

STATION CAMP,
TRADING CREEK, &
WAGON ROAD TUNNEL

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The existence of Station Camp on the frontier of Lee County, Virginia has been previously unknown. Also unknown is the fact that the name "Trading Creek" as used in the frontier period on land grants included much territory now drained by creeks of other modern names.

While researching land grants on the various routes of the Wilderness Road through Lee County, the grant to William Robinson (Virginia Land Office Book 2- page 281) of May 18, 1786 was noted to describe a corner of that survey to have been located 'near the Station Camp". The Station Camp reference in the Robinson Grant could have implied that the Camp was on either the Robinson or the adjoining land of John Ewing

Another historic reference to that site is contained in the Russell County, Va. Court Order Book #1 whose August 10, 1786 page 19 states that "Joseph Boucher be overseer of the main road from the Station Camp to Martin's Station, ". Martin's Upper Station was a well documented fortification located at Rose Hill, Lee County, Virginia, which was part of Russell County in 1786.

By plotting all the John Ewing grants and the connecting grant of William Robinson together as a grouping on the modern topographic map one can locate within a few hundred yards the site of the previously unknown Station Camp.

The July 18, 1787 Preemption Grant (Virginia Land Office Book 12- page 188) to John Ewing contains both the key to locating this string of grants on the map, but also raises the issue of Trading Creek, and what significance it may have played in the location of Station Camp. This grant describes one leg of the tract as "crossing both forks of Trading Creek", and as having been located on Powell's River.

Today, Trading Creek is one of the small head water tributaries of Dry Creek, and is located just to the east of the community of Hubbard Springs. The beautiful Sugar Run flows into it as it heads south toward US 58. As it flows through a narrow pass in Chestnut Ridge it goes underground for about a mile and a half. During wet periods, the stream has sufficient volume to have a flow above ground in the otherwise bed of "Dry Creek". It crosses US 58 just to the northwest of the

intersection with State Route #758, the Flanary Bridge Road. The frontier "Station Camp" was located near this intersection. Trading Creek continues on to join what is now called Hardy's Creek just before it empties into Powell River in the White Shoals section of the Flatwoods Community. This juncture of Hardy's Creek, Dry Creek, and Powell River is the same juncture described in the John Ewing Grant 12-188 as being "both forks of Trading Creek".

Further confirmation of this surprising discovery that Dry Creek and Hardy's Creek were all once called "Trading Creek" is further confirmed by the Official State of Virginia Map of 1807, updated to 1818, by Bishop James Madison, which shows the name "Trading Creek" covering the entirety of the above described water sheds. It also shows mile post #30 on the Great Kentucky Road (present US 58) as being Wm. Ewing's. This site is within a few hundred yards of the site of Station Camp.

These related discoveries would suggest that there was something special about the intersection of Trading Creek with the Wilderness Road (also called the Warrior's Path, Boone's Trail, and the Great Kentucky Road) that determined the location of Station Camp. The research would then turn to Trading Creek, itself, and the origins of its name.

The head waters of the Cumberland River in Harlan County, Kentucky were heavily settled by Cherokee. The shortest route from the center of their settlements at the town of Harlan to the main Cherokee Nation in the area of the Smokey Mountains was to head south from Harlan down present US 421 to Cawood, and then to travel up Martin's Fork to its abutment against Cumberland Mountain, and to then cross this barrier by its saddle with Trading Creek, and to take Trading Creek either to its intersection with the Great Warrior's Path, and follow it east through Moccasin Gap and then to follow the Holston River to the Cherokee settlements; or to continue down trading Creek to its mouth on Powell River, where a dug out canoe could be made to carry the trader downstream to the same Cherokee settlements.

This is likely the clue as to why the settler (probably either Robinson or Ewing), which ever he may have been, chose to place Station Camp at the intersection of Trading Creek and the Wilderness Road. We do not know the purpose of his "Station Camp", but all other known 'stations' in this part of the world were neighborhood defensive structures, and were frequently placed to intersect Indian trails. Could it also have been his purpose to trade with first the Indians, and then with the settlers of the upper Cumberland Valley? There is no known reference to Station Camp having been used either for military purposes, or as a trading station. We are sure that there is a lot of lost history connected with it. Let us explore first the John Ewing family, and then that of William Robinson.

John Ewing's will, which follows in part, is informative. It was written January 25, 1787, and was probated March 1788. Its dates show that within two years of registering his settlement right grant (Virginia Land Office Book 30- page 298) he

WILL AND TESTAMENT OF JOHN EWING

25 January 1787 -Montgomery County, Virginia

"In the name of God amen: I John Ewing, of the County of Montgomery and the State of Virginia, being weak in body but of perfect mind and memory (thanks be to God), calling into mind the mortality of my body and that it is appointed for all men once to die, do make and ordain this my last Will and Testament; that is to say principally and first of all I give and recommend my soul into the hands of the almighty God who gave it, and my body unto the earth to be interred in Christian manner at the discretion of my Executors; nothing doubting but at the General Resurrection I shall receive the same by the mighty power of god. And as touching such worldly estate wherewith it has pleased God to bless me in this life, I give, demise, and dispose of the same in the following manner and form, viz. :

"I give and bequeath to my daughter Eleanore Cocke, my brown mare, with what I have already given to her and no more.

"I give and bequeath to my son Alexander my desk and one young bay mare and colt.

"I give and bequeath to my son William, my negroe man named Lab, and negroe woman named Kate.

"I likewise give and bequeath to my son William my tracts of land lying in Powells Valley, in the County of Russell containing thirteen hundred acres of thereabout."

So here we have the names of his three children. To his son Alexander he gave 1,100 acres on Elk Creek in Montgomery Co, where John was living when this will was drawn up, and where it still may be found in the court house records.

We also see confirmation that his son William is the same William Ewing recorded as living at mile post #30 on the Great Kentucky Road at Trading Creek in 1818, within sight of the old Station Camp. The chimney of this house stood until about 1990, and had an carved arched limestone lintel common of better houses built in this region in the decades surrounding approximately 1820.

His daughter Eleanore was married to a man of local prominence. Charles Cocke was born November 12, 1750. They were both living in present Wythe County at the time, and they and her father later moved to present Lee County, probably in 1778. Their daughter married into the Chrisman family, who had been the original builders of Carter's Fort in Rye cove, and of Chrisman's Station (later known as Rocky Station, Valley Station, or as Cocke's Station) near Dot in Lee County. 1780 finds Charles in command here as a militia colonel of a company of Rangers. (see "The

Appalachian Quarterly" vol. 5, #3). Later records show them living on Trading Creek. He later moved to Kentucky, then to Alabama, then to Arkansas where he filed his Revolutionary War Pension Affidavit. This document follows in its entirety, as it illustrates the life and times on the Lee County frontier very vividly.

PENSION APPLICATION OF CHARLES COCKE

"At a court begun and ? for Lee County, at the courthouse thereof on this 15th day of January 1838.

Declaration -In order to obtain the benefit of this act of Congress, passed June 7th 1832. State of Virginia, Lee County.

"On this 15th day of January 1838 personally appeared in open court, before the Court of Lee County now sitting, Col. Charles Cocke, resident of Clarke county in the State of Arkansas, aged eighty eight years the 12th day of November next, who being first duly sworn according to law. doth on his oath, make the following declarations in order to obtain the benefit of the act of Congress passed June 7th, 1832.

That about the month of July in the year 1780, he was commissioned by the governor of Virginia as a captain of militia, in the then County of Washington in the said State of Virginia, over a company of rangers in the regiment at that time commanded by Co. Arthur Campbell, the number of which, the declarant has now forgotten. That he was stationed, with the company under his command, during the balance of that year, and in 1781 at the Rocky Station Fort, in the county of Washington but now County of Lee, on the old Kentucky Trace, on the Southwestern frontier of Virginia, that during that time, which embraced a period of about eighteen months, the declarant with some part of his command, was in constant service, either in acting as Spies, in pursuit of the Savages, or in guarding the fort. That being himself very active and enterprising, and from his infancy accustomed to the woods, and well acquainted with the Indian character and wily arts, he always himself, when spying was to be done selected two or three men of his command, on whom he could most depend for Service, and with them acted himself as a spy, entrusting the protection of the Fort to his subordinates and the majority of the company that during this service, the declarant several times pursued the savages when they would make incursions into the settlements, murdering the inhabitants and stealing their property and on several occasions he was engaged in bloody skirmishes with the Indians; and can say with certainty that he killed several of them himself on the occasions. That he too, was many times in this most imminent danger, when some times alone, and at other times with but one or two individuals in company and but for his activity and his thorough knowledge of the Indian's habits and characters, he must often have fallen a victim of their savage ferocity. This mode of life, and duty continued from the year 1780 until Sinclair's defeat which the declarant thinks was in 1790. But his duties were not so incessant after 1781 as the Settlements were growing more

populous, other Stations were created, and Major Andrew Lewis, Capt. Hawkins and others were sent out with aids. Major Lewis, with his command visited this declarants station in 1782, which was the only aid he received before the close of the Revolution if 1783. When Major Lewis was here in 1782 the declarant joined him in an expedition some distance down into what is now the State of Tennessee, toward the Cherokee Towns, but although they were often in the immediate vicinity of the Savages, they had at that time no engagement with them. But the declarant has little doubt that this boldness and show of increased strength intimidated the Savages and made them more cautious and less frequent in their incursions to the settlements, so that subsequently up to the end of the Revolutionary War although the declarant was continued in his command as a guard at the Fort, yet his duties were not so laborious, as previously, nor his dangers often so imminent after the Revolution ended his duties still continued for some years, during which he has several active, short campaigns - previous to his appointment to the command of the Rocky Station Fort, he was on an expedition of about six weeks against the Tories on New River who were about embodying to destroy the lead mines. This service he performed as a private soldier under the command of Capt. Henry Francis who was under the command of Col William Campbell and previous to this, and previous to this Revolutionary War, he was on an expedition against the Northwestern Indians in a company commanded by Capt. William Herbert in a Regiment commanded by Co. then Major Christy. Col. Christy with his command was sent to Point Pleasant, and the mouth of Kanawha when Col. Lewis defeated the Indians at that place. This service was performed in 1774 as well as the declarant now recollects, and he was engaged about six months on upwards. Commencing early in May, and ending the latter part of November following. For this last service the declarant supposed the act of congress has made no provision and he mentions it for the purpose only of showing that his early life was one of activity and danger. But he also supposes that from the time he took command of the Rocky Station Fort, about the 1st of July 1780 to the end of the Revolutionary War, he will be entitled to a pension as a captain which rank he held during that time commanding at the same Fort.

This declarant hereby relinquished every claim whatever to a pension or annuity, except the present, and declares that his name is not on the pension role of the agency of any State. His post office address is Greenville, Clarke County, Arkansas.

Sworn to and subscribed this day and yr. as first before written.

Charles Cocke

Teste J. W. S. Morrison, D. C.

This application for a pension was denied on the basis that the service was for "self defense", and was not performed under the authority of the State.

Now. let us review William Robinson and his family.

William Robinson was born about 1750 in South Carolina. He was the descendent of John Robinson of Yorkshire, England, who settled in York Go., Virginia before 1633. Before 1769 he had moved to the Middle Fork of the Arrarat River in the Yadkin Valley of North Carolina, where both William Dorton, Sr., and William Todd Livingston (both later of Chief Bengé fame) also lived.

He became embroiled in a series of legal difficulties centering around a young woman. On 2-12-1769 in Surry County, N. C. he was indicted because he had with force and arms did committ (the) heinous crime (of) fornication upon one Charity Kennedy." Levy Jones was indicted because on "3-20-1771 (he) did beat and falsely imprison William Robinson"; and Lemuel Jones was similarly indicted because on "(he) 4- 20-1771 did beat William Robinson." On 5-12-1772 James Brown, William Hall, and William Dorton were King's Witnesses against Charity Kennedy. After all this unpleasantness, William Robinson and Charity Kennedy were married 3-20-1775. She is said to have been Portuguese and of dark complexion. This suggests that she may have been Melungeon. The legal difficulties continues, however, as this same William Hall was summoned by the sheriff as a witness in a case against William Robertson 5-3-1777.

Moving back and forth between North Carolina and Virginia, he had settled in Castlewood, Russell Co., Va. by 1770. In the next two decades he patented land in Scott Co, and in Lee Co., before moving to Shawanee, Tennessee, near his old friend, David Chadwell -formerly of Chadwell's Station near Kaylor in Lee County.

Charity and William's son, Nelson, was killed by Indians; and a daughter became the wife of the son of William Dorton, Sr., Moses -also an actor in the Bengé drama.

William died about 1804 in Shawanee, and David Chadwell was co-executor of his estate.

As the years passed, the western branch of Trading Creek acquired the name Hardy's Creek, and the eastern branch from its mouth to its disappearance underground became known as Dry Creek, leaving only the northern head of that eastern branch to carry the name Trading Creek into modern times.

In 1895 the L & N Railroad came up Poor Valley and built a depot at Hubbard Springs. This was the most accessible rail head for the settlers of Martin's Fork in Harlan County, and they used it to connect themselves to the outside world.

The spine of Cumberland Mountain at the saddle between Trading Creek and Martin's Fork is a narrow rock wall. Traditionally, in the beginning, settlers from Kentucky would bring their merchandise in wagons to the top of Cumberland Mountain, and hand carry it across the natural rock wall to a wagon waiting a few feet on the other side, and then proceed to Hubbard's Station. Later, they shot out a tunnel through the rock wall, in order that their wagons could make the uninterrupted

passage to Hubbard Springs. This explains why this small heading of Trading Creek kept its name into the Twenty First Century.

This tunnel is marked on the topographic map as "Wagon Road Tunnel", but is known locally as "Hole in the Rock", and is a popular access to Cumberland Mountain by ATVs from around the region. It is the most tangible evidence of the ancient Indian trading route to Trading Creek.

Bibliography:

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HOLE IN ROCK



EWING CHIMNEY

THE CIRCLE CONTAINS THE SITE OF
'STATION CAMP'

