian difficulties, by early spring 1781 the Low Dutch abandoned plans to settle in present-day Madison County. By March 1781, the Low Dutch had negotiated another rental agreement with James Harrod and began moving from both Beargrass and the Boonesborough areas to the relatively safer area near Harrod's Station. Here the consolidated group continued their search for a large tract of land for their colony. Considering this timeline, the Westerfields' move from Beargrass in 1780 seemed to be premature. Conversely, their move in April 1781 corresponds neatly to the timeline.

Coming in Part 3: The Location

Researcher Vince Akers analyzes the evidence and makes new conclusions about where the Westerfield Massacre happened.

ENDNOTES

²⁰ Akers, *Low Dutch Company*, footnote 32 and related text. The conclusion was based on the statements of Thickston's daughter and Miss Campbell, Draper 13CC11, 84.

²¹ Belcher, *Bluegrass Roots*, 32.

²² Thickston's daughter, Draper Mss. 13CC12.

²³ Belcher, *Bluegrass Roots*, 31-32.

- ²⁴ Thickston's daughter, Draper Mss. 13CC9, 11. Benjamin Logan's biography gives one of the best published accounts to be found of Clark's 1780 Ohio campaign, Charles Gano Talbert, *Benjamin Logan: Kentucky Frontiersman* (University of Kentucky Press, Lexington: 1962), Chapter 7, "Invasion and Retaliation," 98-114.
- ²⁵ Chris McHenry, compiler, *Rebel Prisoners at Quebec 1778-1783: Being a List of American Prisoners Held by the British during the Revolutionary War* (Lawrenceburg, Indiana: 1981), 54-55. The original list in the Sir Frederick Haldimand Papers, Add. Mss. 21843 (microfilm roll A-765), 289. An image of the original list appears on Page 4.
- ²⁶ Thickston's daughter, Draper Mss. 13CC12; Stafford, Draper Mss. 24C145-145¹.
- ²⁷ Belcher, *Bluegrass Roots*, 34, 37 (footnote 30).
- ²⁸ Maude Ward Lafferty, "Destruction of Ruddle's and Martin's Forts in the Revolutionary War," *The Register of the Kentucky Historical Society*, vol. 54, no. 189 (October 1956), 297-338.
- ²⁹ Chris McHenry, *The Best Men of Westmoreland: An Historical Account of the Lochry Expedition* (Lawrenceburg, Indiana: 1981). Chris McHenry's transcription of the British prisoner lists was a byproduct of her research of Lochry's Defeat ahead of its 200th anniversary.
- ³⁰ Thomas Boyd, *Poor John Fitch, Inventor of the Steamboat* (Books for Libraries Press, Freeport, New York: 1935, reprinted 1971), 70-71.
- ³¹ C.W. Butterfield, *An Historical Account of the Expedition Against Sandusky Under Col. William Crawford in 1782* (Robert Clarke & Co., Cincinnati: 1873), 214.
- ³² McHenry, *Rebel Prisoners*, 54.
- ³³ Voorhis D. Demarest, *The Demarest Family*, 2 vols. (Demarest Family Association, Hackensack, New Jersey: 1964), V-23-25, children of Samuel Demaree (4-84).
- ³⁴ Revolutionary War pension file of John Demaree (W7004), affidavit dated August 9, 1832, Mercer County, Ky.
- ³⁵ Neal O. Hammon, *John Floyd: The life and Letters of a Frontier Surveyor* (Butler Books, Louisville: 2013), 195-6.
- ³⁶ The danger in placing too much reliance for dates on these pension statements made 50 years after the event is seen in John Ryker's (R9129) candid admission, "My recollection of the dates is however very imperfect." Ryker correctly gives 1781 as the year he went with the militia to the Westerfield Massacre but incorrectly gives 1782 as his Long Run Massacre duty, which was September 1781.
- ³⁷ Hammon, *John Floyd*, 162.
- ³⁸ Hammon, *John Floyd*, 166-8.
- ³⁹ Stafford, Draper Mss. 24C145-145¹. Stafford's account of the massacre is given in Part 1 of this series ([Fall 2016 issue, Bluegrass Roots](#)).
- ⁴⁰ Hammon, *John Floyd*, 173, 177.
- ⁴¹ Jefferson County Minute Book A, March 1781 – September 1783, pages 5, 8. The Minute Book was originally transcribed and published in *The Filson Club History Quarterly* in three installments during 1929 (vol. 3, January, April, July, 1929). This transcription with other court records was later republished in *Early Kentucky Settlers: The Records of Jefferson County, Kentucky* (Genealogical Publishing Co., Inc., Baltimore: 1988). An extract of material in Minute Book A is also in Michael L. Cook and Bettie A. Cummings Cook, *Jefferson County Kentucky Records, Volume 1* (Cook Publications, Evansville, Indiana: 1987), 7-29. References here are to the original Minute Book according to the Filson Club transcriptions.
- ⁴² Jefferson County Minute Book A, page 9. The estate inventory is then described and appraised in detail on 111 lines through page 11. Assuming this appraiser is Peter Demaree, brother-in-law of James/Jacobus Westerfield, the entry provides further proof he and his son were captured in February 1782 as the British prisoner list says, rather than 1781 as John Demaree's pension statement says.
- ⁴³ Jefferson County Minute Book A, pages 1-4; Akers, *Low Dutch Company*, footnote 32.
- ⁴⁴ Akers, *Low Dutch Company*, describes in detail the plans for their Kentucky settlement with complete documentation, which is not necessary to repeat here.
- ⁴⁵ Belcher, *Bluegrass Roots*, 25-26.

The Westerfield Massacre

When and Where Was It?

Part 3 of 3: The Location

(See Parts [1](#) and [2](#) in previous issues)

by Vince Akers

The current interest in commemorating the Westerfield Massacre with a historical marker makes determining where it happened as important as when it happened. All accounts agree the Westerfields were headed from the present-day Louisville /Beargrass area to the Harrodsburg/Harrod's Station area.⁴⁶ But the route they took and the location of their massacre is a subject of disagreement.

Ronald Belcher's 2011 *Bluegrass Roots* article concluded, "The massacre most likely occurred where Floyd's Fork joins Broad Run, a location of 'notorious' reputation situated about two miles above the border with Bullitt County and about 12 miles below Low Dutch Station."⁴⁷ This location along with the June 27, 1780 date is now cited on popular Internet sites.⁴⁸ But this location, like the 1780 date, does not stand up to examination.

First, as to the notorious reputation, Belcher cites the early frontier explorer Thomas McCarty as describing the narrow strip of land on the east side of Floyd's Fork from Pope's Lick south to Broad Run as being "notorious" during 1779-1784. Belcher says, "The Westervelt Massacre in 1780 was a factor contributing to that notoriety."⁴⁹ However, the McCarty citation actually refers to Harrod's Trace from Harrodsburg to the Falls. Harrod's Trace crossed Floyd's Fork at the mouth of Pope Lick Run, just

west of the present-day village of Fisherville, and continued west passing through lands owned by McCarty just to the north of present-day Jeffersontown. Both Fisherville and Jeffersontown are six miles north of the mouth of Broad Run where Belcher says the massacre likely occurred. Thomas McCarty was referring to Harrod's Trace as very notorious from 1779 and for the next three of four years.⁵⁰ McCarty makes no mention whatsoever of the Westerfield Massacre or to any massacre nor did his use of "notorious" mean that something horrible like a massacre had occurred in the area.⁵¹

Notoriety was an important legal concept in Kentucky land case law. It did not have the connotation of being something sensational. Notoriety was critical in perfecting a valid land claim. It meant that a subsequent locator seeking unclaimed land could identify what land was already claimed by reviewing the recorded land entry descriptions. Each entry needed to specify where the claim was located by referencing points of notoriety. These were physical features well known in the area and easily located on the ground, such as a mouth or fork of a creek, or a crossing or ford of a buffalo path or early trace, or a salt lick or spring. Someone's primitive improvement or even a tree with certain initials might be referenced. The important point was that the features had *notoriety* – that is, they were known well enough that the claim could be

found by subsequent land locators with minimal inquiry. Of course, it was all a horrible mess! The legal wrangling stunted Kentucky's development for decades as claimants dealt with the awful legacy of Virginia's haphazard method of land location.⁵² It was in this legal sense that McCarty referred to Harrod's Trace as "notorious"; it was easily located at the time, thus making his land claim easily located as well.

Notorious as Harrod's Trace may have been in the legal sense, it was a good six miles away from the mouth of Broad Run on Floyd's Fork – and it was six miles in the wrong direction. If the Westerfields intended to take Harrod's Trace as their route to Harrod's Station, they did not need to go near the mouth of Broad Run. Court records show there was indeed a great buffalo road that crossed Floyd's Fork at its juncture with Broad Run and continued east along Broad Run.⁵³ But that buffalo road was in no way a connector route between the Beargrass stations and Harrod's Trace. One was not needed. On its way to Louisville and the Falls of Ohio, Harrod's Trace passed right through the cluster of Beargrass stations along the highlands between the Middle and South Forks of Beargrass Creek. Its route west from Fisherville and Jeffersontown roughly follows present-day Taylorsville Road (KY 155) to Bardstown Road (US 31/KY 150) and with it northwest into Louisville.⁵⁴ There was no need for the Beargrass residents to dip several miles into the rough terrain of southeastern Jefferson County to get onto Harrod's Trace.

Ron Belcher cites Hiram Stafford's account for two details to support the Broad Run location. These details are that the Westerfield caravan followed Beargrass Creek to the trail that would take them to Harrod's Town and that they had traveled about 12 miles when they set up camp for the night on the waters of Beargrass. Supposedly, this description of the caravan route "matches exactly a poplar and well known buffalo trail, called Harrod's Trace, found on the

1784 Filson Map of Kentucke."⁵⁵ Hiram Stafford gives gruesome and obviously memorable details about the massacre itself, but he is not a particularly good source of any facts with respect to the route. His second-hand account was written more than 80 years after the events, relying on what he heard from his mother who had died more than 50 years before he wrote to Draper. He says the massacre caravan set off from *Louisville* to Harrod's Town almost immediately after landing at the Falls of the Ohio and does not even mention the Low Dutch settling first at the Beargrass Stations. His only mention of Beargrass is to say they camped "on the waters of bargrass about 12 miles out" that first night. He also never mentions Harrod's Trace or what route was taken.⁵⁶

Floyd's Station and the Low Dutch Station were both on the Middle Fork of Beargrass Creek.⁵⁷ Twelve miles in any direction would have taken the caravan miles out of the Beargrass watershed which drains into the Ohio River at Louisville. The mouth of Broad Run is about 10 miles from Floyd's and the Dutch Stations as the crow flies, perhaps 12 on a winding path. But Broad Run empties into Floyd's Fork, a tributary of Salt River and clearly is not on the waters of Beargrass. The point here is that Hiram Stafford's vague account cannot be relied upon to identify the route or to pinpoint the massacre location.

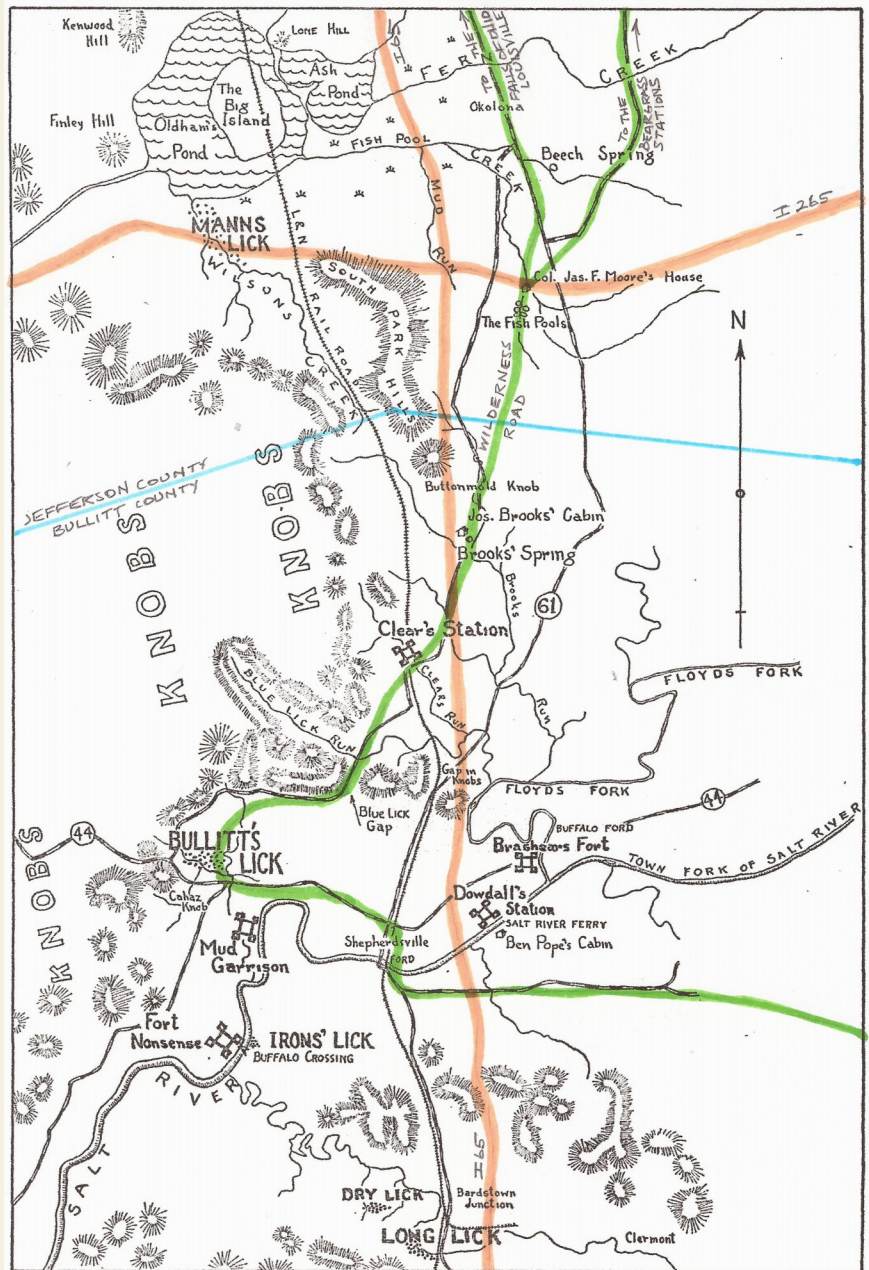
Harrod's Trace was one of two roads from the Falls of the Ohio to the Harrodsburg area in the early 1780s. The other road was the northern extension of the Wilderness Road, which entered Kentucky from the Cumberland Gap. Both routes are shown on an excellent foldout map of Kentucky's Frontier Trails recently published.⁵⁸ There is no need to theorize Harrod's Trace as the Westerfield route based on Stafford's vague description. All three of the other accounts very specifically refer to Bullitt's Lick, which was on the Wilderness Road route, not Harrod's

Trace — and two of those accounts provide us with the general location of the massacre site.

Thickston's daughter says her father ran off in the darkness as the attack on the campsite commenced. He stumbled over a log close enough to see and hear the commotion. "He rose up again, and ran, till he came to Clear Station, near Bullitt's lick guided by the crowing of the roosters... Next day they returned, and dug a great hole, and buried about 20, all together." She says it was only 20 miles from Floyd's Station to Bullitt's Lick and in the direction of Hoagland's Station.⁵⁹

Miss Campbell says, "Westerfelt's family killed, going to Harrodsburgh, near Bullitt's lick."⁶⁰

John Ryker's pension statement says, "In the month of ___ 1781 went with a party of men under Floyd & Whitaker to Bullets Lick to bring back families defeated & massacred by Indians (such as survived) while moving from Bear Grass to Harrodsburgh, massacre at Clear Station. Went 2nd trip to bury the dead, distance not now recollected, suppose it was 15 miles. Time occupied in going both trips was about 3 or 4 days."⁶¹



MAP OF BULLITT'S LICK REGION

This map, originally published with Robert McDowell's article in the April 1956 *Filson Club History Quarterly*, has been modified to add the approximate route of the Wilderness Road (in green) and modern interstates 65 and 265 (in orange). George Clear's Station, center of map, was the refuge point for survivors of the Westerfield Massacre. The Westerfield party likely camped the night of the massacre at one of the two popular camping spots for travelers along the road — Brooks Spring about a mile and a half north or The Fish Pools a bit less than five miles north. McDowell's extensive research on the Wilderness Road is available on the Bullitt County Genealogical Society website along with an excellent interactive Google Map (<http://www.bullittcountyhistory.org/bchistory/wr/wrmap.html>) of the area.

The extension of the Wilderness Road from the Harrodsburg area to the Falls of the Ohio was very purposely run northwest to pass by Bullitt's Lick before then turning north to the Falls. Bullitt's Lick supplied pioneer Kentucky with the salt that was critical to cure and preserve meat. This final segment of the Wilderness Road received little attention from historians until Robert McDowell took it upon himself to resurrect its story. He and his wife spent days in the Bullitt County Circuit Court Clerk's office going through early land suit files case by case searching for interesting depositions and plats. In 1956 McDowell published a thoroughly documented history of salt making in Bullitt County. The work is really an account of all the area salt licks and stations with an emphasis on Bullitt's Lick because it was the largest and most productive.⁶² In the 1960s McDowell published two more articles that are excellent descriptions of exactly where the Wilderness Road originally ran through Jefferson and Bullitt Counties from the Falls to Bullitt's Lick.⁶³ These have all been made available on-line by the Bullitt County Genealogical Society.⁶⁴

The saltworks at Bullitt's Lick were in full operation and production in the spring of 1781 supplying the Virginia troops at the Falls and the influx of Kentucky settlers with that vital necessity. The military commissaries employed hunters that spring to stockpile meat to supply George Rogers Clark's intended campaign to take the British post at Detroit. Bullitt's Lick salt makers were working overtime to supply the salt needed to cure that meat. Indian parties sent down to reconnoiter and harass those operations made the spring of 1781 particularly dangerous. Any activity outside the station forts was dangerous and movement along the roads was very risky. This stretch of the Wilderness Road was a magnet for marauding Indians. The alternative route was no safer. The vast, mostly uninhabited area along Harrod's Trace was equally, if not more, dangerous due to its being

closer to the Ohio River, beyond which was Indian country.⁶⁵

Clearly the three independent Westerfield Massacre accounts referring to Bullitt's Lick prove that the massacre caravan took the Wilderness Road route. Some description of this stretch from the Falls to Bullitt's Lick is useful in determining the massacre location. Fortunately, because of Robert McDowell's research and writings, it is possible to re-trace the Wilderness Road from the Falls to Bullitt's Lick with considerable precision.

The first part of the Wilderness Road south from the Falls the Westerfields would *not* have traveled that first day from Beargrass unless for some reason they first went six miles back to Louisville. From Fort Nelson on the bank of the Ohio, in present-day downtown Louisville at Seventh and Main, the road headed south down 6th, 5th and then 4th Streets, then angling southeast at St. Catherine Street until it ran into the Preston Highway near Barnett Avenue. It then followed the Preston Highway southeast past the Poplar Level, one of those land suit points of notoriety, near the west end of present-day Audubon Country Club. From here, still following the present-day Preston Highway, it descended into what was called the Wetwoods, a great dark swamp south of Louisville, beginning about where Gilmore Lane crosses Preston east of Louisville International Airport. It continued with Preston through the Wetwoods, which were nearly impassable during high water, to Fern Creek, which it forded about where Preston Highway now crosses the Northern Ditch. From here the road got better as the ground lifted up out of the swamp. It went through the modern town of Okolona until, just beyond Southern High School, the road left the modern Preston Highway bearing off to the southwest to the valley of Fishpool Creek, then following it upstream. A little south of where Manslick Road (South Park Road) now crosses the creek, another

road joined the Wilderness Road from the northeast.⁶⁶

It was this other road the Westerfield caravan would have taken. It started back on Beargrass Creek, following a buffalo path that skirted the Wetwoods on higher ground. McDowell says it was used principally by travelers from the Beargrass stations but also by travelers from Louisville when the Wilderness Road through the Wetwoods swamp was impassable. Sullivan's Old Station and Kuykendahl's Mill were on this alternate trail, which also led to Floyd's Station and from there west to the Falls. Present-day Old Shepherdsville Road follows closely a large part of it.⁶⁷

This alternate road is actually the road shown on John Filson's famous 1784 map of Kentucky going from Louisville to Bullets lick, showing it passing Floyd's, Sullivan's and Kirkindol's Mill. The stone springhouse of Floyd's Station still exists, west of Breckenridge Lane tucked away on the northwest corner of the modern Jamestown Apartments complex on Prince William Street. John Floyd formed his station in late 1779, and it became the temporary home to many of the Low Dutch families who arrived at the Falls in the spring of 1780. Floyd's Station was the starting point for the Westerfield caravan. Other Low Dutch families also rented lands in 1780 from John Floyd and built the Low Dutch Station on Beargrass Creek less than three-quarters of a mile due east of Floyd's on the south end of present-day J. Graham Brown Memorial Park immediately north of I64. The exact route of the old trail through this modern congested suburban area is not clear, but Thickston's daughter commented that the direction of travel from Floyd's Station heading for Bullitt's Lick was toward Hoagland's Station. Hoagland's, where still more Low Dutch temporarily settled in 1780, was just less than a half-mile south of Floyd's at the modern Big Spring Country Club. From here

the trail must have headed southwest a couple of miles, perhaps even running along present-day Dutchman's Lane (KY 2048) to Sullivan's Old Station. Sullivan's, which was also constructed in the spring of 1780, was located on the South Fork of Beargrass Creek in the vicinity of present-day Bardstown Road and Goldsmith Lane southeast of the Watterson Expressway (I-264) interchange with Bardstown Road (US31E/150). From Sullivan's the trail must have turned southeast with present-day Bardstown Road to pass near



Floyd's Station Springhouse

The Westerfield caravan left John Floyd's Station on Beargrass Creek early Monday morning of April 2, 1781. The station springhouse remains today tucked away in the northwest corner of the Jamestown Apartments complex. Brothers Lynn and Lee Rogers are in the foreground of the photo. Their ancestor's brother, John Ryker, was part of the militia who went to bury the dead and escort the survivors of the Westerfield Massacre back to Floyd's Station. This photo was taken September 14, 2006 on the 225th anniversary of Floyd's Defeat, where John Ryker's father, Gerardus Ryker, lost his life in yet another of the many Indian incidents involving the Kentucky Low Dutch pioneers.

Kuykendahl's Mill, which was located where present-day Buechel Bank Road crosses the South Fork of Beargrass. Kuykendahl's Station was not formed until 1782 and his mill at the location sometime later, so they would not have been passed by the Westerfield caravan in 1781. From this area the trail headed south and southwest mostly along present-day Old Shepherdsville Road (KY 2052) until it joined with the Wilderness Road from Louisville at Fishpool Creek.⁶⁸

From where the road from Louisville joined the road from Beargrass, the Wilderness Road continued a southerly route up the west branch of Fishpool Creek east of but parallel with Blue Lick Road. Passing Moore's Spring where James Francis Moore settled about 1783, in less than a mile it came to the Fishpools themselves, one of the most famous camping places along the Wilderness Road. These were springs clustered along the creek within a space of an acre. Today a subdivision has been built over the site and most of the fishpools have fallen victim to the subdivider's bulldozers.⁶⁹ Had the Westerfield caravan proceeded a little under eleven miles that first day, they might have camped at the Fishpools. They would have been less than five miles north of Clear's Station, the only inhabited place at the time along that stretch of road between Sullivan's Station and Bullitt's Lick.

From the Fishpools the road headed south crossing the headwaters of Mud Creek and the present-day Jefferson-Bullitt county line. In less than a mile from the county line, heading into the Brooks Run watershed, the old road merged with present-day Blue Lick Road where it crosses a small branch of Brooks Run east of Buttonmold Knob. Walker Daniel, attorney general of the Kentucky District of Virginia and founder of Danville, was ambushed and killed by Indians at this spot in August 1784.⁷⁰

About a mile further south after merging with

Blue Lick Road was Phillips' or Stewart's Spring, as it was alternatively called in April 1781, a famous camping place on the road, according to historian McDowell. Joseph Brooks bought a land entry at Phillips' Spring in 1784 where he built a cabin and moved his family. The spring took his name becoming Brooks Spring as it is known today.⁷¹ This popular camping spot for travelers between the Falls of Ohio and Harrodsburg is the likely campsite for the Westerfields and location of the massacre. It is a little less than 14 miles from their start and less than a mile and a half from Clear's Station.

Halfway between Brooks Spring and Clear's Station, where the road crossed another small branch of Brooks Run, yet another famous pioneer tragedy occurred. On April 8, 1783, Col. John Floyd, county lieutenant of Jefferson County, and his fellow travelers to Bullitt's Lick were ambushed by Indians. One man was killed outright, and Colonel Floyd was mortally wounded. Floyd was carried back up the trace to a cabin near the Fishpools, where he died two days later.⁷² Thus the benefactor of the Low Dutch after their arrival at the Falls in 1780 was killed almost exactly two years after the Westerfield Massacre and in the same vicinity.

Floyd was ambushed less than a mile from Clear's Station. Just south of the Floyd ambush site the, old road cut corners off the modern route of Blue Lick Road, veering more directly to the southwest. It ran fairly straight past Clear's Station on the east bank of Clear Run and on to the Blue Lick Gap in the knobs. The Blue Lick Gap was about two miles southwest from Clear's Station. This high narrow pass between Phelps Knob and Coleman Knob was particularly dangerous. After passing through the gap, the road turned almost due west and followed the base of the knobs another three miles to Bullitt's Lick.⁷³ In all, it was about 20 miles from Floyd's Station on Beargrass to Bullitt's Lick, just as Thickston's daughter recalled.

It was also about 15 miles from Floyd's to Clear's Station, just as John Ryker supposed it was. Ryker's mother was a Demaree, and one of her sisters married Jacobus/James Westerfield.⁷⁴ Ryker was thus closely related to the massacre victims. He was only 17 years old in 1781 but had already seen considerable service. He was one of the Beargrass militiamen sent to bring back the survivors, bury the dead, and salvage their possessions. He said the massacre was *at* Clear's Station.⁷⁵ Certainly he was at Clear's Station. It was the point of refuge for survivors and thus the rallying point for the rescuers. Thickston's daughter indicates her father fled *to* Clear's Station.⁷⁶ It was also likely the fort that Hiram Stafford's mother, Leah Westerfield, escaped to but had difficulty getting into because of the alarm.⁷⁷ The alarm was likely set by Thickston's arrival. The caravan members certainly would have known of Clear's Station since it was the only inhabited station on their route between Sullivan's Station and Bullitt's Lick and, at 15 miles, it was nearly a day's journey away from their starting point at Floyd's Station. It logically was their intended destination for that first day, but they apparently did not make it that far the first day. They likely stopped for the day at one of the two popular camping spots north of Clear's Station along the Wilderness Road – either the Fishpools at about 11 miles or Brooks Spring at about 14 miles. Even so, they would have been well aware that Clear's Station was not far ahead down the road.

There is a rather garbled Westerfield family tradition that suggests the caravan might have reached Clear's Station that first day and camped nearby or pushed on beyond it. According to this tradition, they came down the Ohio to Louisville where they remained several days to allow their cattle to feed on the bear grass. They then hitched up their vans, loaded their goods and removed to

"Bullett's (Riddles) Station" where there was a small stockade or fort crowded with immigrants. It was such a very muddy and uncomfortable place, they preferred remaining outside, and 20 camped on a small stream nearby. The next morning before daylight, they were attacked by Indians who were driven off, but not until Jacob[us] (James) Westervelt, Sr., with several others, was killed. He was shot while in the act of firing a large double gun, one lock of which was carried away by the bullet which also penetrated his brain.⁷⁸

The tradition is full of many obvious errors, but it also has elements of truth. Clear's Station could easily be the "small stockade or fort" they found so uncomfortable they preferred camping outside. But they could not have been camped immediately outside the station or even within earshot since the attack was apparently not heard from the station. They also would not have pushed on through the dangerous Blue Lick Gap that first day, and certainly they did not get to Bullitt's Lick (or to Ruddles Station on the Licking River!). But they could have pushed on and camped beyond earshot somewhere in the two miles between the station and the gap.

The massacre took place along the Wilderness Road somewhere in the vicinity of Clear's Station. Since it plays such a crucial role in the Westerfield Massacre, it is useful to review what is known about Clear's Station. Historian Robert McDowell was dissatisfied with the amount of information he was able to find about Clear's Station, or Clear's Cabins, as it was sometimes called. He found it was built by George Clear well before 1783 and perhaps as early as 1780. George Clear's title was disputed by other claims that were judged better in court. Clear kept only 258 acres out of his original 1,400-acre settlement and pre-emption.⁷⁹

McDowell said his locating and checking the site of Clear's Station became rather involved, using depositions, surveys and plats from seven different land suits.⁸⁰ He determined Clear's Station was on the east bank of Clear Run, a short distance above where the old Wilderness Road crosses the run. It was in the neighborhood of present-day (1956) Huber's Station on the L. & N. Railroad.⁸¹ There is no sign today of Huber's Station, but it is still marked on current road maps. It was about midway along the three-quarter-mile section of the Blue Lick Road where it runs along the west side of the L&N tracks as part of Coral Ridge Road (KY 1020) which continues along the tracks for miles. Clear's Station was north of the north end of that section. Just before the Blue Lick Road crosses the L&N tracks and tees into Coral Ridge from the east, it first crosses Clear Run. North of this crossing on the east bank of the Clear Run is where McDowell determined Clear's Station was located.⁸²

Assuming McDowell is correct on the location, the only remaining question is just how far up the east side Clear Run the station was located. The Wilderness Road apparently ran in a fairly straight southwest direction through this area cutting the corners off today's Blue Lick Road. There is only so far up Clear Run the station could have been located since 751-foot Wagonbed Knob rises about three-quarters mile northwest of McDowell's location. Clear Run heads up in the narrow valley west of this knob, then flows southeast along the southern base of the knob and into level lands where it crosses the old Wilderness Road and today's L&N tracks and Blue Lick Road.⁸³ McDowell's 1967 article indicates, "A white frame farmhouse marks the site today."⁸⁴ This would seem to indicate a homeowner was able to advise McDowell that his farmhouse was the spot. If the farmhouse still remains 50 years later, its present owner may also know its history.

McDowell's 1956 article refers to testimony that the Wilderness Road "ran a few hundred yards east of Clear's Cabins nestled at the foot of the Lost Knob."⁸⁵ But the Lost Knob is on the *wrong side* of the road, about three-quarters mile southeast of the road's crossing of Clear Run.⁸⁶ McDowell clearly found more compelling testimony for the location he determined further up Clear Run. If the station was nestled at the foot of any knob, it would more likely be the 751-foot Wagonbed Knob that rises just north of Clear's Run and west of the road.

A Closing Note from the Author

Ronald Belcher is to be commended for his research and writings on the Westerfield family. His articles have created a real buzz and excitement among the Dutch Cousins to commemorate this massacre, which is such an important part of the Low Dutch Kentucky history. He concluded his massacre article by encouraging readers to independently research the massacre event before relying on his conclusions. While I have drawn different conclusions, I too would encourage more research. Fertile ground for further investigation might be the land suits of the early 19th century. It has been more than 60 years since Robert McDowell and his wife spent some long days in the Bullitt County Clerk's office going through court case files searching for interesting depositions and survey plats. Maybe it's time again to cull through that treasure trove of pioneer history. Maybe the precise location Clear's Station in relation to its nearby knob may be found or, perhaps, if we could be so lucky, even a direct mention of the Westerfield Massacre may be found!

Endnotes for this article are on the next two pages

The Westerfield Massacre – Part 3 of 3

Endnotes

- ⁴⁶ Stafford says they were moving from Louisville to Harrod's Station, Draper Mss. 24C145, 1481; Thickston's daughter says they were moving from Floyd's Station up to Harrod's Old Town, Draper Mss. 13CC11; Miss Campbell says they were going to Harrodsburgh, Draper Mss. 13CC84; and John Ryker says they were moving from Bear Grass to Harrodsburg, pension file R9129.
- ⁴⁷ Belcher, *Bluegrass Roots*, 31.
- ⁴⁸ Both wikipedia.org and findagrave.com give the date and location under their Westervelt Massacre description (Wikipedia) or memorial (Find A Grave), both accessed April 10, 2017.
- ⁴⁹ Belcher, *Bluegrass Roots*, 30.
- ⁵⁰ Robert C. Jobson, *A History of Early Jeffersontown And Southeastern Jefferson County, Kentucky* (Gateway Press, Baltimore: 1977), 6. Belcher, *Bluegrass Roots*, 37 (footnote 9) cites this as his source.
- ⁵¹ Jobson, *A History of Early Jeffersontown*, 8 (footnote 3) refers to McCarty's deposition of April 10, 1807 in Jefferson County Court Order Book No. 4, 132. Order Book 4 has been transcribed and published in Michael L. Cook and Bettie A. Cummings Cook, *Jefferson County Kentucky Records, Volume 2* (Cook Publications, Evansville, Indiana: 1987) where the referenced Thomas McCarty deposition appears on pages 51-52.
- ⁵² James Hughes, *A Report of the Causes Determined by the Late Supreme Court for the District of Kentucky and by the Court of Appeals, In Which Titles to Land were in Dispute*, second edition (Robert Clarke & Co., Cincinnati: 1869), 454; Humphrey Marshall, *The History of Kentucky* (Henry Gore, Frankfort: 1812), 173-180.
- ⁵³ Jobson, *A History of Early Jeffersontown*, 7, 8 (footnote 4). Jobson's reference is to Jefferson County Order Book 4, page 84. McCarty's and other depositions giving interesting testimony and plats showing the area may be found in Cook, *Jefferson County Kentucky Records, Volume 2*, pages 37-41.
- ⁵⁴ Jobson, *A History of Early Jeffersontown*, 6. The route is shown in the main map and Inset A of the recently published frontier roads atlas (see footnote 58).
- ⁵⁵ Belcher, *Bluegrass Roots*, 30. The northern road from Beargrass to Harrod's Town on Filson's 1784 map is not named, but seems to be the road to Boone's Station (Painted Stone) and on to Leestown (Frankfort) connecting to the eastern end of Harrod's Trace. Filson's very interesting map is understandably full of gross geographical distortions.
- ⁵⁶ Stafford, Draper Mss. 24C145. In his letter dated May 16, 1865, Stafford says his mother died in 1813, Draper Mss. 24C148.
- ⁵⁷ Neal O. Hammon, "Early Louisville and the Beargrass Stations," *The Filson Club History Quarterly* (vol. 52, no. 2, April 1978), 155-7.
- ⁵⁸ Karl Raitz, Nancy O'Malley and others, *Kentucky's Frontier Trails: Warrior's Path, Boone's Trace, and Wilderness Road* (Karl Raitz, Department of Geography, University of Kentucky: 2008). Boone's Wagon Road to his station is also shown on this map. An interactive version of this map can be found at <http://www.kygeonet.ky.gov/storymaps/kyfrontiertrails/>
- ⁵⁹ Thickston's daughter, Draper Mss. 13CC11-13.
- ⁶⁰ Miss Campbell, Draper Mss. 13CC84.
- ⁶¹ John Ryker pension statement, R9129.
- ⁶² Robert E. McDowell, "Bullitt's Lick, the Related Saltworks and Settlements," *The Filson Club History Quarterly* (vol. 30, no. 3, July 1956), 241-269.
- ⁶³ Robert E. McDowell, "The Wilderness Road's Louisville End," *The Courier-Journal Magazine*, March 6, 1962; and Robert E. McDowell, "The Wilderness Road In Jefferson County," *Louisville Magazine*, June 20, 1967.
- ⁶⁴ All three of the McDowell articles cited above can be located at the website of the Bullitt County History Museum, a service of the Bullitt County Genealogical Society, <http://www.bullittcountyhistory.org>. References here to McDowell's 1956 article are to page numbers in the original print version. References to his 1967 article are to the on-line version.
- ⁶⁵ Vince Akers, *The American Revolution in Kentucky 1781* (Manuscript, Columbus, IN: 1982) provides a full account of the dangerous situation in 1781 and the three major defeats that year—Lochry's, Long Run Massacre (Boone's Defeat) and Floyd's Defeat.
- ⁶⁶ McDowell, "The Wilderness Road In Jefferson County," on-line version from points (1) through (9). The Bullitt County History website also has an interactive map at <http://www.bullittcountyhistory.org/bchistory/wr/wrmap.html> showing all the sites along the Wilderness Road as described by McDowell. This interactive map uses Google Maps as the background and can be zoomed in and out to show precisely where the old road ran compared to present-day streets and roads. The map can also be set to show the terrain or switched to satellite view and locations can be clicked to show Google's street views, which can be rotated 360 degrees. Hovering over markers on the map at each site will bring up McDowell's description of that site.

- ⁶⁷ McDowell, "The Wilderness Road In Jefferson County," on-line version point (9). Studying the interactive (Google) map, the Wilderness Road and the road from Beargrass would have joined in the area northwest of the Meijer Store at the northwest corner of the Exit 12 interchange of the Gene Snyder Parkway (I-265) and the Preston Highway.
- ⁶⁸ Hammon, "Early Louisville and the Beargrass Stations," 155-158, gives the locations for Floyd's, Low Dutch, Hoagland's, Sullivan's and Kuykendahl's. See also Akers, *Low Dutch Company*, footnotes 26-31 and related text.
- ⁶⁹ McDowell, "The Wilderness Road In Jefferson County," on-line version from points (9) through (12). The interactive (Google) map has the Fishpools located east of the Blue Licks Elementary School and St. Luke Catholic Church between Normie Lane, McCreane Lane, Kurtz Avenue and Sirate Lane.
- ⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, from points (12) through (14).
- ⁷¹ *Ibid.*, point (15); McDowell, "Bullitt's Lick, the Related Saltworks and Settlements," 253. This spring and camping spot is just south of the medical centers at the southeast corner of the Exit 121 interchange of I-65 and John Harper Highway (KY 1526). The old Blue Lick Road was split by I-65 and just to the east of the old camping spot is now named West Hebron Lane.
- ⁷² *Ibid.*, point (16).
- ⁷³ *Ibid.*, from points (16) through (20).
- ⁷⁴ Akers, *Low Dutch Company*, footnote 70; Demarest, *The Demarest Family*, children of Samuel Demaree (4-84).
- ⁷⁵ John Ryker pension statement, R9129.
- ⁷⁶ Thickston's daughter, Draper Mss. 13CC12.
- ⁷⁷ Stafford, Draper Mss. 24C145.
- ⁷⁸ E.A. Westerfield, "Brief History of the Westerfield Family In America," several similar typescript versions of this manuscript exist. The account here is a combination from versions by Rosa E. Williams (Racine, Wisconsin, n.d.) and Mrs. Migon B. Grismold (Lincoln, Nebraska: 1926). Obviously, the massacre was deeply embedded in the family DNA, but many details were undergoing radical mutation. Compounding the confusion, this author nearly forty years ago misinterpreted this account as part of James Westerfield Jr.'s 1784-86 migration story, Akers, *Low Dutch Company*, footnote 80 and related text.
- ⁷⁹ McDowell, "Bullitt's Lick, the Related Saltworks and Settlements," 249-250.
- ⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 265 (footnote 53).
- ⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 249, 265 (footnote 53). McDowell's 1967 article on the Wilderness Road specified Clear's Station was on the east bank of Clear Run (on-line version, narrative for point 17).
- ⁸² *Ibid.*, 240 (McDowell's 1956 map of the Bullitt's Lick region). This map has been reproduced on page 5 of this article.
- ⁸³ U.S. Geological Survey, Brooks KY 2016 Quadrangle topographical map, 7.5-minute series.
- ⁸⁴ McDowell, "The Wilderness Road In Jefferson County," on-line version point (17).
- ⁸⁵ McDowell, "Bullitt's Lick, the Related Saltworks and Settlements," 250. McDowell repeats the reference to "Lost Knob" in his documentation on page 266 (footnote 59).
- ⁸⁶ USGS Brooks KY Quadrangle topographical map where it is called The Lost Knob. This 500-foot knob rises abruptly above the north bank of Clear Run just west of where it empties into Blue Lick Creek. Interstate 65 now cuts through the eastern base of the knob.

Westervelt Massacre in Kentucky in 1780

By Ronald Clay Belcher

[Please see the Spring 2011 Bluegrass Roots for Mr. Belcher's article "Samuel Westervelt (Westerfield) in the Kentucky Territory in 1779"]

Frontier settler Jacobus Westervelt arrived in Kentucky early in the spring of 1780.¹ By mid-April, Jacobus and his fellow brethren from the Dutch Reformation Congregation settled at Beargrass Creek, where the Louisville suburb of St. Matthews is now located. There they built a settlement at Beargrass Creek called Low Dutch Station. In the summer of 1780, Jacobus Westervelt hired John Thixton to guide the family from Low Dutch Station to Harrod's Town. Thirty settlers joined the Westervelt family, forming a caravan of about forty-one people. At the end of their first day of travel, the travelers set camp for the night a few miles below Low Dutch Station. Twenty men, women and children were killed during the night when Native Indians attacked the sleeping settlers. This tragic event became known as the "Westervelt Massacre".

The historical collection of Lyman Copeland Draper² includes testimonials by H. R. Stafford³, Mrs. Strong⁴ and Mrs. Campbell⁵ accounts of the massacre. John Ryker's testimonials at the Indiana court during 1834 and 1835⁶ are pertinent to the timing for the Westervelt Massacre. Also helpful is a partial history of the Westervelt family in America, maintained by Westerfield descendants⁷.

In his testimonial, Stafford described the route traveled by the Westervelt caravan to a trail that connected Low Dutch Station with Harrod's Town, following Beargrass Creek. Stafford's description matches exactly a popular and well known buffalo trail, called Harrod's Trace, found on the 1784 Filson Map of Kentucke.⁸ Stafford recalled that the Westervelt caravan traveled about 12 miles before setting camp for the night. The juncture of Broad Run and Floyd's Fork is about 12 miles from Low Dutch Station, located at the frontier trail leading to Harrod's Town. Landmarks of Thixton and Thixton Lane are situated in the vicinity of Floyd's Fork and Broad Run. Both landmarks are co-incident to the location and circumstance of the Westervelt massacre. Guide John Thixton escaped the massacre, his probable starting point a community called Thixton today. John Thixton navigated a

wilderness terrain and reached safety at Clear's Station, his likely route a modern county road called Thixton Lane.

A narrow region of land lying east of Floyd's Fork bounded by Broad Run on the south and Pope's Lick on the north was described by early frontier explorer Thomas McCarty as "notorious" during 1779-1784.⁹ The Westervelt Massacre in 1780 was a factor contributing to that notoriety. The frontier region described by McCarty was also the tragic site for Floyd's Defeat and the Long Run Massacre, both in 1781.¹⁰

The Westervelt caravan departed Low Dutch Station and traveled Beargrass Creek to its end. They then followed Chenoweth Run to Floyd's Fork and continued along Floyd's Fork to the mouth of Broad Run. The site guide, John Thixton, chose to set camp for the night in an area that McCarty described as a "great buffalo trace crisscrossed at Broad Run". The vicinity at Floyd's Fork and Broad Run is the likely site for the Westervelt massacre when examining details found in the separate escape scenario recalled by Samuel Westervelt¹¹ and John Thixton¹² and the partial accounts of Maria Westervelt¹³.

Samuel Westervelt arrived in Kentucky one year prior to the 1780 arrival of his parents and siblings. Samuel Westervelt entered Kentucky by way of Cumberland Gap and apparently wintered at the vicinity of Ft. Boonesborough and White Oak Station.¹⁴ Following the 1780 Westervelt massacre, Samuel along with his sister, whose given name was not specified, reached safety at Bullitt Lick. Given Samuel's previous experience and knowledge of the frontier, their journey of fifteen miles was readily managed.

The escape scenario for John Thixton noted that he departed from the massacre at 3:00 a.m. Thixton apparently reached safety about four hours later, having run for most of his ten mile journey. Thixton's journey neared its end when the sound of early morning rooster crowing was heard, around 6:00 a.m. Thixton oriented his route and found safety at Clear's Station. Thixton's

rapid pace eliminated any chance of pursuit by the Indians. His early arrival allowed couriers to be dispatched to warn nearby settlements.

Maria Westervelt's account recalled secluding herself and three of her children in a sinkhole. Later that day, Maria left without her children and with some difficulty gained entrance to a fortification, resulting in an alarm being raised. Most likely, Maria found safety at Brashear's Station, a fortification within walking distance, about eight miles, reachable given her delayed start time. Brashear's Station was in distance about four miles from Clear's Station, from which a courier was apparently dispatched following Thixton's news of the massacre.

In the absence of a valid citation for the site of the Westervelt massacre, fact, historical observations, testimonials and landmarks must suffice. The massacre most likely occurred where Floyd's Fork joins Broad Run, a location of 'notorious' reputation situated about two miles above the border with Bullitt County and about 12 miles below Low Dutch Station. Survivors of the massacre reached safety at Clear's Station, Brashear's Station and Bullitt Lick, or Shanklin's Outpost.

About the first of July of 1780, British Colonel Byrd, accompanied by 700 Indian allies, invaded the Kentucky Territory and captured Ruddle's Fort and Martin's Fort. Byrd's exact whereabouts and plans were unknown, heightening concern amongst settlers and causing alarm throughout Kentucky. The magnitude of that event curtailed any semblance of normal life for settlers between July and the month of September. After receiving the news, Colonel George Rogers Clark levied frontier settlers to serve as attachments to his military force. Clark conducted a military campaign on Indian encampments and villages situated in Kentucky and into southern Ohio. Settlers were recruited for military duty. Settlements were left undermanned requiring defenses to be strengthened prior to departure. Frontier militiamen undertook their own preparations for the military campaign. Fearful of Clark's plans, many Native Indians returned to their villages and encampments to protect their own families. About 470 men, women and children were taken captive by the invading force.¹⁵

The Ryker family and the Westervelt family were fellow brethren of the Dutch Reformed Congregation at Low Dutch Station. John Ryker provided court

testimony at the Indiana court later in his life. In 1834 Ryker recalled his 1780 military service against the Indians included the months of July, August and early September. Several Dutch settlers at Low Dutch Station, including men from the Banta family, served with Clark's militia, many of whom served for the three months.¹⁶

Byrd's invasion and Clark's retaliatory campaign, attested by the Ryker testimonial and others at Low Dutch Station, significantly narrows the timing for the Westervelt's intended removal from Low Dutch Station to Harrod's Town. Due to the threat, July, August, and September are effectively eliminated as possible dates for that relocation. Forty-one settlers, most of whom were women and children, were unlikely to undertake the risk of such a move and were further hampered due to men being unavailable. The frontiersmen returning from Clark's campaign in early and late September faced numerous tasks and demands, given their extended absence. Crops, repairs, family needs and winter preparations were of immediate priority. It is extremely unlikely that the Westervelt summer relocation occurred between 1 July 1780 and end of summer.

The Westervelts probably tried to relocate in early summer, according to historical circumstances. Low Dutch Station proved to be at a dangerous locale, encouraging the Westervelts to seek removal. The immediate area east of Low Dutch Station was controlled by hostile bands of Native Indians. On 21 June 1780, the first day of summer, Jacobus Westervelt registered ownership of 400 acres of land along Silver Creek, situated two day's journey beyond Harrod's Town.¹⁷ Jacobus' land registration likely prompted the Westervelt relocation to Harrod's Town. Squire Boone and Colonel John Harrod traveled Harrod's Trace to settlements along Beargrass Creek in the spring of 1780. Boone successfully recruited thirteen families to relocate to Squire Boone Station. Harrod encouraged settlers to relocate to Harrod's Town, where Jacobus Westervelt elected to go. Relocation to Harrod's Town was the first segment of the move. The Westervelts likely planned their second relocation to Silver Creek during the spring of 1781. A removal to Harrod's Town in early summer allowed time to plant crops, and harvest and preserve food for winter. Kentucky experienced a near famine in 1780¹⁸, one so severe that one bushel of corn cost the equivalent of 400 acres of land. This famine is evidenced by the household items¹⁹

listed in the 1781 probate proceedings for massacre victim, Jan Westervelt. The relocation from Low Dutch Station necessitated additional trips, each roundtrip consuming about ten days. An early summer removal allowed the Westervelts to complete additional trips prior to the onset of winter.

James Swan relocated his family to Beargrass Creek on a Sunday evening in preparation for departing with the Westervelt caravan, apparently on Monday morning.²⁰ In Mrs. Strong's testimonial, she recalled the massacre occurred on a Monday, meaning the group was attacked on Monday night. The massacre occurred at 3:00 a.m., pushing the event into early Tuesday morning. In early summer, prior to 1 July 1780, the most likely time for the Westervelt relocation to Harrod's Town, only one suitable Tuesday is found on the calendar from that year, occurring on 27 June. The actual date for the Westervelt massacre is not found in any historical citation. Circumstantial information, combined with known historical facts and testimonials, adds credence for the Westervelt massacre to have occurred at 3:00 a.m. on Tuesday, 27 June 1780.

A likely roster for those traveling with the Westervelt caravan is shown below. Details from the Draper collection state the Westervelt caravan consisted of ten families, interpreted to mean male heads-of-

household. The Westervelt family was joined by thirty additional settlers, increasing the size of the group to about 41 settlers. Eight heads-of-households are authenticated. The two heads-of-household lacking citation may be John Van Leeve and John Dorland, brethren of the Dutch Reformed Congregation at Low Dutch Station. John Van Leeve and John Dorland are believed killed by Indians in 1780. Their wives, Margareta Van Leeve and Catherina Dorland, survived the Indian attack as did Maria Westervelt. Van Leeve and Dorland, similar to the Westervelts, were temporary residents at Low Dutch Station, intending to relocate in 1780 or spring of 1781. The Dorland and Van Leeve families may have planned to remain at Squire Boone Station for the second day of travel. Squire Boone's wife, Jane Van Cleaf, was a cousin of Margareta Van Leeve and Catherina (Van Leeve) Dorland. The widows Van Leeve and Dorland received 400 acre land grants in 1781 pursuant to frontier hardships they endured in 1780. On that same occasion, land grants were also given to massacre survivors Maria Westervelt, Mary McGlaughlin, Barbara (P) lyburn and John Thixton.²¹

The roster below is assembled from my research. Individuals or events without a definitive citation are shown in an *italicized* font.

Reconstructed Roster of the Westervelt Caravan - Summer of 1780

- | | |
|--|---------|
| 1. Jacobus Westervelt, husband/ father ²² | killed |
| a. Maria Westervelt, wife/mother | escaped |
| b. unknown Westervelt, daughter | killed |
| c. Lea Westervelt, daughter | killed |
| d. Samuel Westervelt, adult son | escaped |
| e. Leah Westervelt, daughter | escaped |
| f. Isaac Westervelt, son | escaped |
| g. William Westervelt, son | escaped |
| h. Rebecca Westervelt, daughter | escaped |
| i. Catrina Westervelt, daughter | escaped |
| j. Deborah Westervelt, daughter | captive |
- Notes: Catrina, Rebecca, Deborah and Leah are accounted for after 1780. This identifies Lea Westervelt and a sister of unknown given name as the two Westervelt daughters killed.
- | | |
|---|--------|
| 2. Jan Westervelt, husband/father (cousin of Jacobus) ²³ | killed |
| a. Anaetje Westervelt, wife/mother | killed |
| b. Gerritt Westervelt, son | killed |

Account of the Massacre in the Draper Collection

The following summary of the massacre is derived from details extracted from the Westerfield family account and testimonials found in the Draper Collection:

Around 3:00 a.m. on a Tuesday morning in the summer of 1780, the Westervelt settlers were attacked by Native Indians. Darkness, surprise and strength in numbers favored the attacking foe. Survivors from the attack recounted hearing hacking sounds, chopping, “crackling of skulls, plundering and screaming”, joined by the sound of volleys discharged from muskets. In moments, about half the members of the Westervelt group were slaughtered despite valiant attempts by the men to protect the women and children. Fewer than half of the approximately forty settlers managed to escape.

Jacobus Westervelt, said to weigh 333 pounds, died from a gun shot wound. Apparently, a projectile first struck the flintlock on Westervelt’s rifle, and then the ricochet lodged in his brain. The lead guide, John Thixton, awakened by the noise and commotion, wrestled free his rifle and struck his assailant. Thixton’s blanket was peppered through with shot. Thixton suffered a wound to his neck while escaping into the darkness, after stumbling over an unseen log. A few hours later John Thixton gained safety at Clear’s Station in Bullitt County. Guide William Thixton escaped into the darkness with wounds to the back of his hand. Guide Thomas Pearce also escaped although he suffered a painful wound and was said to “holler most dreadfully when his wounds were dressed”. Six men are believed to have been killed while protecting the women and children.

In the aftermath of the fighting, three Indians donned the oversized great coat belonging to Jacobus Westervelt and danced jubilantly in celebration. The escape scenarios for Samuel Westervelt, Leah Westervelt, Maria Westervelt and three children who accompanied Maria are mentioned above.

Maria Westervelt and Samuel Westervelt returned to the site of the massacre on Wednesday. They dug a large hole and buried 20 companions, the majority of which were family members. A daughter of Jacobus and Maria Westervelt and a daughter of Jan and Anaetje Westervelt were taken captive by the attacking foe.

At first, the youngster Gerritt Westervelt survived the massacre. The horrific tragedy of the massacre witnessed by young Gerritt led the lad to become hysterical, causing the Indians to become distraught. They subsequently killed and scalped the wailing boy in the aftermath of the massacre. Betsy Swan suffered a severe wound to her shoulder during the massacre. Betsy’s wound made her unsuitable for the rigors of travel. Betsy was soon killed and scalped. British authorities paid a bounty of £5 to the Indians for each scalp taken. Each of the twenty settlers killed by the Indians was scalped.

Settlers taken captive by the Indians were either kept at camps or taken to Ft. Detroit where they were frequently sold as slaves or prisoners, a typical sum being £5. Captives were made to carry plundered items to Ft. Detroit for the Indians to sell or trade. Likely, captives Deb and Polly Westervelt were kept at an Indian village in southern Ohio until the spring of 1781. They were likely taken to Ft. Detroit in April 1781.³⁰ At Ft. Detroit, Deb and Polly were sold as slaves to a French house, badly abused.

News of Deb and Polly’s arrival at Ft. Detroit reached Low Dutch Station, likely in the late summer of 1781. Maria Westervelt, a 46 year old widow who survived the Westervelt Massacre, gathered together provisions, a saddle and on horseback sought rescue. From Low Dutch Station, Maria journeyed the buffalo trail, her likely route past the site of the Westervelt Massacre, continued past Squire Boone’s cabin before joining the Alanant-o-wamiowee Trail leading to Licking Creek. Maria Westervelt crossed the Ohio River likely following Byrd’s “War Trail”, covering more than 400 miles of hostile wilderness territory controlled by Indian allies of the British military. Maria arrived as the fall season came to an end and received the unwanted news that Deb and Polly Westervelt had since been transported to Montreal. Harsh weather forced Maria to remain throughout the winter at Ft. Detroit. Maria returned to Kentucky the following spring or summer, the year of 1782. On her return to Low Dutch Station, Maria was pursued by Indians and the horse upon which Maria was mounted

was shot out from underneath her. Collecting her saddle and necessities, Maria fled and outmaneuvered her attackers for a distance of four miles where she reached safety. If not daring enough, Maria mounted a horse stolen from the Indians and made good her getaway. Maria's journey on horseback traversed a rugged and hostile terrain whose distance exceeded 800 miles, her circumstance unknown to family and friends at Low Dutch Station. Although unsuccessful in her rescue of Deb and Polly Westervelt, Maria proved to be a frontier woman of strenuous determination and capable to the extreme. Her actions are legendary by their very nature.

On 4 October 1782, the Indian captors transported Debra and Polly Westervelt to Niagara.³¹ At

war's conclusion, the Legislature of Virginia ransomed freedom for two hundred surviving Kentucky men, women and children held captive at war's end. By the time of the Legislature's final approval in December of 1782, those captives were well on their way homeward. Most likely, Debra and Polly arrived at Low Dutch Station during December of 1782, possibly early spring of 1783. Their homeward route from Niagara to Kentucky is believed to have passed through Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Debra and Polly re-united with surviving family members in Kentucky, having endured the most horrid of experiences.

A timeline for events and people associated with the Westervelt(s) at 1780 follows:

- 1780 – Widow Pyburn/Plyburn returned to Floyd's Station on Beargrass Creek
- 1780 – Widow McGlaughlin returned to Floyd's Station on Beargrass Creek
- 1781 – Maria Westervelt departed for Ft. Detroit
- 1781 – Samuel Westervelt served as executor for the estate of Jan Westervelt
- 1781 – William Brashear, founder of Brashear's Station, was killed in an Indian attack
- 1781 – Squire Boone Station attacked, Squire badly wounded by gunshot
- 1781 – Massacre at Long Run and Floyd's Defeat, slightly north and east of the Westervelt Massacre
- 1781 – Land Grants of 400 acres given to massacre survivors - widows Westervelt, McGlaughlin, Dorland, Van Leeve and Pyburn; also, guide John Thixton
- 1781 – Westervelt caravan's guide, Thomas Pearce, recorded a land survey at Jefferson County Court³²
- 1782 – Maria Westervelt returned from Ft. Detroit
- 1782 – Samuel Westervelt married Catherine Monfort
- 1783 – Leah Westervelt married William Stafford
- 1783 – Col. Floyd who owned the property at Low Dutch Station was killed in an Indian ambush in Bullitt County
- 1783 – James McGlaughlin (Jr.), believed to be a Westervelt Massacre survivor, was badly wounded by Indians while hunting near Floyd's Station
- 1784 – Captive Deb Westervelt married James Baxter
- 1785 – 10th child of Jacobus and Maria Westervelt who was not at the massacre is James Westervelt/Westerfield. James led a wagon train from Berkeley County, Virginia, to the vicinity of Ft. Pitt where he then led a flatboat flotilla to Limestone, Kentucky; the group was attacked at night by Indians near Ruddle's Station³³
- 1786 – Squire and Jane Boone sold 5,945 acres to the Dutch settlers who established Low Dutch Station³⁴
- 1786 – Likely Westervelt massacre survivor and widow, Catherine Dorland, remarried
- 1792 – Westervelt massacre survivor, Isaac Westervelt, married Polly Smock
- 1793 – Westervelt massacre survivor, Catrina Westervelt, married John Brazleton
- 1796 – Westervelt massacre survivor, Rebecca Westervelt, married William Brazleton; Rebecca later in life served as Mother Superior at Shakertown, Kentucky
- 1795-1800 – Maria Westervelt helped found the Old Mud Meeting House near Harrodsburg
- 1807 – Westervelt caravan's guide, John Thixton, died at Bullitt County

Jacobus Westervelt and Maria Demarest are my 5th great grandparents. This Westervelt lineage emigrated in 1662 from Holland and arrived by ship at New Amsterdam, now Long Island and Manhattan, New York.³⁵

Generations of the Westervelt lineage is shown below:

1. Lubbert Westervelt b 1660 in Holland
..... +Hilletje Pouluse
-2. Jan Westervelt b 1686 in NJ
..... +Dirckje Hubbertse Blauvelt
-3. Gerrit Westervelt b 1724 in NJ
..... +Marytje Brouwer
-4. Jan Westervelt b 1744 in NJ
..... + Anaetje Dey
-3. Jacobus Westervelt b 1712 in NJ
..... + Debora Van Schyven
-4. Jacobus Westervelt b 1737 in NJ
..... + Maria Demarest
-5. Jacobus (James) Westervelt b 1755 in NJ
..... + Phoebe Cozine
-6. James Cozine Westerfield b 1783 in VA
..... + Catherine Sotore
-7. David Cozine Westerfield b 1825 in KY
..... + Ann Covert
-8. John Anderson Westerfield b 1866 in KY
..... + Lottie Lear Strevels
-9. Lillie Florence Westerfield b 1911 in KY
..... + Roy Belcher
-10. Cecil Lee Belcher b 1929 in KY
..... + Margaret Lucille Girtley
-11. Ronald Clay Belcher b 1948

Over two and a quarter centuries have passed since the Westervelt Massacre. Important massacre details have not been documented. Likely, the massacre occurred on 27 June 1780 at the juncture of Floyd's Fork and Broad Run and involved about forty one frontier settlers. The Westervelt story, most tragic in circumstance, was not an isolated event for early pioneers in Kentucky.

My birth occurred in 1948 at Campbellsville, KY. I soon moved to Bullitt County and afterward graduated from Murray State University. I first read the Westerfield family account sometime around 1962³⁶. My research into the event of the massacre began seven years ago and included excursions to Bullitt Lick, Clear's Station, Brashear's Station, Chenoweth Run, Low Dutch Station, Broad Run, Floyd's Fork, Brooks' Stations, Shanklin's Outpost, Thixton and Thixton Lane. The reader is encouraged to independently research the massacre event prior to making reliance on my research.

¹ Akers, Vincent. *The Low Dutch Company, a history of the Holland Dutch settlements of the Kentucky frontier*. De Halve Maen, Vol. LV, New York City, Summer 1980. Page 4, 21.

² Draper, Lyman Copeland. 1735. Collection of Lyman Copeland Draper Manuscripts [Microfilm]. Louisville Public Library. Louisville, KY.

³ Draper, Lyman Copeland. 1735. Correspondence from Hiriarn R. Stafford, 1865. Reel 8, Vol. 24, Series CC, Page 145-1, 145-2, 145-3.

⁴ Draper, Lyman Copeland. 1735. Shane–Mrs. Strong Interview. Reel 77, Vol. 13, Series CC, Page 11-12.

⁵ Draper, Lyman Copeland. 1735. Shane–Campbell Interview. Vol. 13, Series CC, Page 84.

- ⁶ Pension Application John Ryker, 1834 and 1835, Jefferson County Court, Indiana. The National Archives and Records Service, Washington, D.C. 1969. Microcopy 8014, Roll 2107. Page 624-630.
- ⁷ Westervelt family account entitled "A Brief History of the Westerfield Family in America". Original author is believed to be E. A. Westerfield. Other versions are credited to Rosa E. Williams, Thomas W. Westerfield, Alvin Westerfield and Bower Westerfield, likely others as well, varies between 3-8 pages.
- ⁸ Filson, John. *Filson's Kentucke [Map]*: Willard Rouse Jillson, Sc. D. Lennox Hills Publication & Distribution Co. New York. 1972.
- ⁹ Jobson, Robert C, Lt. Col. *A History of Early Jeffersontown and Southeastern Jefferson County, Kentucky*. Jobson, Robert C., Lt. Col. Gateway Press, Inc. Baltimore. 1977. Page 5-7.
- ¹⁰ Yater, George H. *Two Hundred Years at the Falls of the Ohio: A History of Louisville and Jefferson County*. The Heritage Corporation of Louisville and Jefferson County, 1979. Page 23.
- ¹¹ Draper, Lyman Copeland. Shane–Campbell Interview.
- ¹² Draper, Lyman Copeland. Shane–Mrs. Strong Interview.
- ¹³ Draper, Lyman Copeland. Correspondence from Hiriam R. Stafford.
- ¹⁴ Belcher, Ronald Clay. Samuel Westervelt (Westerfield) at Kentucky Territory in 1779. *Bluegrass Roots*. Kentucky Genealogical Society. Vol. 38, No. 1, Spring 2011, Page 25-28.
- ¹⁵ Coleman, J. Winston. *The British Invasion of Kentucky*. Lexington, KY: Winburn Press. 1951.
- ¹⁶ Akers, Vincent. *The Low Dutch Company, a history of the Holland Dutch settlements of the Kentucky frontier*. De Halve Maen. Vol. LV. No. 3. Fall 1980. Page 12.
- ¹⁷ Lincoln County Court Records, Book 1, page 75, Entry 726, Virginia Treasury Warrant, James Westervelt, Silver Creek Watercourse, 21 June 1780. Kentucky.
- ¹⁸ Murray, Joan England. 1985. *The Bantas of Pleasant Hill, Kentucky: their ancestors and descendants*. Palatine, Ill. (1281 N. Linden Ave., Palatine 60067): J.E. Murray. Page 26.
- ¹⁹ *Early Kentucky Settlers—The Records of Jefferson County, Kentucky*. From the Filson Club History Quarterly. Genealogical Publishing Co., Inc. Baltimore, 1988. Page 13-16.
- ²⁰ Draper, Lyman Copeland. 1735. Neil Interview. Page 26.
- ²¹ *Early Kentucky Settlers—The Records of Jefferson County, Kentucky*. Page 19-21.
- ²² Draper, Lyman Copeland. Shane–Strong Interview.
- ²³ Draper, Lyman Copeland. Shane–Strong Interview.
- ²⁴ Draper, Lyman Copeland. Shane–Strong Interview.
- ²⁵ Draper, Lyman Copeland. Shane–Strong Interview.
- ²⁶ Draper, Lyman Copeland. Shane–Strong Interview.
- ²⁷ Draper, Lyman Copeland. Shane–Strong Interview.
- ²⁸ Draper, Lyman Copeland. Shane–Strong Interview.
- ²⁹ Draper, Lyman Copeland. Shane–Strong Interview.
- ³⁰ McHenry, Chris. 1981. Rebel Prisoners at Quebec, 1778-1783 being a list of American prisoners held by the British during the Revolutionary War. The Haldeman Papers. [Lawrenceburg, Ind.]: C. McHenry.
- ³¹ McHenry. Rebel prisoners at Quebec, 1778-1783.
- ³² *Early Kentucky Settlers—The Records of Jefferson County, Kentucky*. Page 10.
- ³³ Westervelt family account entitled "A Brief History of the Westerfield Family in America". Page 2
- ³⁴ Murray. *The Bantas of Pleasant Hill*. Page 34.
- ³⁵ Westervelt, Walter Tallman, and Wharton Dickinson. 1905. *Genealogy of the Westervelt family*. New York: Press of T.A. Wright. Page 1-2, 24-25, 33, 51.
- ³⁶ Westervelt family account entitled "A Brief History of the Westerfield Family in America". Page 1-8.

CLEAR'S STATION AS A CANDIDATE SITE

by Mr Lynn Rogers
2019 Jan 24

Thanks to Eddie Cozine for connections to Bullitt County History and thanks to Vince Akers for several helpful suggestions.

SUMMARY:

Herein it is claimed that Clear's Station is a very strong candidate as the Westerfield Massacre Site, the three possible locations for Clear's Station are described, and then it is speculated (unproven) that the Westerfield Massacre and Burial Site is along Clear's Run near the intersection of Filly Drive and Colt Lane in Shepherdsville Kentucky. The above Akers and Belcher articles cite the presently known evidence about the Westerfield Massacre.

BACKGROUND:

In the 1781 time frame the Indians were a deadly 24/7/365 threat to the Pioneers, over the entire Kentucky frontier and during the entire year.

Once one is informed about the context of the Westerfield Massacre, one realizes that the caravan was an act of utter desperation in the face of incredible odds. Simply put, the hostilities between the Kentucky Pioneers and the Indians under British sponsorship was kill or be killed. Atrocities were being committed by both sides. Ambush was an unrelenting 24/7/365 threat to our ancestors. They were trapped inside the forts. Over the winter, they determined that they had to take action, especially about food. The Indian presence was less in the Ft Harrod area than it was in the Beargrass, so, relocate there as a practical matter.

The caravan of about 40 people, including children, together with packhorses, and probably other livestock, could not be hidden. The caravan knew that the Indians were shadowing them, and the Indians knew that the caravan knew. The caravan was following the Wilderness Road and would have to camp for the night after each days travel. The usual camping spots were well known to both Pioneers and Indians. Before the caravan started, there would have been months of discussion with Col John Floyd and all of the militia to develop a plan on how best to minimize the chance of Indian ambush. A moonless night probably was a major factor in selecting the departure date. They would have felt pressure to start the farming season and not wait another month. Full moons occurred on Saturday March 10, and on Sunday April 8, 1781, so April 3, 1781 would have been moonless.

Did the caravan watch their back trail? Did they post sentries? Did they have watch dogs?

MCDOWELL/AKERS MAP ANNOTATED:

The map is included to facilitate visualization of distances and other circumstances.

The map is identical to that in Akers Part 3 p 6 with added:

Blue circles to indicate campsites/water/springs.

Red flame to indicate inhabited locations.

Red circle at Blue Lick Gap, a well known ambush spot.

Arrow identifying direction to Sullivan's.

Yellow dot –Shanklin's Improvement- <https://bullittcountyhistory.org/bchistory/shanklin-tract.html>

THE CASE:

“The massacre took place along the Wilderness Road somewhere in the vicinity of Clear's Station.” (Akers pt 3 p 10)

The Westerfield Massacre was a horrific event.

Floyd, head of the militia, and Whittaker, another officer, participated in the rescue/burial party of militia. They would have been familiar with the Wilderness Road from the Falls to Bullitt's Lick, as well as the connecting trail to the Beargrass stations. They would have well acquainted with all the places and their names: Sullivan's, Fish Pools, Phillips'/Stewart's Spring, Clear's Station, Blue Lick Gap, Bullitt's Lick, etc. Afterwards the event would have been discussed at great length within the entire community, including Ryker. Accounts from individuals would have been related and consolidated into a coherent consensus including all details. The name, “Bullitt's Lick,” because it was so well known as it was the major source of salt, appears in multiple accounts. The names, “Clear's Station” and “Hoagland's” were not as well known, and did not appear as much.

Ryker possessed life-long outstanding credentials. He was born in 1764. At age 12 he exchanged rifle fire with the Red Coats in New Jersey. After the WM and in the same year, his father was killed at Floyd's Defeat. Ryker served as a “spy,” ie, a scout who went out in search of indian sign. In 1800 he was commissioned the Colonel of the Corn Stalk Militia. He was the first permanent settler in Jefferson County Indiana in 1805, which was the same year as the Grouseland Treaty. In 1795 the Treaty of Greenville had opened up land to the east. No doubt that he had visited the Territory many times pursuing Indians. His account of the WM was recorded in 1832. The event and many of its details would have been indelibly etched into Ryker's mind, largely because of his participation in rescuing and burying blood kin that he had been living with (Conewago, Berkeley, the flatboat trip, and Kentucky) for years. A paraphrase of the Ryker account is “I, along with others in a party of militia, went to Bullitt's Lick to rescue the survivors, and then went on a second trip to bury the dead at Clear's Station.” All things considered, this evidence is highly credible.

The Westerfield Massacre occurred “at” Clear's Station, a very strong probability, barely short of proven.

Now, to interpret the word “at.” Trees near the stockade would have been removed for construction of the cabin and stockade and providing garden and crop land area. Campers would chose a site with water convenient. It is speculated that “at” meant along good water a rifle shot or so away from the stockade.

COUNTERPOINTS:

The major question: The question arises because there are many examples of rescue attempts performed at great risk. The inhabitants would have known of the caravan arrival and the exact location of the camp. If the Massacre was within a rifle shot or so of the stockade, the inhabitants would certainly have been aware of the ambush in progress (gun shots, blazing fire, screaming, etc), Why did they not render aid?

Viable answer: Initially, they may have thought that it was a thunder storm, delaying any reaction: “.. Thickston thought it was a loud clap of thunder.” (pt 1 p 4) There may have been a shortage of armed, able bodied men in the stockade. With poor visibility it was impossible to distinguish between friend and foe. The caravan and the inhabitants may have agreed that under the circumstances, an ambush was unlikely, and discussed reactions in case there was one, then acknowledged that meaningful timely assistance would be impossible.

Another question: If the WM was at Clear’s Station, why did Thickston need a rooster crow to guide him “to Clear’s Station”?

Viable answer: Thickston was fleeing for his life, running as much as a half a mile, becoming disoriented in mildly rugged, forested terrain. The rooster crow may not have been essential but expeditious, and it is a fascinating detail that demands to be included in the story.

Still another question, very critical: Why the fire? (when Indians were a potential threat, woodsmen would not make a fire, or when necessary, used elaborate techniques to make the fire less detectable.) The fire enabled the Indians to pinpoint the camp, identify which were the men, and develop the surprise attack.

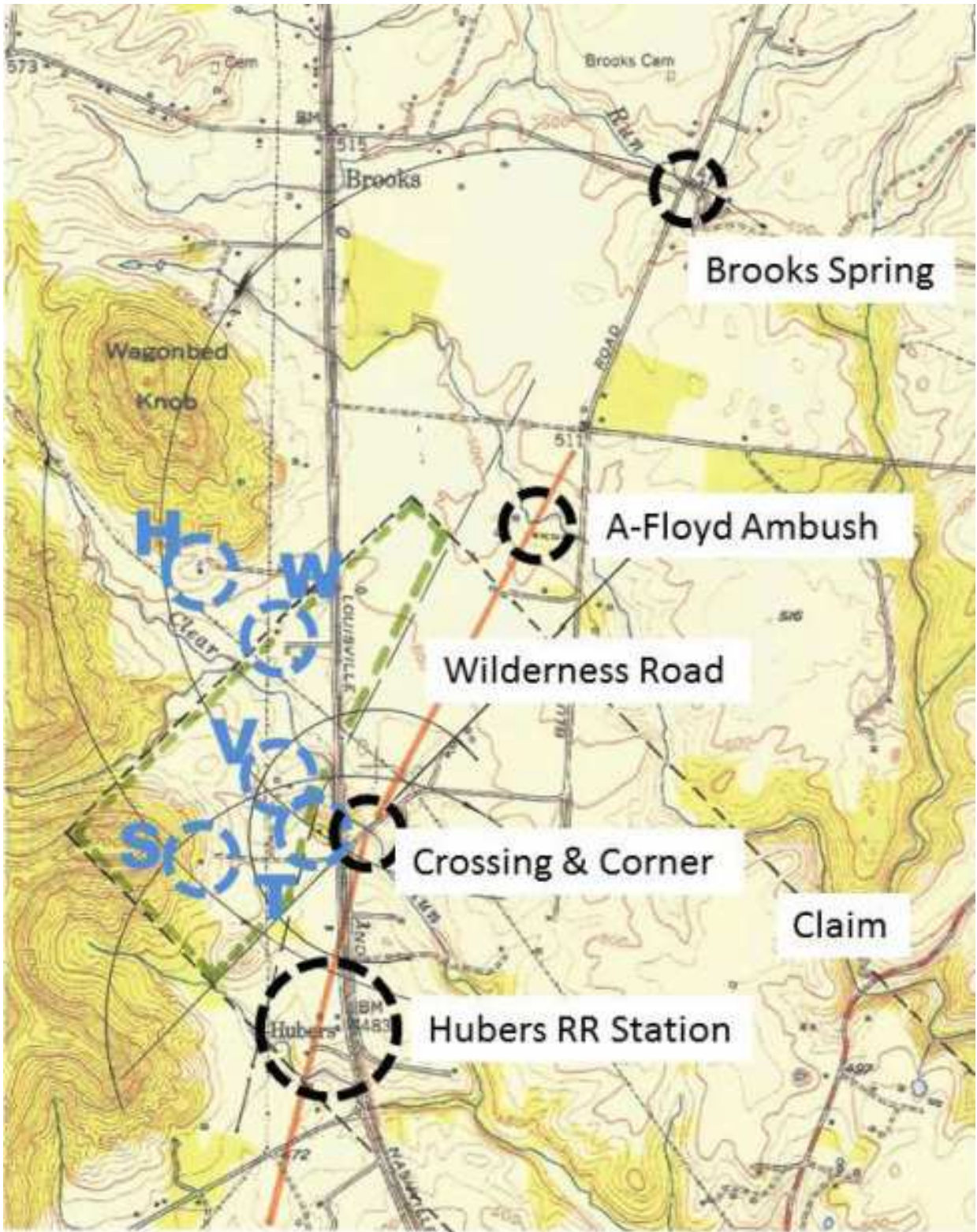
Viable answer: It is surmised that hypothermia was imminent; the caravan was cold, much more probable, both cold and wet, soaked to the skin. It is possible that the need for a fire entered into the plan to camp at Clear’s. Traveling on a rainy day may have been the plan.

And one more question: The big mystery is not that the Indians detected the camping spot, but how the Indians massed at the site in sufficient numbers to ambush a sizeable caravan.

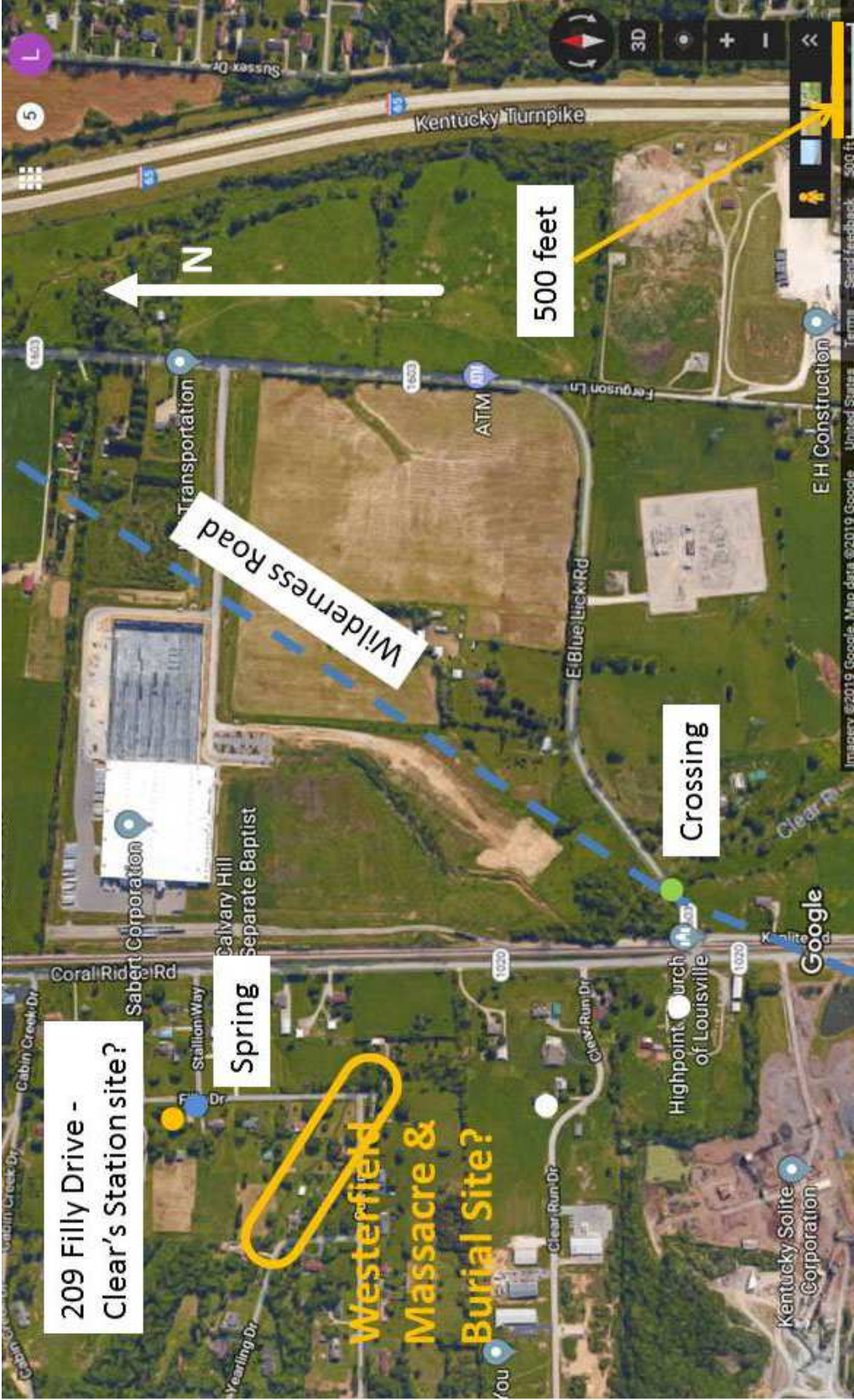
Viable answer: It is possible that an adequate number of Indians were hiding at each of the small number of practical campsites, or, when the caravan passed their particular site, they hurriedly paralleled the trail to the next campsite. The Indians were capable of very clever tactics.

LOCATION CLEAR’S STATION:

So, what was the location of Clear’s Station? The historical topo map shows the region under consideration. The Wilderness Road is the orange line in the topo map. “Claim” is the boundary of George Clear’s land claim. “Crossing & Corner” is the point where the WR crosses the stream Clear’s Run. According to clues from McDowell and other sources (mostly within George Clear’s claim, and a few hundred yards west of the Wilderness Road) the location of Clear’s Station is within the green dashed line on the topo map and where a white frame



farmhouse was in 1967. In the general area, the candidates are the five square black dots, indicating farmhouses, and are labeled H, S, W, V, & T. H is eliminated because it is outside the claim.



209 Filly Drive -
Clear's Station site?

Spring

Westerfield
Massacre &
Burial Site?

Wilderness Road

Crossing

500 feet

N

Highpoint Church
of Louisville

Kentucky Solite
Corporation

Sabert Corporation

Calvary Hill
Separate Baptist

ATM

E H Construction

Kentucky Turnpike

Ferguson Ln

E Blue Tick Rd

Coral Ridge Rd

Stallion Way

Yeasling Dr

Clear Run Dr

Clear Run Dr

L

5

3D

+

-

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Google

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WM researchers met with JM, a gentleman who has lived all of his life in the immediate area, for a tour; his family owned a sizeable farm which encompassed present x-121 of I-65 (indicated by the Brooks Spring circle on the map). During the tour, JM pointed out the locations of the three white frame farmhouses (the only ones existing in 1967). He explicitly stated that he had no memory of a farmhouse at S. The three candidates as the location of Clear's Station are:

W - 209 Filly Drive near Stallion ; approx. lat/long 38.03568 / 85.69465

V - 210 Clear Run Drive ; approx. lat/long 38.04003 / 85.69463

T - 1835 Coral ridge Road, near East Blue Lick Road ; approx. lat/long 38.03414 / 85.69326

The aerial photo zooms in to the area of specific interest. The green dot is where the Wilderness Road crosses the stream Clear's Run. The yellow dot and the two white dots are the locations of the three farmhouses that JM pointed out when touring the area. The blue dot is the spring at the intersection of Filly and Stallion. This spring was visited, but there was no search made for sink holes or other springs.

For what it is worth, the Filly location is east of Clear's Run, the only candidate which is, plus, it has a spring nearby.

Note that all of the candidates are close to the spring, and to the stream Clear's Run. For presently known evidence, the best speculation is that the Westerfield Massacre and Burial Site is along Clear's Run near the intersection of Filly Drive and Colt Lane.

CLOSING REMARKS:

Future research may find more evidence and prove the location of Clear's Station, and also prove the site of the Westerfield Massacre and Burial