

CHAPTER VIII.

THE LONG HUNTERS IN THE TWILIGHT ZONE

The long Hunters principally resided in the upper countries of Virginia & North Carolina on New River & Holston River, and when they intended to make a long Hunt (as they call it) they Collected near the head of Holston near whare Abingdon now stands....

—GENERAL WILLIAM
HALL.

BEFORE the coming of Walker and Gist in 1750 and 1751 respectively, the region now called Kentucky had, as far as we know, been twice visited by the French, once in 1729 when Chaussegros de Léry and his party visited the Big Bone Lick, and again in the summer of 1749 when the Baron de Longueuil with four hundred and fifty-two Frenchmen and Indians, going to join Bienville in an expedition against "the Chericees and other Indians lying at the back of Carolina and Georgia," doubtless encamped on the Kentucky shore of the Ohio. Kentucky was also 117 traversed by John Peter Salling with his three adventurous companions in their journey through the Middle West in 1742. But all these early visits, including the memorable expeditions of Walker and Gist, were so little known to the general public that when John Filson wrote the history of Kentucky in 1784 he attributed its discovery to James McBride in 1754. More influential upon the course of westward expansion was an adventure which occurred in 1752, the very year in which the Boones settled down in their Yadkin home.

In the autumn of 1752, a Pennsylvania trader, John Findlay, with three or four companions, descended the Ohio River in a canoe as far as the falls at the present Louisville, Kentucky, and accompanied a party of Shawanoes to their town of Es-kip-pa-ki-thi-ki, eleven miles east of what is now Winchester. This was the site of the "Indian Old Corn Field," the Iroquois name for which ("the place of many fields," or "prairie") was Ken-ta-ke, whence came the name of the state. Five miles east of this spot, where still may 118 be seen a mound and an ellipse showing the outline of the stockade, is the famous Pilot Knob, from the summit of which the fields surrounding the town lie visible in their smooth expanse. During Findlay's stay at the Indian town

other traders from Pennsylvania and Virginia, who reported that they were "on their return from trading with the Cuttawas (Catawbas), a nation who live in the Territories of Carolina," assembled in the vicinity in January, 1753. Here, as the result of disputes arising from their barter, they were set upon and captured by a large party of straggling Indians (Coghnawagas from Montreal) on January 26th; but Findlay and another trader named James Lowry were so fortunate as to escape and return through the wilderness to the Pennsylvania settlements. [89] The incident is of important historic significance; for it was from these traders, who must have followed the Great Warriors' Path to the country of the Catawbas, that Findlay learned of the Ouasioto (Cumberland) Gap traversed by the Indian path. His reminiscences—of this [119] gateway to Kentucky, of the site of the old Indian town on Lulbegrud Creek, a tributary of the Red River, and of the Pilot Knob—were sixteen years later to fire Boone to his great tour of exploration in behalf of the Transylvania Company.

During the next two decades, largely because of the hostility of the savage tribes, only a few traders and hunters from the east ranged through the trans-Alleghany. But in 1761, a party of hunters led by a rough frontiersman, Elisha Walden, penetrated into Powell's Valley, followed the Indian trail through Cumberland Gap, explored the Cumberland River, and finally reached the Laurel Mountain where, encountering a party of Indians, they deemed it expedient to return. With Walden went Henry Scaggs, afterward explorer for the Henderson Land Company, William Blevens and Charles Cox, the famous Virginia hunters, one Newman, and some fifteen other stout pioneers. Their itinerary may be traced from the names given to natural objects in honor of members of the party—Walden's [120] Mountain and Walden's Creek, Scaggs' Ridge and Newman's Ridge. Following the peace of 1763, which made travel in this region moderately safe once more, the English proceeded to occupy the territory which they had won. In 1765 George Croghan with a small party, on the way to prepare the inhabitants of the Illinois country for transfer to English sovereignty, visited the Great Bone Licks of Kentucky (May 30th, 31st); and a year later Captain Harry Gordon, chief engineer in the Western Department in North America, visited and minutely described the same licks and the falls. But these, and numerous other water-journeys and expeditions of which no records were kept, though interesting enough in themselves, had little bearing upon the larger phases of westward expansion and colonization.

The decade opening with the year 1765 is the epoch of bold and ever bolder exploration—the more adventurous frontiersmen of the border pushing deep into the wilderness in search of game, lured on by the excitements [121] of the chase and the profit to be derived from the sale of peltries. In midsummer, 1766, Captain James Smith, Joshua Horton, Uriah Stone, William Baker, and a young mulatto slave passed through Cumberland Gap, hunted through the country south of the Cherokee and along the Cumberland and Tennessee rivers, and as Smith reports "found no vestige of any white

man." During the same year a party of five hunters from South Carolina, led by Isaac Lindsey, penetrated the Kentucky wilderness to the tributary of the Cumberland, named Stone's River by the former party, for one of their number. Here they encountered two men, who were among the greatest of the western pioneers, and were destined to leave their names in historic association with the early settlement of Kentucky—James Harrod and Michael Stoner, a German, both of whom had descended the Ohio from Fort Pitt. With the year 1769 began those longer and more extended excursions into the interior which were to result in conveying at last to the outside ^[122]world graphic and detailed information concerning "the wonderful new country of Cantucky." In the late spring of this year Hancock and Richard Taylor (the latter the father of President Zachary Taylor), Abraham Hempinstall, and one Barbour, all true-blue frontiersmen, left their homes in Orange County, Virginia, and hunted extensively in Kentucky and Arkansas. Two of the party traveled through Georgia and East and West Florida; while the other two hunted on the Washita during the winter of 1770-1. Explorations of this type became increasingly hazardous as the animosity of the Indians increased; and from this time onward for a number of years almost all the parties of roving hunters suffered capture or attack by the crafty red men. In this same year Major John McCulloch, living on the south branch of the Potomac, set out accompanied by a white man-servant and a negro, to explore the western country. While passing down the Ohio from Pittsburgh McCulloch was captured by the Indians near the mouth of the ^[123]Wabash and carried to the present site of Terre Haute, Indiana. Set free after four or five months, he journeyed in company with some French *voyageurs* first to Natchez and then to New Orleans, whence he made the sea voyage to Philadelphia. Somewhat later, Benjamin Cleveland (afterward famous in the Revolution), attended by four companions, set out from his home on the upper Yadkin to explore the Kentucky wilderness. After passing through Cumberland Gap, they encountered a band of Cherokees who plundered them of everything they had, even to their hats and shoes, and ordered them to leave the Indian hunting-grounds. On their return journey they almost starved, and Cleveland, who was reluctantly forced to kill his faithful little hunting-dog, was wont to declare in after years that it was the sweetest meat he ever ate.

Fired to adventure by the glowing accounts brought back by Uriah Stone, a much more formidable band than any that had hitherto ventured westward—including Uriah Stone as pilot, Gasper Mansker, John Rains, the Bledsoes, ^[124]and a dozen others— assembled in June, 1769, in the New River region. "Each Man carried two horses," says an early pioneer in describing one of these parties, "traps, a large supply of powder and led, and a small hand vise and bellows, files and screw plate for the purpose of fixing the guns if any of them should get out of fix." Passing through Cumberland Gap, they continued their long journey until they reached Price's Meadow, in the present Wayne County, Kentucky, where they established their encampment. In the course of their explorations, during which they gave various names to prominent natural features, they

established their "station camp" on a creek in Sumner County, Tennessee, whence originated the name of Station Camp Creek. Isaac Bledsoe and Gasper Mansker, agreeing to travel from here in opposite directions along a buffalo trace passing near the camp, each succeeded in discovering the famous salt-lick which bears his name—namely Bledsoe's Lick and Mansker's Lick. The flat surrounding the lick, about one hundred acres in extent, ^[125]discovered by Bledsoe, according to his own statement "was principally Covered with buffelows in every direction—not hundreds but thousands." As he sat on his horse, he shot down two deer in the lick; but the buffaloes blindly trod them in the mud. They did not mind him and his horse except when the wind blew the scent in their nostrils, when they would break and run in droves. Indians often lurked in the neighbourhood of these hunters—plundering their camp, robbing them, and even shooting down one of their number, Robert Crockett, from ambush. After many trials and vicissitudes, which included a journey to the Spanish Natchez and the loss of a great mass of peltries when they were plundered by Piomingo and a war party of Chickasaws, they finally reached home in the late spring of 1770. ^[90]

The most notable expedition of this period, projected under the auspices of two bold leaders extraordinarily skilled in woodcraft, Joseph Drake and Henry Scaggs, was organized in the early autumn of 1770. This imposing ^[126]band of stalwart hunters from the New River and Holston country, some forty in number, garbed in hunting shirts, leggings, and moccasins, with three pack-horses to each man, rifles, ammunition, traps, dogs, blankets, and salt, pushed boldly through Cumberland Gap into the heart of what was later justly named the "Dark and Bloody Ground" (see Chapter XIV)—"not doubting," says an old border chronicler, "that they were to be encountered by Indians, and to subsist on game." From the duration of their absence from home, they received the name of the Long Hunters—the romantic appellation by which they are known in the pioneer history of the Old Southwest. Many natural objects were named by this party—in particular Dick's River, after the noted Cherokee hunter, Captain Dick, who, pleased to be recognized by Charles Scaggs, told the Long Hunters that on *his* river, pointing it out, they would find meat plenty—adding with laconic significance: "Kill it and go home." From the Knob Lick, in Lincoln County, as reported by a member of the party, ^[127]"they beheld largely over a thousand animals, including buffaloe, elk, bear, and deer, with many wild turkies scattered among them; all quite restless, some playing, and others busily employed in licking the earth... The buffaloe and other animals had so eaten away the soil, that they could, in places, go entirely underground." Upon the return of a detachment to Virginia, fourteen fearless hunters chose to remain; and one day, during the absence of some of the band upon a long exploring trip, the camp was attacked by a straggling party of Indians under Will Emery, a half-breed Cherokee. Two of the hunters were carried into captivity and never heard of again; a third managed to escape. In embittered commemoration of the plunder of the camp and the destruction

of the peltries, they inscribed upon a poplar, which had lost its bark, this emphatic record, followed by their names:

2300 Deer Skins lost Ruination by God ^[91]

Undismayed by this depressing stroke of fortune, they continued their hunt in the direction ^[128]of the lick which Bledsoe had discovered the preceding year. Shortly after this discovery, a French *voyageur* from the Illinois who had hunted and traded in this region for a decade, Timothé de Monbreun, subsequently famous in the history of Tennessee, had visited the lick and killed an enormous number of buffaloes for their tallow and tongues with which he and his companion loaded a keel boat and descended the Cumberland. An early pioneer, William Hall, learned from Isaac Bledsoe that when "the long hunters Crossed the ridge and came down on Bledsoe's Creek in four or five miles of the Lick the Cane had grown up so thick in the woods that they thought they had mistaken the place until they Came to the Lick and saw what had been done.... One could walk for several hundred yards a round the Lick and in the lick on buffellows Skuls, & bones and the whole flat round the Lick was bleached with buffellows bones, and they found out the Cause of the Canes growing up so suddenly a few miles around the ^[129]Lick which was in Consequence of so many buffellows being killed."

This expedition was of genuine importance, opening the eyes of the frontiersmen to the charms of the country and influencing many to settle subsequently in the West—some in Tennessee, some in Kentucky. The elaborate and detailed information brought back by Henry Scaggs exerted an appreciable influence, no doubt, in accelerating the plans of Richard Henderson and Company for the acquisition and colonization of the trans-Alleghany. But while the "Long Hunters" were in Tennessee and Kentucky the same region was being more extensively and systematically explored by Daniel Boone. To his life, character, and attainments, as the typical "long hunter" and the most influential pioneer we may now turn our particular attention.

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CHAPTER IX.

DANIEL BOONE AND WILDERNESS EXPLORATION

Here, where the hand of violence shed the blood of the innocent; where the horrid yells of the savages, and the groans of the distressed, sounded 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 equal the glory of the greatest upon earth.

—DANIEL BOONE, 1784.

THE wandering life of a border Nimrod in a surpassingly beautiful country teeming with game was the ideal of the frontiersman of the eighteenth century. As early as 1728, while running the dividing line between North Carolina and Virginia, William Byrd encountered along the North Carolina frontier the typical figure of the professional hunter: "a famous Woodsman, call'd Epaphroditus Bainton. This Forester Spends all his time in ranging the Woods, and is said to make great Havock among the Deer, and other Inhabitants ¹³¹of the Forest, not much wilder than himself." By the middle of the century, as he was threading his way through the Carolina piedmont zone, the hunter's paradise of the Yadkin and Catawba country, Bishop Spangenberg found ranging there many hunters, living like Indians, who killed thousands of deer each year and sold the skins in the local markets or to the fur-traders from Virginia whose heavy pack-trains with their tinkling bells constantly traversed the course of the Great Trading Path.

The superlative skill of one of these hunters, both as woodsman and marksman, was proverbial along the border. The name of Daniel Boone became synonymous with expert huntsmanship and almost uncanny wisdom in forest lore. The bottoms of the creek near the Boone home, three miles west of present Mocksville, contained a heavy growth of beech, which dropped large quantities of its rich nuts or mast, greatly relished by bears; and this creek received its name, Bear Creek, because Daniel and his father killed in its rich bottoms ¹³²ninety-nine bears in a single hunting-season. After living for a time with his young wife, Rebecca Bryan, in a cabin in his father's yard, Daniel built a home of his own upon a tract of land, purchased from his father on October 12, 1759, and lying on Sugar Tree, a tributary of Dutchman's Creek. Here he dwelt for the next five years, with the exception of the period of his temporary removal to Virginia during the terrible era of the Indian war. Most of his time during the autumn and winter, when he was not engaged in wagoning or farming, he spent in long hunting-journeys into the mountains to the west and northwest. During the hunting-season of 1760 he struck deeper than ever before into the western mountain region and encamped in a natural rocky shelter amidst fine hunting-grounds, in what is now Washington County in east Tennessee. Of the scores of inscriptions commemorative of his hunting-feats, which Boone with pardonable pride was accustomed throughout his life-time to engrave

with his hunting-knife upon trees and rocks, the earliest known is found ¹³³ upon a leaning beech tree, only recently fallen, near his camp and the creek which since that day has borne his name. This is a characteristic and enduring record in the history of American exploration:

D. Boon
Cilled A. BAR On
Tree
in The
yEAR
1760

Late in the summer of the following year Boone marched under the command of the noted Indian-fighter of the border, Colonel Hugh Waddell, in his campaign against the Cherokees. From the lips of Waddell, who was outspoken in his condemnation of Byrd's futile delays in road-cutting and fort-building, Boone learned the true secret of success in Indian warfare, which was lost upon Braddock, Forbes, and later St. Clair: that the art of defeating red men was to deal them a sudden and unexpected blow, before they had time either to learn the strength of the force employed ¹³⁴ against them or to lay with subtle craft their artful ambushade.

In the late autumn of 1761, Daniel Boone and Nathaniel Gist, the son of Washington's famous guide, who were both serving under Waddell, temporarily detached themselves from his command and led a small party on a "long hunt" in the Valley of the Holston. While encamping near the site of Black's Fort, subsequently built, they were violently assailed by a pack of fierce wolves which they had considerable difficulty in beating off; and from this incident the locality became known as Wolf Hills (now Abingdon, Virginia). ^[92]

From this time forward Boone's roving instincts had full sway. For many months each year he threaded his way through that marvelously beautiful country of western North Carolina felicitously described as the Switzerland of America. Boone's love of solitude and the murmuring forest was surely inspired by the phenomenal beauties of the country through which he roamed at will. Blowing Rock on one arm of a ¹³⁵ great horseshoe of mountains and Tryon Mountain upon the other arm, overlooked an enormous, primeval bowl, studded by a thousand emerald-clad eminences. There was the Pilot Mountain, the towering and isolated pile which from time immemorial had served the aborigines as a guide in their forest wanderings; there was the dizzy height of the Roan on the border; there was Mt. Mitchell, portentous in its grandeur, the tallest peak on the continent east of the Rockies; and there was the Grandfather, the oldest mountain on earth according to geologists, of which it has been written:

Oldest of all terrestrial things—still holding

Thy wrinkled forehead high;
 Whose every seam, earth's history enfolding,
 Grim science doth defy!

Thou caught'st the far faint ray from Sirius rising,
 When through space first was hurled
 The primal gloom of ancient voids surprising,
 This atom, called the World!

What more gratifying to the eye of the wanderer than the luxuriant vegetation and lavish ¹³⁶profusion of the gorgeous flowers upon the mountain slopes, radiant rhododendron, rosebay, and laurel, and the azalea rising like flame; or the rare beauties of the water—the cataract of Linville, taking its shimmering leap into the gorge, and that romantic river poetically celebrated in the lines:

Swannanoa, nymph of beauty,
 I would woo thee in my rhyme,
 Wildest, brightest, loveliest river
 Of our sunny Southern clime.

• • •

Gone forever from the borders
 But immortal in thy name,
 Are the Red Men of the forest
 Be thou keeper of their fame!
 Paler races dwell beside thee,
 Celt and Saxon till thy lands
 Wedding use unto thy beauty—
 Linking over thee their hands.

The long rambling excursions which Boone made through western North Carolina and eastern Tennessee enabled him to explore every nook and corner of the rugged and beautiful mountain region. Among the companions ¹³⁷and contemporaries with whom he hunted and explored the country were his little son James and his brother Jesse; the Linville who gave the name to the beautiful falls; Julius Cæsar Dugger, whose rock house stood near the head of Elk Creek; and Nathaniel Gist, who described for him the lofty gateway to Kentucky, through which Christopher Gist had passed in 1751. Boone had already heard of this gateway, from Findlay, and it was one of the secret and cherished ambitions of his life to scale the mountain wall of the Appalachians and to reach that high portal of the Cumberland which beckoned to the mysterious new Eden beyond. Although hunting was an endless delight to Boone he was haunted in the midst of this pleasure, as was Kipling's Explorer, by the lure of the undiscovered:

Till a voice as bad as conscience, rang interminable changes
 On one everlasting whisper day and night repeated—so:

'Something hidden. Go and find it. Go and look behind the ranges—¹³⁸
'Something lost behind the ranges. Lost and waiting for you. Go.'

Of Boone's preliminary explorations for the land company known as Richard Henderson and Company, an account has already been given; and the delay in following them up has been touched on and in part explained. Meanwhile Boone transferred his efforts for a time to another field. Toward the close of the summer of 1765 a party consisting of Major John Field, William Hill, one Slaughter, and two others, all from Culpeper County, Virginia, visited Boone and induced him to accompany them on the "long Journey" to Florida, whither they were attracted by the liberal offer of Colonel James Grant, governor of the eastern section, the Florida of to-day. On this long and arduous expedition they suffered many hardships and endured many privations, found little game, and on one occasion narrowly escaped starvation. They explored Florida from St. Augustine to Pensacola; and Boone, who relished fresh scenes and a new environment, purchased a house and lot ¹³⁹in Pensacola in anticipation of removal thither. But upon his return home, finding his wife unwilling to go, Boone once more turned his eager eye toward the West, that mysterious and alluring region beyond the great range, the fabled paradise of Kentucky.

The following year four young men from the Yadkin, Benjamin Cutbird, John Stewart (Boone's brother-in-law who afterwards accompanied him to Kentucky), John Baker, and James Ward made a remarkable journey to the westward, crossing the Appalachian mountain chain over some unknown route, and finally reaching the Mississippi. The significance of the journey, in its bearing upon westward expansion, inheres in the fact that while for more than half a century the English traders from South Carolina had been winning their way to the Mississippi along the lower routes and Indian trails, this was the first party from either of the Carolinas, as far as is known, that ever reached the Mississippi by crossing the great mountain barrier. When Cutbird, a superb woodsman and veritable Leatherstocking, ¹⁴⁰narrated to Boone the story of his adventures, it only confirmed Boone in his determination to find the passage through the mountain chain leading to the Mesopotamia of Kentucky.

Such an enterprise was attended by terrible dangers. During 1766 and 1767 the steady encroachments of the white settlers upon the ancestral domain which the Indians reserved for their imperial hunting-preserve aroused bitter feelings of resentment among the red men. Bloody reprisal was often the sequel to such encroachment. The vast region of Tennessee and the trans-Alleghany was a twilight zone, through which the savages roamed at will. From time to time war parties of northern Indians, the inveterate foes of the Cherokees, scouted through this no-man's land and even penetrated into the western region of North Carolina, committing murders and depredations upon the Cherokees and the whites indiscriminately. During the summer of 1766, while Boone's friend and close connection, Captain William Linville, his son

John, and ^[141]another young man, named John Williams, were in camp some ten miles below Linville Falls, they were unexpectedly fired upon by a hostile band of Northern Indians, and before they had time to fire a shot, a second volley killed both the Linvilles and severely wounded Williams, who after extraordinary sufferings finally reached the settlements. ^[93] In May, 1767, four traders and a half-breed child of one of them were killed in the Cherokee country. In the summer of this year Governor William Tryon of North Carolina laid out the boundary line of the Cherokees, and upon his return issued a proclamation forbidding any purchase of land from the Indians and any issuance of grants for land within one mile of the boundary line. Despite this wise precaution, seven North Carolina hunters who during the following September had lawlessly ventured into the mountain region some sixty miles beyond the boundary were fired upon, and several of them killed, by the resentful Cherokees. ^[94]

Undismayed by these signs of impending ^[142]danger, undeterred even by the tragic fate of the Linvilles, Daniel Boone, with the determination of the indomitable pioneer, never dreamed of relinquishing his long-cherished design. Discouraged by the steady disappearance of game under the ruthless attack of innumerable hunters, Boone continued to direct his thoughts toward the project of exploring the fair region of Kentucky. The adventurous William Hill, to whom Boone communicated his purpose, readily consented to go with him; and in the autumn of 1767 Boone and Hill, accompanied, it is believed, by Squire Boone, Daniel's brother, set forth upon their almost inconceivably hazardous expedition. They crossed the Blue Ridge and the Alleghanies, the Holston and Clinch rivers near their sources, and finally reached the head waters of the West Fork of the Big Sandy. Surmising from its course that this stream must flow into the Ohio, they pushed on a hundred miles to the westward and finally, by following a buffalo path, reached a salt-spring in what is now Floyd County, in the extreme ^[143]eastern section of Kentucky. Here Boone beheld great droves of buffalo that visited the salt-spring to drink the water or lick the brackish soil. After spending the winter in hunting and trapping, the Boones and Hill, discouraged by the forbidding aspect of the hilly country which with its dense growth of laurel was exceedingly difficult to penetrate, abandoned all hope of finding Kentucky by this route and wended their arduous way back to the Yadkin.

The account of Boone's subsequent accomplishment of his purpose must be postponed to the next chapter.

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CHAPTER X.

DANIEL BOONE IN KENTUCKY

He felt very much as Columbus did, gazing from his caravel on San Salvador; as Cortes, looking down from the crest of Ahualco, on the Valley of Mexico; or Vasco Nuñez, standing alone on the peak of Darien, and stretching his eyes over the hitherto undiscovered waters of the Pacific.

—WILLIAM GILMORE
SIMMS:
Views and Reviews.

ACHANCE acquaintance formed by Daniel Boone, during the French and Indian War, with the Irish lover of adventure, John Findlay, [95] was the origin of Boone's cherished longing to reach the El Dorado of the West. In this slight incident we may discern the initial inspiration for the epochal movement of westward expansion. Findlay was a trader and horse peddler, who had early migrated to Carlisle, Pennsylvania. He had been licensed a trader with the Indians in 1747. During the same year he was married to Elizabeth Harris, daughter of John Harris, the Indian-trader [145] at Harris's Ferry on the Susquehanna River, after whom Harrisburg was named. During the next eight years Findlay carried on his business of trading in the interior. Upon the opening of the French and Indian War he was probably among "the young men about Paxtang who enlisted immediately," and served as a waggoner in Braddock's expedition. Over the camp-fires, during the ensuing campaign in 1765, young Boone was an eager listener to Findlay's stirring narrative of his adventures in the Ohio Valley and on the wonderfully beautiful levels of Kentucky in 1752. The fancies aroused in his brooding mind by Findlay's moving recital and his description of an ancient passage through the Ouasioto or Cumberland Gap and along the course of the Warrior's Path, inspired him with an irrepressible longing to reach that alluring promised land which was the perfect realization of the hunter's paradise.

Thirteen years later, while engaged in selling pins, needles, thread, and Irish linens in [146] the Yadkin country, Findlay learned from the Pennsylvania settlers at Salisbury or at the Forks of the Yadkin of Boone's removal to the waters of the upper Yadkin. At Boone's rustic home, in the winter of 1768-9, Findlay visited his old comrade-in-arms of Braddock's campaign. On learning of Boone's failure during the preceding year to reach the Kentucky levels by way of the inhospitable Sandy region, Findlay again described to him the route through the Ouasioto Gap traversed sixteen years before by Pennsylvania traders in their traffic with the Catawbas. Boone, as we have seen, knew that Christopher Gist, who had formerly lived near him on the upper Yadkin, had found

some passage through the lofty mountain defiles; but he had never been able to discover the passage. Findlay's renewed descriptions of the immense herds of buffaloes he had seen in Kentucky, the great salt-licks where they congregated, the abundance of bears, deer, and elk with which the country teemed, the innumerable flocks of wild turkeys, geese, and ducks, aroused in ^[147]Boone the hunter's passion for the chase; while the beauty of the lands, as mirrored in the vivid fancy of the Irishman, inspired him with a new longing to explore the famous country which had, as John Filson records, "greatly engaged Mr. Findlay's attention."

In the comprehensive designs of Henderson, now a judge, for securing a graphic report of the trans-Alleghany region in behalf of his land company, Boone divined the means of securing the financial backing for an expedition of considerable size and ample equipment. ^[96] In numerous suits for debt, aggregating hundreds of dollars, which had been instituted against Boone by some of the leading citizens of Rowan, Williams and Henderson had acted as Boone's attorneys. In order to collect their legal fees, they likewise brought suit against Boone; but not wishing to press the action against the kindly scout who had hitherto acted as their agent in western exploration, they continued the litigation from court to court, in lieu of certain "conditions performed" on behalf of Boone, during his unbroken absence, ^[148]by his attorney in this suit, Alexander Martin. ^[97] Summoned to appear in 1769 at the March term of court at Salisbury, Boone seized upon the occasion to lay before Judge Henderson the designs for a renewed and extended exploration of Kentucky suggested by the golden opportunity of securing the services of Findlay as guide. Shortly after March 6th, when Judge Henderson reached Salisbury, the conference, doubtless attended by John Stewart, Boone's brother-in-law, John Findlay, and Boone, who were all present at this term of court, must have been held, for the purpose of devising ways and means for the expedition. Peck, the only reliable contemporary biographer of the pioneer, who derived many facts from Boone himself and his intimate acquaintances, draws the conclusion (1847): "Daniel Boone was engaged as the master spirit of this exploration, because in his judgment and fidelity entire confidence could be reposed.... He was known to Henderson and encouraged by him to make the exploration, and to examine particularly the whole country south of the ^[149]Kentucky—or as then called the Louisa River." ^[98] As confidential agent of the land company, Boone carried with him letters and instructions for his guidance upon this extended tour of exploration. ^[99]

On May 1, 1769, with Findlay as guide, and accompanied by four of his neighbors, John Stewart, a skilled woodsman, Joseph Holden, James Mooney, and William Cooley, Boone left his "peaceable habitation" on the upper Yadkin and began his historic journey "in quest of the country of Kentucky." Already heavily burdened with debts, Boone must have incurred considerable further financial obligations to Judge Henderson and Colonel Williams, acting for the land company, in order to obtain the

large amount of supplies requisite for so prolonged an expedition. Each of the adventurers rode a good horse of strength and endurance; and behind him were securely strapped the blanket, ammunition, salt, and cooking-utensils so indispensable for a long sojourn in the wilderness. In Powell's Valley they doubtless encountered the party led ¹⁵⁰thither by Joseph Martin (see Chapter VII), and there fell into the "Hunter's Trail" commented on in a letter written by Martin only a fortnight before the passing of Boone's cavalcade. Crossing the mountain at the Ouasioto Gap, they made their first "station camp" in Kentucky on the creek, still named after that circumstance, on the Red Lick Fork. After a preliminary journey for the purpose of locating the spot, Findlay led the party to his old trading-camp at Es-kip-pa-ki-thi-ki, where then (June 7, 1769) remained but charred embers of the Indian huts, with some of the stockading and the gate-posts still standing. In Boone's own words, he and Findlay at once "proceeded to take a more thorough survey of the country"; and during the autumn and early winter, encountering on every hand apparently inexhaustible stocks of wild game and noting the ever-changing beauties of the country, the various members of the party made many hunting and exploring journeys from their "station camp" as base. On December 22, 1769, while ¹⁵¹engaged in a hunt, Boone and Stewart were surprised and captured by a large party of Shawanoes, led by Captain Will, who were returning from the autumn hunt on Green River to their villages north of the Ohio. Boone and Stewart were forced to pilot the Indians to their main camp, where the savages, after robbing them of all their peltries and supplies and leaving them inferior guns and little ammunition, set off to the northward. They left, on parting, this menacing admonition to the white intruders: "Now, brothers, go home and stay there. Don't come here any more, for this is the Indians' hunting-ground, and all the animals, skins, and furs are ours. If you are so foolish as to venture here again, you may be sure the wasps and yellow jackets will sting you severely."

Chagrined particularly by the loss of the horses, Boone and Stewart for two days pursued the Indians in hot haste. Finally approaching the Indians' camp by stealth in the dead of night, they secured two of the horses, upon which they fled at top speed. In turn ¹⁵²they were immediately pursued by a detachment of the Indians, mounted upon their fleetest horses; and suffered the humiliation of recapture two days later. Indulging in wild hilarity over the capture of the crestfallen whites, the Indians took a bell from one of the horses and, fastening it about Boone's neck, compelled him under the threat of brandished tomahawks to caper about and jingle the bell, jeering at him the while with the derisive query, uttered in broken English: "Steal horse, eh?" With as good grace as they could summon—wry smiles at best—Boone and Stewart patiently endured these humiliations, following the Indians as captives. Some days later (about January 4, 1770), while the vigilance of the Indians was momentarily relaxed, the captives suddenly plunged into a dense cane-brake and in the subsequent confusion succeeded in effecting their escape. Finding their camp deserted upon their return, Boone and

Stewart hastened on and finally overtook their companions. Here Boone was both surprised and delighted to encounter his brother ^[153]Squire, loaded down with supplies. Having heard nothing from Boone, the partners of the land company had surmised that he and his party must have run short of ammunition, flour, salt, and other things sorely needed in the wilderness; and because of their desire that the party should remain, in order to make an exhaustive exploration of the country, Squire Boone had been sent to him with supplies. ^[100] Findlay, Holden, Mooney, and Cooley returned to the settlements; but Stewart, Squire Boone, and Alexander Neely, who had accompanied Squire, threw in their lot with the intrepid Daniel, and fared forth once more to the stirring and bracing adventures of the Kentucky wilderness. In Daniel Boone's own words, he expected "from the furs and peltries they had an opportunity of taking ... to recruit his shattered circumstances; discharge the debts he had contracted by the adventure; and shortly return under better auspices, to settle the newly discovered country." ^[101]

Boone and his party now stationed themselves near the mouth of the Red River, and ^[154]soon provided themselves, against the hardships of the long winter, with jerk, bear's oil, buffalo tallow, dried buffalo tongues, fresh meat, and marrow-bones as food, and buffalo robes and bearskins as shelter from the inclement weather. Neely had brought with him, to while away dull hours, a copy of "Gulliver's Travels"; and in describing Neely's successful hunt for buffalo one day, Boone in after years amusingly deposed: "In the year 1770 I encamped on Red River with five other men, and we had with us for our amusement the History of Samuel Gulliver's Travels, wherein he gave an account of his young master, Glumdelick, careing him on market day for a show to a town called Lulbegrud. A young man of our company called Alexander Neely came to camp and told us he had been that day to Lulbegrud, and had killed two Brobdignags in their capital." ^[102] Far from unlettered were pioneers who indulged together in such literary chat and gave to the near-by creek the name (after Dean Swift's *Lorbrulgrud*) of Lulbegrud which name, first seen ^[155]on Filson's map of Kentucky (1784), it bears to this day. From one of his long, solitary hunts Stewart never returned; and it was not until five years later, while cutting out the Transylvania Trail, that Boone and his companions discovered, near the old crossing at Rockcastle, Stewart's remains in a standing hollow sycamore. The wilderness never gave up its tragic secret.

The close of the winter and most of the spring were passed by the Boones, after Neely's return to the settlements, in exploration, hunting, and trapping beaver and otter, in which sport Daniel particularly excelled. Owing to the drain upon their ammunition, Squire was at length compelled to return to the settlements for supplies; and Daniel, who remained alone in the wilderness to complete his explorations for the land company, must often have shared the feelings of Balboa as, from lofty knob or towering ridge, he gazed over the waste of forest which spread from the dim outlines of the

Alleghanies to the distant waters of the Mississippi. He now proceeded to ^[156]make those remarkable solitary explorations of Kentucky which have given him immortality—through the valley of the Kentucky and the Licking, and along the "Belle Rivière" (Ohio) as low as the falls. He visited the Big Bone Lick and examined the wonderful fossil remains of the mammoth found there. Along the great buffalo roads, worn several feet below the surface of the ground, which led to the Blue Licks, he saw with amazement and delight thousands of huge shaggy buffalo gamboling, bellowing, and making the earth rumble beneath the trampling of their hooves. One day, while upon a cliff near the junction of the Kentucky and Dick's Rivers, he suddenly found himself hemmed in by a party of Indians. Seizing his only chance of escape, he leaped into the top of a maple tree growing beneath the cliffs and, sliding to safety full sixty feet below, made his escape, pursued by the sound of a chorus of guttural "Ughs" from the dumbfounded savages.

Finally making his way back to the old camp, Daniel was rejoined there by Squire ^[157]on July 27, 1770. During the succeeding months, much of their time was spent in hunting and prospecting in Jessamine County, where two caves are still known as Boone's caves. Eventually, when ammunition and supplies had once more run low, Squire was compelled a second time to return to the settlements. Perturbed after a time by Squire's failure to rejoin him at the appointed time, Daniel started toward the settlements, in search of him; and by a stroke of good fortune encountered him along the trail. Overjoyed at this meeting (December, 1770) the indomitable Boones once more plunged into the wilderness, determined to conclude their explorations by examining the regions watered by the Green and Cumberland rivers and their tributaries. In after years, Gasper Mansker, the old German scout, was accustomed to describe with comic effect the consternation created among the Long Hunters, while hunting one day on Green River, by a singular noise which they could not explain. Stealthily slipping from tree to tree, Mansker finally beheld with ^[158]mingled surprise and amusement a hunter, bare-headed, stretched flat upon his back on a deerskin spread on the ground, singing merrily at the top of his voice! It was Daniel Boone, joyously whiling away the solitary hours in singing one of his favorite songs of the border. In March, 1771, after spending some time in company with the Long Hunters, the Boones, their horses laden with furs, set their faces homeward. On their return journey, near Cumberland Gap, they had the misfortune to be surrounded by a party of Indians who robbed them of their guns and all their peltries. With this humiliating conclusion to his memorable tour of exploration, Daniel Boone, as he himself says, "once more reached home after experiencing hardships which would defy credulity in the recital." ^[103]

Despite the hardships and the losses, Boone had achieved the ambition of years: he had seen Kentucky, which he "esteemed a second paradise." The reports of his extended explorations, which he made to Judge Henderson, were soon communicated to the other

partners ¹⁵⁹of the land company; and their letters of this period, to one another, bristle with glowing and minute descriptions of the country, as detailed by their agent. Boone was immediately engaged to act in the company's behalf to sound the Cherokees confidentially with respect to their willingness to lease or sell the beautiful hunting-grounds of the trans-Alleghany. ¹⁰⁴The high hopes of Henderson and his associates at last gave promise of brilliant realization. Daniel Boone's glowing descriptions of Kentucky excited in their minds, says a gifted early chronicler, the "spirit of an enterprise which in point of magnitude and peril, as well as constancy and heroism displayed in its execution, has never been paralleled in the history of America."