



Exceeding life, or true in spirit?

“THE ADVENTURES OF COL. DANIEL BOON” (1784) by John Filson and Daniel Boone.

It is and has been the fad of latter-day scholars and historians to engage in “myth busting” -- while freely using that bombastic phrase to describe what they do. And yet often times such putative debunkers are typically driven by personal or ideological agendas, and are themselves not always consistent in their impartiality or overly concerned with fair and objective truth; not infrequently pummeling a straw man for the benefit of a mostly non-thinking (i.e., “popular”) audience, and or for one that is cynical for cynicism’s sake. No other figures of history are more frequently presented as objects of public attention and interest than pirates, gangsters, and organized crime. But who is “myth busting” or ridiculing them? *That* would be no one. No, the proper objects of myth busting it would seem is or are anyone that has affiliations or associations with morals or higher ideals; such as piety or devotion to country. Rank criminals or eminent nihilists, by contrast, we are lead to believe can be better taken at their word and looked up to. So, at least, appears to be the pattern of frigid, callous, emotionally sterile, and money-and-patron shackled modernism.¹

John Mack Faragher’s *Daniel Boone: The Life and Legend of an American Pioneer* (1992) is otherwise a competently researched and composed biography. Yet on the subject of Filson (c.1747-1788), it suffers from the above dubious merit of trashing truth for the purpose of supposedly better arriving at it.

When an artist, and he a good one, has a subject like Daniel Boone, it is to be hoped and expected, that the resultant portrait will be all the more inspiring to its audience. Do we then fault Copley, Peale, or Stuart if their paintings of individual historical figures are larger than (this) life? “But,” you say, “the portrait could still stand to be more and reasonably life-like also, and it wasn’t life-like to have Boone using flowery language.” Lyman Draper, one of Boone’s most thorough biographers, never, in his lengthy (albeit unfinished) volume, voiced objections to Filson’s account because he tacitly and simply took for granted to be the case what Faragher, after all his obligatory deriding of Filson, culminates in concluding; namely, that the work, while admittedly a collaboration (and not a *strictly* an autobiography), is embellished in literary style -- but an essentially sound as to fact.² Of course, Boone himself would not be expected to drop

¹ “Similar to the reaction against the romantic *a priori Naturphilosophie* of Schelling, Hegel, and their followers, is the view best represented by Ranke, that the function of history and science is to get at the evidence and to describe things as they really happen. Actual history, however, shows that this is an inadequate ideal because it offers no ground for discriminating between important and unimportant facts.” Morris R. Cohen, *A Preface to Logic* (1945), p. 163.

Lucan, for his part, states perhaps more bluntly: “Churlish is he who robs hoary antiquity of fame and demands the truth from poets.” *Pharsalia*, Book IX.

² Faragher: “Filson structured Boone’s narrative to read like an epic,” p. 4; “Other evidence confirms most of the details of Boone’s life in Filson’s text.” p. 7.

references to Persepolis and Palmyra; and yet it is the Persepolis and Palmyra reference that are the most glaring literary offense; and the one invariably first pointed to by Filson's critics. In other presumably Filsonian interpolations, however, where Boone, for instance expresses love of God, country and nature; the words are apparently Filson's, yet who would imagine that Boone would have objected to them, or they did not, at heart and to a significant degree mirror, reflect his own views and feelings? We know in point of fact Boone himself approved of Filson's portrait and presentation. What then more is necessary than to interject the little bit of plain, common sense, and assumed by Draper, in order to make more and properly clear what one is reading? It is not unreasonable to deduce, as Draper did, that Filson's Boone does not materially exceed life, and is plausibly authentic in heart and spirit.

But to bring the matter to nearer inspection, the following is Boone's actual letter to Benjamin Harrison, Governor of Virginia, dated Boone's Station, Fayette Co., of August 30th, 1782, describing the battle at Blue Licks; and which can be compared with the account of the same engagement found in Filson.

"SIR, --

"Present circumstances of affairs cause me to write to your Excellency as follows. On the 16th instant a large number of Indians with some white men attacked one of our frontier stations known by the name of Bryant's Station. The siege continued from about sunrise till about ten o'clock the next day, when they marched off. Notice being given to the neighboring stations, we immediately raised 181 horsemen commanded by Col. John Todd, including some of the Lincoln county militia, commanded by Col. Trigg, and having pursued about forty miles, on the 19th inst. We discovered the enemy lying in wait for us. On this discovery we formed our columns into one single line, and marched up in their front within about forty yards before there was a gun fired. Col. Trigg commanded on the right, myself on the left, Major McGary in the center, and Major Harlan the advance party in the front. From the manner in which we had formed, it fell to my lot to bring on the attack. This was done with a very heavy fire on both sides, and extending back of the line to Col. Trigg, where the enemy was so strong that they rushed up and broke the right wing at the first fire. Thus the enemy got in our rear, and we were compelled to retreat with the loss of seventy-seven of our men and twelve wounded. Afterwards we were reinforced by Col. Logan, which made our force four hundred and sixty men. We marched again to the battle ground, but finding the enemy had gone we proceeded to bury the dead. We found forty-three on the ground, and many lay about which we could not stay to find, hungry and weary as we were, and somewhat dubious that the enemy might not have gone off quite. By the sign we thought the Indians had exceeded four hundred; while the whole of this militia of the county does not amount to more than one hundred and thirty. From these facts your Excellency may form an idea of our situation. I know that your own circumstances are critical, but are we to be wholly forgotten? I hope not. I trust about five hundred men may be sent to our assistance immediately. If these shall be stationed as our county lieutenants shall deem necessary, it may be the means of saving our part of the country; but if they are placed under the direction of Gen. Clark, they will be of little or no service to our settlement. The Falls lie one hundred miles west of us and the Indians northeast; while our men are frequently called to protect them. I have encouraged the people in this country all that I could, but I can no longer justify them or myself to risk our lives here under such extraordinary hazards. The inhabitants of this county are very much alarmed at the thoughts of the Indians bringing another campaign into our country this Fall. If this should be the case, it will break up these settlements. I hope therefore your Excellency will take the matter into your consideration, and send us some relief as quick as possible. These are my sentiments without consulting any person. Col. Logan will I expect, immediately send you an express, by whom I humbly request your Excellency's answer -- in the mean while I remain,

"Subscribed Daniel Boone."

Undeniably there is a difference here from Filson's prose. And yet of more significance we still manage to catch in Filson's version much of Boone's true voice all the same. What then we can say is that which no one denies; that is, "The Adventures of Colonel Boon" is the work of two men, and that would not have been possible without the other.

Hope Hodges informs us further that Boone may have been much better read than we might have surmised,³ and was later in life acquainted with Jonathan Swift's writings. Not all that are good readers are equally good speakers or writers; and perhaps there was more to Boone in his person and conversation than it was possible to set down on paper himself.

If Faragher is to be believed, Filson was fly-by-night mountebank; who wrote his book on Kentucky (to which the Boone narrative is placed in the Appendix) merely out of a desire for lucre and as an investment on Kentucky lands he acquired; with the implication seeming to be that all the high flown sentiments he expresses can only be his ulterior and calculated moon-shine to effect avarice's end. If so, then Filson should be given credit for a consummate performance of feigned enthusiasm. So perfect that even Byron adored it.

We might last mention that the *Heitman Register of Officers of the Continental Army* (1914 edition), on p.226, lists a John Filson from Pennsylvania who was "Ensign of Montgomery's Pennsylvania Battalion of the Flying Camp," and "taken prisoner at Fort Washington, 16th November, 1776."⁴ Is this Filson the same as our author? Only heaven knows.

Here is then the Filson/Boone narrative in its entirety; as it appears in Filson's *The Discovery, Settlement and Present State of Kentucke* (1784)

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The Adventures of Col. DANIEL BOON, containing a  
*Narrative of the Wars of Kentucky.*

CURIOSITY is natural to the soul of man, and interesting objects have a powerful influence on our affections. Let these influencing powers actuate, by the permission or disposal of Providence, from selfish or social views, yet in time the mysterious will of Heaven is unfolded, and we behold our conduct, from whatsoever motives excited, operating to answer the important designs of Heaven. Thus we behold Kentucky, lately an howling wilderness, the habitation of savages and wild beasts, become a fruitful field; this region, so favourably distinguished by nature, now become the habitation of civilization, at a period unparalleled in history, in the midst of a raging war, and under all the disadvantages of emigration to a country so remote from the inhabited parts of the continent. Here, where the hand of violence shed the blood of the innocent; where the horrid yells of savages, and the groans of the distressed, founded in our ears, we now hear the praises and adorations of our Creator; where wretched wigwams stood, the miserable abodes of savages, we behold the foundations of cities laid, that, in all probability, will rival the glory of the greatest upon earth; and we view Kentucky, situated on the fertile banks of the great Ohio, rising from obscurity to shine with splendor, equal to any other of the stars of the American hemisphere.

The settling of this region well deserves a place in history; most of the memorable events I have myself been exercised in: and for the satisfaction of the public, will briefly relate the circumstances of my adventures, and scenes of life, from my first movement to this country until this day.

It was on the first of May, in the year 1769, that I resigned my domestic happiness for a time, and lest my family and peaceable habitation on the Yadkin river, in North Carolina, to wander through the wilderness of America in quest of the country of Kentucky, in company with John Finley, John Stewart, Joseph Holden, James Monay, and William Cool. We proceeded successfully, and after a long and fatiguing journey through a mountainous wilderness, in a westward direction, on the seventh day of June following, we found ourselves on Red river, where John Finley had formerly been trading with the Indians, and, from the top of an eminence, saw with pleasure the beautiful level of Kentucky. Here let me observe, that for some time we had experienced the most uncomfortable weather as a pre[-]libation of our future sufferings. At this place we encamped, and made a shelter to defend us from the inclement season, and

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<sup>3</sup> "Reading Boone's Writing: Issues in Backcountry Literacy" by Hope Hodges, *Journal of Backcountry Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (Autumn/Winter 2011). <http://libjournal.uncg.edu/ojs/index.php/jbc/article/view/376>

<sup>4</sup> Many of which captives ended up in the Sugar House or the *Jersey*.

began to hunt and reconnoitre the country. We found every where abundance of wild beasts of all sorts through this vast forest; the buffaloes were more frequent than I have seen cattle in the settlements, browsing on the leaves of the cane, or cropping the herbage on those extensive plains, fearless, because ignorant of the violence of man. Sometimes we saw hundreds in a drove, and the numbers about the salt springs were amazing. In this forest (the habitation of beasts of every kind natural to America) we practised hunting with great success until the twenty-second day of December following.

This day John Stewart and I had a pleasing ramble, but fortune changed the scene in the close of it. We had passed through a great forest on which stood myriads of trees, some gay with blossoms, others with fruits. Nature was here a series of wonders, and a fund of delight; here she displayed her ingenuity and industry in a variety of flowers and fruits, beautifully coloured, elegantly shaped, and charmingly flavoured; and we were diverted with innumerable animals presenting themselves perpetually to our view. In the decline of the day, near Kentucky river, as we ascended the brow of a small hill, a number of Indians rushed out of a thick cane-brake upon us, and made us prisoners. The time of our sorrow was now arrived, and the scene sully opened; the Indians plundered us of what we had, and kept us in confinement seven days, treating us with common savage usage. During this time we discovered no uneasiness or desire to escape, which made them less suspicious of us; but in the dead of night, as we lay in a thick cane-brake by a large fire, when sleep had locked up their senses, my situation not disposing me for rest, I touched my companion and gently awoke him. We improved this favourable opportunity and departed, leaving them to take their rest, and speedily directed our course towards our old camp, but found it plundered, and the company dispersed and gone home. About this time my brother, 'Squire Boon, with another adventurer, who came to explore the country shortly after us, was wandering through the forest, determined to find me, if possible, and accidentally found our camp. Notwithstanding the unfortunate circumstances of our company, and our dangerous situation, as surrounded with hostile savages, our meeting so fortunately in the wilderness made us reciprocally sensible of the utmost satisfaction. So much does friendship triumph over misfortune, that sorrows and sufferings vanish at the meeting not only of real friends, but of the most distant acquaintances, and substitute happiness in their room.

Soon after this, my companion in captivity, John Stewart, was killed by the savages, and the man that came with my brother returned home by himself. We were then in a dangerous, helpless situation, exposed daily to perils and death amongst savages and wild beasts, not a white man in the country but ourselves.

Thus situated, many hundred miles from our families in the howling wilderness, I believe few would have equally enjoyed the happiness we experienced. I often observed to my brother, "You see now how little nature requires to be satisfied. Felicity, the companion of content, is rather found in our own breasts than in the enjoyment of external things: and I firmly believe it requires but a little philosophy to make a man happy in whatsoever state he is. This consists in a full resignation to the will of Providence; and a resigned soul finds pleasure in a path strewn with briars and thorns."

We continued not in a state of indolence, but hunted every day, and prepared a little cottage to shelter us from the winter storms. We remained there undisturbed during the winter; and on the first day of May, 1770, my brother returned home to the settlement by himself, for a new recruit of horses and ammunition, leaving me by myself, without bread, salt, or sugar, without company of my fellow creatures, or even a horse or dog. I confess I never before was under greater necessity of exercising philosophy and fortitude. A few days I passed uncomfortably. The idea of a beloved wife and family, and their anxiety upon the account of my absence and exposed situation, made sensible impressions on my heart. A thousand dreadful apprehensions presented themselves to my view, and had undoubtedly exposed me to melancholy, if further indulged.

One day I undertook a tour through the country, and the diversity and beauties of nature I met with in this charming season, expelled every gloomy and vexatious thought. Just at the close of day the gentle gales retired, and left the place to the disposal of a profound calm. Not a breeze shook the most tremulous leaf. I had gained the summit of a commanding ridge, and, looking round with astonishing delight, beheld the ample plains, the beautiful tracts below. On the other hand, I surveyed the famous river Ohio that rolled in silent dignity, marking the western boundary of Kentucky with inconceivable grandeur. At a vast

distance I beheld the mountains lift their venerable brows, and penetrate the clouds. All things were still. I kindled a fire near a fountain of sweet water, and feasted on the loin of a buck, which a few hours before I had killed. The sullen shades of night soon overspread the whole hemisphere, and the earth seemed to gasp aster the hovering moisture. My roving excursions this day had fatigued my body, and diverted my imagination. I laid me down to steep, and I awoke not until the sun had chased away the night. I continued this tour, and in a few days explored a considerable part of the country, each day equally pleased as the first. I returned again to my old camp, which was not disturbed in my absence. I did not confine my lodging to it, but often reposed in thick cane-brakes, to avoid the savages, who, I believe, often visited my camp, but, fortunately for me, in my absence. In this situation I was constantly exposed to-danger and death. How unhappy such a situation for a man tormented with sear, which is vain if no danger comes, and if it does, only augments the pain. It was my happiness to be destitute of this afflicting passion, with which I had the greatest reason to be affected. The prowling wolves diverted my nocturnal hours with perpetual howlings; and the various species of animals in this vast forest, in the day time, were continually in my view.

Thus I was surrounded with plenty in the midst of want. I was happy in the midst of dangers and inconveniencies. In such a diversity it was impossible I should be disposed to melancholy. No populous city, with all the varieties of commerce and stately structures, could afford so much pleasure to my mind, as the beauties of nature I found here.

Thus, through an uninterrupted scene of sylvan pleasures, I spent the time until the 27th day of July following, when my brother, to my great felicity, met me, according to appointment, at our old camp; shortly after, we left this place, not thinking it safe to stay there longer, and proceeded to Cumberland river, reconnoit[er]ing that part of the country until March, 1771, and giving names to the different waters.

Soon after, I returned home to my family with a determination to bring them as soon as possible to live in Kentucky, which I esteemed a second paradise, at the risk of my life and fortune.

I returned safe to my old habitation, and found my family in happy circumstances. I fold my farm on the Yadkin, and what goods we could not carry with us: and on the twenty-fifth day of September, 1773, bade a farewell to our friends, and proceeded on our journey to Kentucky, in company with five families more, and forty men that joined us in Powel's valley, which is one hundred and fifty miles from the now settled parts of Kentucky. This promising beginning was soon overcast with a cloud of adversity; for upon the tenth day of October, the rear of our company was attacked by a number of Indians, who killed six and wounded one man; of these my eldest son was one that fell in the action. Though we defended ourselves, and repulsed the enemy, yet this unhappy affair scattered our cattle, brought us into extreme difficulty, and so discouraged the whole company, that we retreated forty miles, to the settlement on Clench river. We had passed over two mountains, viz. Powel's and Walden's, and were approaching Cumberland mountain when this adverse fortune overtook us. These mountains are in the wilderness, as we pass from the old settlements in Virginia to Kentucky, are ranged in a southwest and north-east direction, are of great length and breadth, and not far distant from each other. Over these, nature hath formed passes, that are less difficult than might be expected from a view of such huge piles. The aspect of these cliffs is so wild and horrid, that it is impossible to behold them without terror. The spectator is apt to imagine that nature had formerly suffered some violent convulsion; and that these are the dismembered remains of the dreadful shock; the ruins, not of Persepolis or Palmyra, but of the world!

I remained with my family on Clench until the sixth of June, 1774, when I and one Michael Stoner were solicited by Governor Dunmore, of Virginia, to go to the Falls of the Ohio, to conduct into the settlement a number of surveyors that had been sent thither by him some months before; this country having about this time drawn the attention of many adventurers. We immediately complied with the governor's request, and conducted in the surveyors, completeing a tour of eight hundred miles, through many difficulties, in sixty-two days.

Soon after I returned home, I was ordered to take the command of three garrisons during the campaign, which Governor Dunmore carried on against the Shawanese Indians: after the conclusion of which, the militia was discharged from each garrison, and I being relieved from my post, was solicited by a number of North Carolina gentlemen, that were about purchasing the lands lying on the south side of

Kentucky river from the Cherokee Indians, to attend their treaty at Watag[u]a, in March, 1775, to negotiate with them, and mention the boundaries of the purchase. This I accepted, and, at the request of the same gentlemen, undertook to mark out a road in the best passage from the settlement through the wilderness to Kentucky, with such assistance as I thought necessary to employ for such an important undertaking.

I soon began this work, having collected a number of enterprising men well armed. We proceeded with all possible expedition until we came within fifteen miles of where Boonsborough now stands, and where we were fired upon by a party of Indians that killed two, and wounded two of our number; yet, although surprised and taken at a disadvantage, we stood our ground. This was on the twentieth of March, 1775. Three days after, we were fired upon again, and had two men killed, and three wounded. Afterwards we proceeded on to Kentucky river without opposition; and on the first day of April began to erect the fort of Boonsborough at a salt lick, about sixty yards from the river, on the south side.

On the fourth day the Indians killed one of our men. We were busily employed in building this fort, until the fourteenth day of June following, without any farther opposition from the Indians: and having finished the works, I returned to my family, on Clench.

In a short time I proceeded to remove my family from Clench to this garrison; where we arrived safe without any other difficulties than such as are common to this passage, my wife and daughter being the first white women that ever stood on the banks of Kentucky river.

On the twenty-fourth day of December following we had one man killed, and one wounded, by the Indians, who seemed determined to persecute us for erecting this fortification.

On the fourteenth day of July, 1776, two of Col. [Richard] Cal[ ]away's daughters, and one of mine, were taken prisoners near the fort. I immediately pursued the Indians, with only eight men, and on the sixteenth overtook them, killed two of the party, and recovered the girls. The same day on which this attempt was made, the Indians divided themselves into different parties, and attacked several forts, which were shortly before this time erected, doing a great deal of mischief. This was extremely distressing to the new settlers. The innocent husbandman was shot down, while busy cultivating the soil for his family's supply. Most of the cattle around the stations were destroyed. They continued their hostilities in this manner until the fifteenth of April, 1777, when they attacked Boonsborough with a party of above one hundred in number, killed one man, and wounded four. Their loss in this attack was not certainly known to us.

On the fourth day of July following, a party of about two hundred Indians attacked Boonsborough, killed one man, and wounded two. They besieged us forty-eight hours; during which time seven of them were killed, and at last, finding themselves not likely to prevail, they raised the siege and departed.

The Indians had disposed their warriors in different parties at this time, and attacked the different garrisons to prevent their assisting each other, and did much injury to the distressed inhabitants.

On the nineteenth day of this month, Col. [Benjamin] Logan's fort was besieged by a party of about two hundred Indians. During this dreadful siege they did a great deal of mischief, distressed the garrison, in which were only fifteen men, killed two, and wounded one. The enemies loss was uncertain, from the common practice which the Indians have of carrying off their dead in time of battle. Col. [James] Harrod's fort was then defended by only sixty-five men, and Boonsborough by twenty-two, there being no more forts or white men in the country, except at the Falls, a considerable distance from these, and all taken collectively, were but a handful to the numerous warriors that were every where dispersed through the country, intent upon doing all the mischief that savage barbarity could invent. Thus we palled through a scene of sufferings that exceed description.

On the twenty-fifth of this month a reinforcement of forty-five men arrived from North Carolina, and about the twentieth of August following, Col. [John] Bowman arrived with one hundred men from Virginia. Now we began to strengthen, and from hence, for the space of six weeks, we had skirmishes with Indians, in one quarter or other, almost every day.

The savages now learned the superiority of the long knife, as they call the Virginians, by experience; being out-generalled almost in every battle. Our affairs began to wear a new aspect, and the enemy, not daring to venture on open war, practised secret mischief at times.

On the first day of January, 1778, I went with a party of thirty men to the Blue Licks, on Licking river, to make salt for the different garrisons in the country.

On the seventh day of February, as I was hunting to procure meat for the company, I met with a party of one hundred and two Indians, and two Frenchmen, on their march against Boonsborough, that place being particularly the object of the enemy.

They pursued and took me; and brought me on the eighth day to the Licks, where twenty-seven of my party were, three of them having previously returned home with the salt. I knowing it was impossible for them to escape, capitulated with the enemy, and, at a distance in their view, gave notice to my men of their situation, with orders not to resist, but surrender themselves captives.

The generous usage the Indians had promised before in my capitulation, was afterwards fully complied with, and we proceeded with them as prisoners to old Chelicothe, the principal Indian town, on Little Miami, where we arrived, after an uncomfortable journey in very severe weather, on the eighteenth day of February, and received as good treatment as prisoners could expect from savages. On the tenth day of March following, I and ten of my men were conducted by forty Indians to Detroit, where we arrived the thirtieth day, and were treated by Governor [Henry] Hamilton, the British commander at that post, with great humanity.

During our travels, the Indians entertained me well; and their affection for me was so great, that they utterly refused to leave me there with the others, although the governor offered them one hundred pounds sterling for me, on purpose to give me a parole to go home. Several English gentlemen there, being sensible of my adverse fortune, and touched with human sympathy, generously offered a friendly supply for my wants, which I refused, with many thanks for their kindness; adding, that I never expected it would be in my power to recompence such unmerited generosity.

The Indians lest my men in captivity with the British at Detroit, and on the tenth day of April brought me towards Old Chelicothe, where we arrived on the twenty-fifth day of the same month. This was a long and fatiguing march, through an exceeding fertile country, remarkable for fine springs and streams of water. At Chelicothe I spent my time as comfortably as I could expect; was adopted, according to their custom, into a family where I became a son, and had a great share in the affection of my new parents, brothers, sisters, and friends. I was exceedingly familiar and friendly with them, always appearing as cheerful and satisfied as possible, and they put great confidence in me. I often went a hunting with them, and frequently gained their applause for my activity at our shooting-matches. I was careful not to exceed many of them in shooting; for no people are more envious than they in this sport. I could observe, in their countenances and gestures, the greatest expressions of joy when they exceeded me) and, when the reverse happened, of envy. The Shawanese king took great notice of me, and treated me with profound respect, and entire friendship, often entrusting me to hunt at my liberty. I frequently returned with the spoils of the woods, and as often presented somewhat of what I had taken to him, expressive of duty to my sovereign. My food and lodging was, in common, with them, not so good indeed as I could desire, but necessity made every thing acceptable.

I now began to meditate an escape, and carefully avoided their suspicions, continuing with them at Old Chelicothe until the first day of June following, and then was taken by them to the salt springs on Scioto, and kept there making salt, ten days. During this time I hunted some for them, and found the land, for a great extent about this river, to exceed the soil of Kentucky, if possible, and remarkably well watered.

When I returned to Chelicothe, alarmed to see four hundred and fifty Indians, of their choicest warriors, painted and armed in a fearful manner, ready to march against Boonsborough, I determined to escape the first opportunity.

On the sixteenth before sun-rise, I departed in the most secret manner, and arrived at Boonsborough on the twentieth, after a journey of one hundred and sixty miles; during which I had but one meal.

I found our fortress in a bad state of defence, but we proceeded immediately to repair our flanks, strengthen our gates and posterns, and form double bastions, which we completed in ten days. In this time we daily expected the arrival of the Indian army; and at length, one of my fellow prisoners, escaping from them, arrived, informing us that the enemy had an account of my departure, and postponed their expedition three weeks. The Indians had spies out, viewing our movements, and were greatly alarmed with our increase in number and fortifications. The grand councils of the nations were held frequently, and with more deliberation than usual. They evidently saw the approaching hour when the long knife would dispossess them of their desirable habitations; and anxiously concerned for futurity, determined utterly to extirpate the whites out of Kentucky. We were not intimidated by their movements, but frequently gave them proofs of our courage.

About the first of August, I made an incursion into the Indian country, with a party of nineteen men, in order to surprise a small town up Scioto, called Paint-creek-town. We advanced within four miles thereof, where we met a party of thirty Indians, on their march against Boonsborough, intending to join the others from Chelicothe. A smart fight ensued betwixt us for some time: at length the savages gave way, and fled. We had no loss on our side; the enemy had one killed and two wounded. We took from them three horses, and all their baggage; and being informed, by two of our number that went to their town, that the Indians had entirely evacuated it, we proceeded no further, and returned with all possible expedition, to assist our garrison against the other party. We passed by them on the sixth day, and on the seventh we arrived safe at Boonsborough.

On the eighth, the Indian army arrived, being four hundred and forty-four in number, commanded by Capt. Duquesne, eleven other Frenchmen, and some of their own chiefs; and marched up within view of our fort, with British and French colours flying; and having sent a summons to me in his Britannic Majesty's name, to surrender the fort, I requested two days consideration, which was granted.

It was now a critical period with us. We were a small number in the garrison: a powerful army before our walls, whose appearance proclaimed inevitable death, fearfully painted, and marking their footsteps with desolation. Death was preferable to captivity; and if taken by storm, we must inevitably be devoted to destruction. In this situation we concluded to maintain our garrison, if possible. We immediately proceeded to collect what we could of our horses, and other cattle, and bring them through the posterns into the fort: and in the evening of the ninth, I returned answer, that we were determined to defend our fort while a man was living. "Now," said I, to their commander, who stood attentively hearing my sentiments, "we laugh at all your formidable preparations: but thank you for giving us notice and time to provide for our defence. Your efforts will not prevail; for our gates shall for ever deny you admittance." Whether this answer affected their courage, or not, I cannot tell; but, contrary to our expectations, they formed a scheme to deceive us, declaring it was their orders, from Governor Hamilton, to take us captives, and not to destroy us; but if nine of us would come out, and treat with them, they would immediately withdraw their forces from our walls, and return home peaceably. This sounded grateful in our ears; and we agreed to the proposal.

We held the treaty within sixty yards of the garrison, on purpose to divert them from a breach of honour, as we could not avoid suspicions of the savages. In this situation the articles were formally agreed to, and signed; and the Indians told us it was customary with them, on such occasions, for two Indians to shake hands with every white-man in the treaty, as an evidence of entire friendship. We agreed to this also, but were soon convinced their policy was to take us prisoners. They immediately grappled us; but although surrounded by hundreds of savages, we extricated ourselves from them, and escaped all safe into the garrison, except one that was wounded, through a heavy fire from their army. They immediately attacked us on every side, and a constant heavy fire ensued between us day and night for the space of nine days.



In this time the enemy began to undermine our fort, which was situated sixty yards from Kentucky river. They began at the water-mark, and proceeded in the bank some distance, which we understood by their making the water muddy with the clay; and we immediately proceeded to disappoint their design, by cutting a trench across their subterranean passage. The enemy discovered our counter-mine, by the clay we threw out of the fort, desisted from that stratagem: and experience now fully convinced them that neither their power nor policy could effect their purpose, on the twentieth day of August they raised the siege and departed.

During this dreadful siege, which threatened death in every form, we had two men killed, and four wounded, besides a number of cattle. We killed of the enemy thirty-seven, and wounded a great number. After they were gone we picked up one hundred and twenty-five pounds weight of bullets, besides what stuck in the logs of our fort; which certainly is a great proof of their industry. Soon after this, I went into the settlement, and nothing worthy of a place in this account passed in my affairs for some time.

During my absence from Kentucky, Col. Bowman carried off an expedition against the Shawanese, at Old Chelicothe, with one hundred and sixty men, in July, 1779. Here they arrived undiscovered, and a battle ensued, which lasted until ten o'clock, A. M. when Col. Bowman, finding he could not succeed at this time, retreated about thirty miles. The Indians in the mean time, collecting all their forces, pursued and overtook him, when a smart fight continued near two hours, not to the advantage of Col. Bowman's party.

Col. Harrod proposed to mount a number of horse, and furiously to rush upon the savages, who at this time fought with remarkable fury. This desperate step had a happy effect, broke their line of battle, and the savages fled on all sides. In these two battles we had nine killed, and one wounded. The enemy's loss uncertain, only two scalps being taken.

On the twenty-second day of June, 1780, a large party of Indians and Canadians, about six hundred in number, commanded by Col. Bird, attacked Riddle's and Martin's stations, at the forks of Licking river, with six pieces of artillery. They carried this expedition so secretly, that the unwary inhabitants did not discover them, until they fired upon the forts; and not being prepared to oppose them, were obliged to surrender themselves miserable captives to barbarous savages, who immediately after tomahawked one man and two women, and loaded all the others with heavy baggage, forcing them along toward their towns, able or unable to march. Such as were weak and saint by the way, they tomahawked. The tender women and helpless children fell victims to their cruelty. This, and the savage treatment they received afterwards, is shocking to humanity, and too barbarous to relate.

The hostile disposition of the savages, and their allies, caused General [George Rogers] Clark, the commandant of the Falls of the Ohio, immediately to begin an expedition with his own regiment, and the armed force of the country, against Pecaway, the principal town of the Shawanese, on a branch of Great Miami, which he finished with great success, took seventeen scalps, and burnt the town to ashes, with the loss of seventeen men.

About this time I returned to Kentucky with my family; and here, to avoid an inquiry into my conduct, the reader being before informed of my bringing my family to Kentucky, I am tinder the necessity of informing him that, during my captivity with the Indians, my wife, who despaired of ever seeing me again, expecting the Indians had put a period to my life, oppressed with the distresses of the country, and bereaved of me, her only happiness, had, before I returned, transported my family and goods, on horses, through the wilderness, amidst a multitude of dangers, to her father's house, in North-Carolina.

Shortly after the troubles at Boonsborough, I went to them, and lived there peaceably until this time. The history of my going home, and returning with my family, forms a series of difficulties, an account of which would swell a volume, and being foreign to my purpose, I shall purposely omit them.

I settled my family in Boonsborough once more, and shortly after, on the sixth day of October, 1780, I went in company with my brother to the Blue Licks, and, on our return home, we were fired upon by a party of Indians; they shot him, and pursued me, by the scent of their dog, three miles, but I killed the

dog, and escaped. The winter soon came on, and was very severe, which confined the Indians to their wigwams.

The severity of this winter caused great difficulties in Kentucky. The enemy had destroyed most of the corn the summer before; this necessary article was scarce and dear, and the inhabitants lived chiefly on the flesh of buffaloes. The circumstances of many were lamentable; however, being a hardy race of people, and accustomed to difficulties and necessities, they were wonderfully supported through all their sufferings, until the ensuing fall, when we received abundance from the fertile soil.

Towards spring we were frequently harrassed by Indians, and in May, 1782, a party assaulted Ashton's station, killed one man, and took a negro prisoner. Captain Ashton, with twenty-five men, pursued, and overtook the savages, and a smart fight ensued, which lasted two hours; but they being superior in number, obliged Captain Ashton's party to retreat, with the loss of eight killed, and four mortally wounded; their brave commander himself being numbered among the dead.

The Indians continued their hostilities, and about the 10th of August following, two boys were taken from Major Hoy's station. This party was pursued by Capt. Holder and seventeen men, who were also defeated, with the loss of four men killed and one wounded. Our affairs became more and more alarming; several stations which had lately been erected in the country were continually infested with savages, stealing their horses and killing the men at every opportunity. In a field near Lexington, an Indian shot a man, and running to scalp him, was himself shot from the fort, and fell dead upon his enemy.

Every day we experienced recent mischiefs. The barbarous savage nations of Shawanese, Cherokees, Wyandots, Tawas, Delawares, and several others near Detroit, united in a war against us, and assembled their choicest warriors at old Chelicothe, to go on the expedition, in order to destroy us, and entirely depopulate the country. Their savage minds were inflamed to mischief by two abandoned men, Captains [Alexander] M'Kee and [Simon] Girty. These led them to execute every diabolical scheme; and on the 5th day of August, commanded a party of Indians and Canadians, of about five hundred in number, against Briant's station, five miles from Lexington. Without demanding a surrender, they furiously assaulted the garrison, which was happily prepared to oppose them; and after they had expended much ammunition in vain, and killed the cattle round the fort, not being likely to make themselves masters of this place, they raised the siege, and departed in the morning of the third day after they came, with the loss of about thirty killed, and the number of wounded uncertain. Of the garrison four men were killed, and three Wounded.

On the 18th day, Col. [John] Todd, Col. [Stephen] Trigg, Major Harland, and myself, speedily collected one hundred and seventy-six men, well armed, and pursued the savages. They had marched beyond the Blue Licks to a remarkable bend of the main fork of Licking river, about forty-three miles from Lexington, as it is particularly represented in the map, where we overtook them on the 19th day. The savages observing us, gave way, and we being ignorant of their numbers, passed the river. When the enemy saw our proceedings, having greatly the advantage of us in situation, they formed the line of battle, as represented in the map, from one bend of Licking to the other, about a mile from the Blue Licks. An exceeding fierce battle immediately began, for about fifteen minutes, when we, being overpowered by numbers, were obliged to retreat, with the loss of sixty-seven men, seven of whom were taken prisoners. The brave and much-lamented Colonels Todd and Trigg, Major Harland, and my second son, were among the dead. We were informed that the Indians, numbering their dead, found they had slain more than we; and therefore four of the prisoners they had taken were by general consent ordered to be killed in a most barbarous manner by the young warriors, in order to train them up to cruelty, and then they proceeded to their towns.

On our retreat we were met by Col. Logan, hastening to join us, with a number of well-armed men. This powerful assistance we unfortunately wanted in the battle; for notwithstanding the enemy's superiority in numbers, they acknowledged that if they had received one more fire from us, they should undoubtedly have given way. So violently did our small party fight, that to the memory of those who unfortunately fell in battle, enough of honour cannot be paid. Had Colonel Logan and his party been with us, it is highly probable we should have given the savages a total defeat.

I cannot reflect upon this dreadful scene but sorrow fills my heart; a zeal for the defence of their country led these heroes to the scene of action, though with a few men, to attack a powerful army of experienced warriors. When we gave way, they pursued us with the utmost eagerness, and in every quarter spread destruction. The river was difficult to cross, and many were killed in the flight, some just entering the river, some in the water, others after crossing, in ascending the cliffs. Some escaped on horseback, a few on foot; and being dispersed every where, in a few hours brought the melancholy news of this unfortunate battle to Lexington. Many widows were now made. The reader may guess what sorrow filled the hearts of the inhabitants, exceeding any thing that I am able to describe. Being reinforced, we returned to bury the dead, and found their bodies strewed every where, cut and mangled in a dreadful manner. This mournful scene exhibited a horror almost unparalleled: some torn and eaten by wild beasts; those in the river eaten by fishes; all in such a putrefied condition, that no one could be distinguished from another.

As soon as General Clark, then at the Falls of the Ohio, who was ever our ready friend, and merits the love and gratitude of all his countrymen, understood the circumstances of this unfortunate action, he ordered an expedition with all possible haste to pursue the savages, which was so expeditiously effected, that we overtook them within two miles of their towns, and probably might have obtained a great victory, had not two of their number met us about two hundred poles before we came up. These returned quick as lightning to their camp with the alarming news of a mighty army in view. The savages fled in the utmost disorder, evacuated their towns, and reluctantly lest their territory to our mercy. We immediately took possession of Old Chelicothe without opposition, being deserted by its inhabitants; we continued our pursuit through five towns on the Miami rivers, Old Chelicothe, Pecaway, New Chelicothe, Will's towns, and Chelicothe; burnt them all to ashes, entirely destroyed their corn, and other fruits, and every where spread a scene of desolation in the country. In this expedition we took seven prisoners and five scalps, with the loss of only four men, two of whom were accidentally killed by our own army.

This campaign in some measure damped the spirits of the Indians, and made them sensible of our superiority. Their connections were dissolved, their armies scattered, and a future invasion put entirely out of their power; yet they continued to practise mischief secretly upon the inhabitants in the exposed parts of the country.

In October following, a party made an excursion into that district called the Crab Orchard, and one of them being advanced some distance before the others, boldly entered the house of a poor defenceless family, in which was only a negro man, a woman, and her children, terrified with the apprehensions of immediate death. The savages perceiving their defenceless situation, without offering violence to the family, attempted to captivate the negro, who happily proved an overmatch for him, threw him oil the ground, and in the struggle, the mother of the children drew an axe from a corner of the cottage, and cut his head off, while her little daughter shut the door. The savages instantly appeared, and applied their tomahawks to the door. An old rusty gun barrel, without a lock, lay in a corner, which the mother put through a small crevice, and the savages perceiving it, fled. In the mean time, the alarm spread through the neighbourhood, the armed men collected immediately, and pursued the ravagers into the wilderness. Thus Providence, by the means of this negro, saved the whole of the poor family from destruction. From that time, until the happy return of peace between the United States and Great Britain, the Indians did us no mischief. Finding the great king beyond the water disappointed in his expectations, and conscious of the importance of the long knife, and their own wretchedness, some of the nations immediately desired peace, to which, at present, they seem universally disposed, and are sending ambassadors to General Clark, at the Falls of the Ohio, with the minutes of their councils; a specimen of which, in the minutes of the Piankashaw council, is subjoined.

To conclude, I can now say that I have verified the saying of an old Indian who signed Col. [Richard] Henderson's deed. Taking me by the hand at the delivery thereof, Brother, says he, we have given you a fine land, but I believe you will have much trouble in settling it. My footsteps have often been marked with blood, and therefore I can truly subscribe to its original name. Two darling sons and a brother have I lost by savage hands, which have also taken from me forty valuable horses, and abundance of cattle. Many dark and sleepless nights have I been a companion for owls, separated from the cheerful society of

men, scorched by the summer's sun, and pinched by the winter's cold, an instrument ordained to settle the wilderness; but now the scene is changed; peace crowns the sylvan shade.

What thanks, what ardent and ceaseless thanks are due to that all-superintending Providence which has turned a cruel war into peace, brought order out of confusion, made the fierce savages placid, and turned away their hostile weapons from our country! May the same Almighty Goodness banish the accursed monster, war, from all lands, with her hated associates, rapine and insatiable ambition. Let peace, descending from her native heaven, bid her olives spring amidst the joyful nations; and plenty, in league with commerce, scatter blessings from her copious hand.

This account of my adventures will inform the reader of the most remarkable events of this country. I now live in peace and safety, enjoying the sweets of liberty, and the bounties of Providence, with my once fellow-sufferers in this delightful country, which I have seen purchased with a vast expence of blood and treasure, delighting in the prospect of its being in a short time one of the most opulent and powerful states on the continent of North America; which, with the love and gratitude of my countrymen, I esteem a sufficient reward for all my toil and danger.

DANIEL BOON.

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