

The Siege of Bryan Station

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THE Siege of Bryan Station should be given the most prominent place among the many interesting episodes of Bryan Station history. It is well nigh impossible to condense it into one short sketch. The thrilling story of the Siege, where less than fifty pioneer settlers held off an army of 500 Indians and Canadians, under the leadership of British officers, assisted by such renegade white men as Simon Girty and Alexander McKee, can not be told in a few words.

Bryan Station, settled by the four Bryan brothers in 1779, had passed through several years of hardships and by the summer of 1782 seemed to have reached a turning point in its career. Peace and prosperity surrounded the little settlement, crops were good, the cabins of the station were mostly occupied by settlers, and the Indians appeared to be quiet throughout the country. This, however, was only the quiet before the storm, for, like lightning from a clear sky, came disaster.

Late in the evening of August 15th (1782) news came that the Indians had attacked and defeated a party of men at Upper Blue Licks; that they appeared to be planning to attack Hoy's Station; that British officers were directing the savages and all fighting men were urged to prepare for war.

Excitement reigned, but no time was lost in making preparations to start at earliest dawn to go to the aid of the endangered stations. Late into the night the work of molding bullets went on, powder horns were filled, and supplies gathered in readiness for the march to be made

at break of day. While the settlers were so busily engaged the savage enemy slipped silently around the settlement and hid themselves in the corn, hemp, cane, and in the forest.

The presence of the enemy was discovered by the woodsmen within the station before they opened the gate to march away in the hour of dawn. Within a short time messengers slipped away to go for help, and plans were made for the defense of the station. With the knowledge that the station was surrounded came the terrifying knowledge that the garrison was without sufficient water to withstand a long siege.

It was at this time that the brave women of the station showed their heroic courage. They declared that it was everywhere the recognized work of the women to carry the water; that if they went for it as usual the enemy would think themselves undiscovered; that if the men went to procure the water the Indians would open an immediate attack and the women and children would be left unprotected. The men consented to the plan and stood guard while the women and girls took their pails and marched down to the spring for the much needed supply of water. The daring plan was a success and all returned in safety to the protection of the stockade.

All day, and throughout the night the battle raged. The firing of the outside cabins, the arrival of reinforcements in the afternoon, the fighting in the dense corn and cane, the thrilling escape of the foot-men, the safe return of

[Continued on page 30]



Close-up of Bryan Station Memorial, showing names of men and women defenders of the fort.

Trigg was universally lamented as a great public calamity." Terror and dismay for a while overshadowed the whole of Kentucky. There was sorrow and mourning in many stricken households. "Many widows were now made," says the laconic Boone, in the Filson Narrative, and "The reader may guess what sorrow filled the hearts of the inhabitants, exceeding anything that I am able to describe." It was indeed a staggering blow. Not only were the people of the Kentucky settlements profoundly affected by the number of the fatalities and the high standing of the victims, but they were shocked and horrified even more by the brutal manner in which many of the deaths had been inflicted; and from this savage spectacle our feelings to this day instinctively recoil.

The Battle of Blue Licks was not a wanton or useless waste of life. It was a costly sacrifice, but a sacrifice of inestimable and enduring value. It proved to Indians and red-coats alike that Kentucky would not basely and timidly submit to wrongs without prompt and sturdy resistance. It was by all odds the most important, as it is by all odds the most celebrated, of all the Revolutionary battles in Kentucky. It was a battle waged in Kentucky, by Kentucky, and for Kentucky, and, for better or worse, is pre-eminently typical of Kentucky. . . .

As long as the annals of Kentucky are preserved in the records or the memory of men, as long as firmness and fearlessness in the presence of peril are extolled; as long as nobility of character and magnanimity of heart are respected; as long as duty calls to danger and the sons of the proudest of American commonwealths shall count it sweet and honorable to die for one's country; so long will the high emprise and daring deeds of the heroes of the Battle of the Blue Licks be admired and acclaimed, their fair fame be cherished, and their names remain enshrined in all our hearts, with ever-growing love and never-fading lustre.

The Siege of Bryan Station

[Continued from page 15]

the messengers sent for help, the strategy of Captain John Craig, the commander during the siege, the speech of Simon Girty demanding the garrison to surrender, and the well known reply by Aaron Reynolds, all these, and many more, are thrilling episodes of Bryan Station history. Many stories are told of the heroism of every person within the stockade, for during this terrifying siege even the smallest children took part in the defense of the station, and each and every one is recognized as a Soldier of the Revolution.

Reinforcements, arriving on the morning of the 18th of August (1782) found that the enemy had lifted the siege, and were in retreat toward Blue Licks, leaving a plain trail to be followed by the settlers.

Historians, everywhere, are giving more and more stress to the fact that the Siege of Bryan Station, and the Battle of Blue Licks were the two last battles of the Revolutionary War. It is rather hard to realize that Revolutionary battles were fought here in our own Kentucky, months after the surrender of Cornwallis at Yorktown, but such is the case.

All Kentucky is proud of the part taken by the handful of pioneer men and women in the Siege of Bryan Station. In 1896 the Lexington Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution erected a Memorial Wall around the spring from which the women of Bryan Sta-

tion carried the water. Many hundreds of visitors have been thrilled to view this memorial and to read the inscription, "In honor of the Women of Bryan Station, who on the 16th of August, 1782, faced a savage force in ambush; and, with a heroic courage and sublime self-sacrifice that will remain forever illustrious, obtained from this spring the water that made possible the successful defense of that station."

Proud indeed are those who can claim descent from the heroines whose names appear in the list of water carriers, or from those heroes whose names are listed as the defenders of the station.

August 16th, 1932, will be the 150th anniversary of this very important battle. In practically every State in the union descendants will look forward, with interest, to a celebration of honor to those who so bravely did their share in the defense of Bryan Station. Many are there who will welcome, with pleasure, a chance to join in a nation wide "Home-coming" where the hundreds of descendants of Bryan Station pioneers may get together and tell again and again of the deeds of heroism performed by their ancestors one hundred and fifty years ago.

The Everlasting Springs of the Lincolns

[Continued from page 17]

youngest son, Thomas Lincoln, to Nancy Hanks, who was living in the home of her cousin and guardian, Richard Berry, where the wedding took place. This cabin stood by a generous flow of water which for many years has been known as the Lincoln Spring. The original cabin has been moved away, but nature's memorial still remains. Here other youths of the community may pledge their love and plight their faith with cups of cool spring water.

Within two and a half years after the wedding in the Berry cabin, Thomas Lincoln purchased for "two hundred dollars, cash in hand paid," the three hundred acre farm, in what is now Larue County, Kentucky. Undoubtedly the famous spring, close by the beginning corner of the farm survey, influenced Lincoln in the purchase of the property. In the deed which designates the boundaries of the farm at the time the Lincolns lived there, is the following clause "a certain parcel or tract of land on the waters of the South Fork of Nolin, containing three hundred acres, beginning near or at a spring called the Sinking Spring."

It is difficult to find a more picturesque spring than this one, near which Abraham Lincoln was born on February 12, 1809. After centuries of continual toil it has made its own house in a lime stone cave, seven feet high, seven feet wide, and fifteen feet long. It is overhung with the branches of a huge tree and its banks are covered with wild vines. Except for the retaining wall built just outside the cave, and the approach down a flight of stone steps, it is very much like it must have been in the days of Lincoln's infancy.

In pioneer times a much travelled trail passed by the convenient watering place and the spring became known for miles around. It was first called Sinking Spring, later Cave Spring and Rock Spring, and now Lincoln Spring.

On the back wall of this natural limestone spring house we have what may be the first attempt to memorialize Lincoln with hammer and chisel. Shortly after Lincoln's election, a person by the name of Samuel Castene, who