

E E Williams interview with Draper

"From Ellison E. Williams, near Covington Ky, born in Surry County, N.C. April 19th 1770.

In October, 1779, Peter Williams, the father of my informant, arrived in Kentucky from Surry County, NC - at Rockcastle Col. Boone met Williams & a large number of Emigrants, & conducted them in to Boonesboro. There were several hundred scattered along the road. Williams had been out to Bryan's Station in the spring, raised a crop of corn, & was now moving his family there. At this time Col. Boone had not yet settled his "Station."

In Spring of 1780, perhaps, late in May, a party from Bryan's went to Lexington & there joined by others, & started for Falls of Ohio for salt at Mann's and Drennon's Licks. The first night camped within 3 or 4 miles of Kentucky river; next morning early proceeded, for the Whites entered the river they were fired on by Indians from the precipice on the rocky precipice on the western bank where old Leestown was - Stephen Frank was killed: Nicholas Tomlin was shot through the back, but subsequently recovered; & Wm. Bryan (brother-in-law to Col. Boone) had his middle finger shot off near the first joint - his horse threw him, he remounted and escaped with the others. Thinks one was missing. The party wheeled & returned to Lexington that night. Next day party went out, & buried Frank - found his body much eaten by wolves. Hence the name of Frankfort.

For three months in 1780, say from 1st of March to abt the 1st of June, no salt nor bread was used at Bryan's Station. Peter Williams and several others had raised very good crops of corn the preceding year, but the great press of newcomers in the fall of '79 together with the ensuing hard winter, made the corn scarce. The newcomers half starved would have it - and the Stationers divided it as long as they had any.

Bryans Station Siege - The attack commenced Friday morning Aug. 16th, & the Indians left towards evening next day. Among the defenders were James & Aaron Reynolds, the John Craigs father & son; Thomas Hendon, Nicholas & Richard Tomlin, Lewis Gooding, --- Rogers, Jacob & David Stucker, Charles Beasley, Michael Mitchell Sr., --- Adkins, James Twynman, Wm Richards, -- & others & Peter Williams.

Charles Beasley had, but three or four weeks before, been captured by the Indians - was questioned by Girty about the strength of Bryan's Station, etc. - & he suspected an attack was designed: He soon after, one night, managed to slip the ropes with which he was tied & escaped, & returned to Bryan's, just before this attack.

The morning of Friday early some of Capt. Craig's negroes in the watermelon patch were fired on - who ran to the fort with the intelligence - the guns were heard withal. The Indians, evidently did not try to harm, only alarm them, & thus decoy out a large party from the Station. Beasley strongly cautioned against being thus led into a snare - but to prepare for defence - he & others had seen the 5 or 6 Indians who showed themselves scamper off with much apparent alarm, & he rightly judged the stratagem designed.

It was thought best, however, that Aaron Reynolds and a few others sh(oul)d go out in the lane & make discoveries, but proceed no further than they could make good their retreat to the fort if attacked - & they should be properly supported from the station. They moved out cautiously, & when about 100 yards one of the men saw an Indian through the fence just in the edge of the cornfield - & only a few feet distant - he fired &

killed the Indian; the party now wheeled & ran back - Ind(ian)s yelling after them & firing, but affecting nothing. None others of Reynolds party fired, save the one mentioned.

So the decoy failed the main body of Indians[?] advanced from the north to the attack, & aimed their greatest efforts at the north west corner, where Adkins was killed - & were fired on by the garrison as they approached. Don't recollect about the Indians marching to a fife.

Michael Mitchell, Sr. was shot dead at the first of the attack - shot in the forehead. - Adkins, a young man, was shot in the belly & killed, while in the bastion. - Nicholas Tomlin had his arm broke.

There were outside the fort 6 or 7 houses - among them a cabin occupied by James Twyman & Wm Richards as a hatter's shop. This was soon occupied by several Indians - & among other things from there (hastily abandoned with all the contents) was a violin, which some of them got & commenced amusing themselves by scratching on it, so that it was heard in the fort. Reynolds & several others fired a platoon into the shop, & raised much groaning within & several killed - saw none escape. These cabins were soon fired by the Indians but the wind favoured the besieged, & the flames blew towards the Indians & tended to drive them back, besides depriving them of a shelter. This was in the morning. After the siege was over, several charred bodies were found where the hatter's shop stood & burned several days.

Bell & Tomlin had early gone to Lexington for relief. About noon 16 horsemen ducked safe into the fort. - I think, Robt Patterson commanded them. The footmen under the Todds were driven back, McConnell killed - none got in: No distinct recollection about there being two different sets of footmen - one for Lexington, the others from Boone's Station.

Soon after the horsemen reached the Station, an Indian was seen behind a large Elm stump some 70 or 80 yards from the fort gate, over the little run: Jac(ob) Stucker shot with his big Yager, took him in the eye & killed him. And sometime during the siege (particular time not recollected) two Indians were seen high up in the big sycamore tree at the spring, Stucker shot one who tumbled down dead through the limbs into the mud at the edge of the creek - the other scampered down like a bear. - The Indian shot behind the stump was very large & next evening after the Indians had gone, was dragged around by a rope by two stout negroes.

Recollects about Levy Craig

There was no Levy Craig at Bryan's Station during the siege. Possible Craigs who were there include Lewis, Lucy, and Jane [Jeny]. shooting an Indian over the cove of a cabin [most likely when Reynolds & others shot into the hatter's shop. L.C.D.]

Girty Spoke - men shot at him - he laughed & retired. Recollects about James Girty being knocked down, or something of that kind, by a ball.

A good many Indians were killed.

Were several days hauling away the dead, swollen cattle, horses, sheep, etc. The Indians caught & carried away all the horses they could catch - & that such as they could not catch; & killed some of the young cattle for their own supplies, present & prospective. Peter Williams lost 27 head.

The aged Parson Suggett was too old to take part - was praying for the fort &

people.

Jacob Stucker - was near 6 feet in height, a fine looking, smart & active man. He was in the Blue Lick defeat - was the first to return to Bryan's Station with the sad intelligence - in this shirt tail, through nettles, etc.; got his buckskin pants wet in crossing Licking, took them off & threw them away - was taken prisoner, knocked over an Indian with his fist & got away [this note made in a hurry, & is certainly wrong - it alludes to Reynolds plainly. L.C.D.]

Stucker was both at the Blue Lick defeat, & Clark's ensuing campaign that fall: He did not appear like a Dutchman - was truly a hero.

Blue Licks - Samuel Black & others were killed from Bryan's.

Peter Williams death - In August, 1783, Williams & David Stucker went down Elkhorn from Bryan's Station, hunting buffaloes - Williams spangled out his horse, which during the day strayed off, & at night Williams could not find him. Next day he started out from the Station, with his dog to hunt for the horse, & was never seen or heard of after - the dog & horse came in, the dog much wounded & torn, evidently by wolves; & though previously fond of going in the woods before, could never after be prevailed on to go out with the hunters. [Williams very likely was killed by Indians - his faithful dog remained to guard his master's body till driven off by a gang of hungry wolves - L.C.D.]

In 1786, Mr. Williams with his step-father (Saml Van Hook) & family, settled at Higgins Block House - situated on a rocky cliff on the southern bank of Licking, 2 miles above Cynthiana. Capt. John Higgins originally owned the land, & perhaps made the improvements, & sold to Capt. Ezra Reese. Capt. Reese, Mr. Van Hook, Michael Hogg & Daniel Ratcliff resided there with their families - & Wm. McCombs & family lived in a house some 30 rods off.

Wm. McCombs had gone to Lexington, in June 1788, his son Andrew, nearly grown, and a young man named Joseph McFall were the only men to guard the family. Early one morning, as these two young men went out of the house, they were both shot by Indians secreted in the garden near by - McFall was shot in the bowels, ran to the block-house, & died the next night. McCombs had both his knees broken - mortification ensued, & he died the ninth day afterwards.

The Indians loitered around the McCombs house, without injuring any of the family, as they easily might have done, but showed themselves & dodged behind the house, yelling, trying to decoy out the men from the block-house. Young Williams & Sam'l Van Hook Jr. started, but went only part way, when suspecting the intended treachery, they returned. The main body of Indians were collected in the cornfield, back of the fort; & between them & the block-house were some corncribs and stables. They evidently intended, if the men could have been decoyed towards McCombs, to have rushed from the cornfield & possessed themselves of the place.

This failing, they collected some dry rails & other faggots & built a fire beside a stump in the rear of the cribs & stables, in order to burn off the rails & make fire brands of them, & then endeavor to fire the block-house. They did not burn these outbuildings, as doubtless they found them a safe protection to screen them from the rifles of the whites.

Capt. Reese now desired some one of the younger men to go to Col. Ben. Harrison's Station, two miles up the river, for a relief party. Williams volunteered - had to run some 30 yards exposed to the fire of the Indians, & three shots were fired at him, when he

reached the cliff; he threw himself some 8 or 10 feet into the top of a small tree entangled with grape vines, without injury; caught, & descended the tree some 25 feet to the ground in all the work of a moment. Before the Indians could have got round & approached the shore, if they attempted it, Williams was far beyond their reach, having kept the beach, & protected by the overhanging rocks, trees & bushes. He soon reached Harrison's Station; & in less than an hour he was back with Col. Harrison & eleven men. The Indians had wisely decamped, but were too numerous to render it prudent for pursuit.

Col. Harrison settled his Station in the spring of 1786 - Col. Hinkson accompanied him from Penn., & re-settled his or Ruddell's Station.

John Grist - This was the name of the young Dutchman, taken when young from the Wheeling or West Penn. Region, & surrendered himself. Early one morning, as James Smith left Higgin's block-house just at gaze? of days, to go out & kill a deer, he happened to espy Grist in the fence corner close by the block-house, & having every appearance of an Indian, Smith drew up his rifle to shoot him; when he said in broken English that he was a white man, & begged for his life. He told his name, & of the two Indians who came with him. Col. Harrison & Hinkson & a party went after the two, taking Grist along - On Beaver Creek of Licking, near the Big Elk Lick, they killed the old Indian; & chased the young Indian - finally steered their course to the mouth of Snag Creek where the canoe was buried in which the party came over; Harrison's party got there a few minutes first, & secreted themselves, & as the young Indian ran down the bank he was shot.

Grist was fitted out with clothes & money, & started for his friends - & never more heard of.

Martin Wetzel - no knowledge of his escape from Indians.

Lewis Wetzel & Cornelius Washburn, about 1789 or '90 were employed to take a couple of runaway negroes, going to join the Indians. One of the negroes belonged to one Stout who had settled at the Blue Licks: the other belonged to Arthur World, who lived near Hinkson's Station, & was named Basil, who had enticed the other to go off with him. A son of Stout, a young man, accompanied Wetzel & Washburn; they crossed the Ohio at Maysville & pursued several miles - finally discovered the negroes treed & well armed with good rifles. As Basil was behind a tree not quite large enough to cover his entire body, Washburn fired & brought him down - badly wounded. Both was surrendered, were taken back: Basil in due time recovered; but was subsequently hung for breaking open & robbing a store in Bourbon.

Ellison Williams' subsequent services - As already mentioned, was in spring '80, when but 10 years old, in Wm. Bryan's party defeated at the Kentucky river; in '82 the siege of Bryan's Station - & performed the gallant exploit in the attack on Higgin's block-house, in 1786: From this latter date he was pretty constantly engaged as a spy for several years - first spied to the forks of Licking; & when Cincinnati commenced settling then extended the rout to mouth of Licking. In 1790, he settled at Cincinnati: In '91, when St. Clair was defeated, he was engaged as a guard to carry supplies from Fort Hamilton to Fort Jefferson. When Gen. Wayne went out, Williams was in Kibby's spies, 75 men rank & file; & served in the battle of the 20th Aug. 1794.

Mays' horse fell on the rocks, & thus the Indians were enabled to catch & burn him.