"THE TRAVELLING CHURCH"

AN ACCOUNT OF THE BAPTIST EXODUS FROM VIRGINIA TO KENTUCKY IN 1781 UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF REV. LEWIS CRAIG AND CAPT. WILLIAM ELLIS.

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"THE TRAVELLING CHURCH."

It was plain that something very unusual was transpiring at an isolated building in Spottsylvania County, Virginia, one Sunday morning in September, 1781*. The house, which stood on the old Catharpin road leading to the then little village of Fredericksburg**, and which was located about four miles south of the spot since known as Parker's Station, was surrounded by such a gathering of men, women and children, slaves, pack horses, catttle, dogs, and loaded wagons as had never been seen in the county before, but there was no unseemly disorder and but little noise except such as came from fretful infants and from the bells on the grazing stock. The crowd was too great for the house and most of the people were assembled under the trees in front of it where the women had been provided with seats. It could not be a camp-meeting—there were no signs of either cheerfulness or enjoyment. It was not a funeral though all were sad and many were deeply dejected. It was "farewell Sunday" at Upper Spottsylvania (Baptist) Church†—the next morning the congregation was to start in a body for Kentucky. Such an exodus,—one so strange and so complete,—created a profound sensation, even though occurring as it did so near the exciting close of an eventful Revolution. Numerous squads of adventurers it is true had already followed Boone into the blood stained depths of that magnificent wilderness "beyond the mountains", but here was

* Semple's "Rise and Progress of the Baptists in Va." p. 153, and James B. Taylor's "Lives Va. Baptist Ministers." First Series.

** Population in 1781 about 1000.

† Now known as "Craig's" and located 22 miles S. W. of Fredericksburg, in Livingston township, and 4 miles from Parker's Station on "the Narrow Gauge" or Piedmont, Fredericksburg and Potomac Rail Road.

a whole flourishing church about to journey to it, pastor, officers, members and all even as that greater church had journeyed from Egypt to the rich but ensanguined plains of Canaan. How this singular unanimity happened to come about nobody knows but the fact remains and these stout-hearted Baptists, once resolved, turned not back. Even the places of settlement were selected. Most of them were to locate in the neighborhood of Logan's Fort in the Dick's River region of Kentucky, while others would seek the centre of what is now called "The Blue Grass Region" and establish new homes a few miles east of Lexington.*

They set the day for their departure and their own familiar meeting-house was chosen as the place of final rendezvous. Then came weeks of energetic, hopeful and regretful preparation. All kinds of property were disposed of, all kinds of arrangements were made and the Farewell Sunday found them heavy-hearted but ready for the start with packing completed, homes abandoned and surrounded by friends who had gathered from far and near to bid them a last and long good bye. Of these not a few were Baptist preachers of Spottsylvania and the neighboring counties. Among them according to tradition, was Elijah Craig, the bold exhorter of the Blue Run church who had lunched in jail more than once on rye bread and water for conscience sake; Ambrose Dudley who had often labored with him; William E. Waller, pastor of County Line and William Ellis the aged shepherd of the Nottaway flock who had realized what "buffetings" meant long before the Revolution brought its blessed heritage of religious freedom. They had many relatives among the departing throng and all of them but the venerable Ellis soon followed them to the land of Boone.** John Waller, pastor of Lower Spottsylvania

* The writer is indebted to Col. R. T. Durrett and Dr. Wm. Pratt for aid in securing data pertaining to the early Baptists of Virginia.

** W. E. Waller removed to Ky. in 1783—Family Sketch by Henry Waller.

Elijah Craig came to Ky. in 1785. John Taylor calls him the greatest

Church*, and the most picturesque of the early Baptist ministers of Virginia was also there. He was the "Devil's Adjutant" no longer.** The former persecutor, whole-souled in everything he undertook, had for years been one of the staunchest defenders of the people he had once so energetically reviled. One familiar figure was missing from the crowd. John Clay, the struggling preacher for the struggling church in the flat and desolate "slashes"† of Hanover was not there. Only a few weeks before the father of the eloquent "Harry of the West" had ceased from is labors forever. Preachers were not lacking in the expedition itself. Joseph Bledsoe of the Wilderness Church and father of the afterwards noted Senator Jesse Bledsoe of Kentucky; Joseph Craig, "the man who laid down in the road"‡; William Cave, a connection of the Craig's, and Simeon Walton, pastor for a season of Nottaway Church, were four of probably a dozen preachers who accompanied it. Many more came after them, so many in fact that an early chronicler of the church in Virginia calls Kentucky "the vortex

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of the three brothers. See Ten Churches.

Ambrose Dudley came in 1786.

* The Upper and the Lower Baptist Churches of this county, though entirely separate and distinct, are often confused by writers, some of whom have incorrectly mentioned Lewis Craig as pastor of "Lower" Spottsylvania Church.

** John Waller, so profane and reckless in early life as to gain the names of "swearing Jack" and "Devil's Adjutant", was one of the grand jury that in 1765 indicted Lewis Craig and other Baptists "for preaching the Gospel contrary to law." Semple.

† "The Slashes," a tract of piney woods with clay soil, near Hanover Court House. The mother of Henry Clay subsequently became a member of Clear Creek Baptist Church in Woodford Co., Ky.

‡ Joseph Craig, brother of Lewis Craig, when arrested on one occasion for preaching without having taken out a license said, "A good man ought not to be put in prison, I won't have any hand in it," and forthwith laid down in the road and would neither walk nor ride. They let him go.

It was this same original Joseph Craig who said to a niece who was supposed to be at the point of death, "Think of your husband and all the children you have to raise. If you die now it will be the meanest thing you ever did in your life." She recovered.—Hist. Ten Churches.

of Baptist preachers."* Mingling with the crowd in front of the church was a young man noticeable for his fine physique, soldierly bearing and earnest air of watchfulness and responsibility. It was Capt. William Ellis,** son of the patriotic Ellis imprisoned in 1775 for denouncing British tyranny,† kinsman of the aged pastor of Nottaway Church and the military leader of the expedition. Experienced as an officer of the Continental army, and having already aided in the planting of one of the earliest outposts‡ in the wilds of central Kentucky, he was especially fitted both as a soldier and a woodsman for the position to which he had been called. But the attention of the assembly was soon turned to the little temporary pulpit which had been hastily erected in the open air and all eyes were fixed upon the master spirit of this unique movement—its religious leader so to speak—Lewis Craig, § the magnetic pastor of Upper Spottsylvania Church

* R. B. Semple. He adds in this connection—"It is questionable with some whether half the Baptist ministers raised in Virginia have not emigrated to the western country."

** Grandfather of the late Mrs. John Carty, of Lexington, Ky. Hist. Lexington, Ky., p. 29.

† "Hezekiah Ellis, father of the pioneer here named, is the historic character who was imprisoned in the Fredericksburg jail in 1775 by Lord Dunmore, the Royal Governor of Virginia, for publicly denouncing the tyrannical course of the English government. The Ellis family, according to Henning and Bishop Meade, is of English descent, and is listed among the first settlers of the Colony of Virginia. The name first appears in the second charter granted to the London Company in 1609." Hist. of Fayette County, Ky., p. 496.

‡ Col. John Grant, of North Carolina, and Capt. William Ellis, of Virginia, with other settlers, established Grant's Station, five miles from Bryant's, in Fayette County, Ky., in September, 1779. They were driven away by the Indians in 1780, when Capt. Ellis returned to Virginia and re-entered the Continental army. Hist. Lexington, Ky., p. 29.

§ Lewis Craig, son of Toliver Craig, was born in Orange County, Va., about the year 1740, according to James B. Taylor, who says (in Lives of of Va. Bap. Ministers) that "he was baptized in 1767, when about 27 years old."

which to this day bears his name.* The man who arose to address them was then about forty-one years of age. He was not an Apollo in figure for he was barely of ordinary stature and was stoop shouldered, but his eye was expressive, his voice musical and strong and his manner earnest and impassioned. They all knew him. Many of them had participated with him in "the great awakening" which followed the efforts of the zealous Samuel Harris in 1765, and well remembered the day when he so boldly arraigned the famous grand jury of which "Swearing Jack" was a member.** Some of them had been arrested with him on that memorable 4th of June, 1768,† when he was siezed by the Sheriff while conducting public worship in the very building they now surrounded and had sung with him "Broad is the road that leads to death," as they moved toward the Fredericksburg jail, while others in the crowd had not only witnessed this first case in Virginia of actual imprisonment for preaching contrary to the laws for the maintainance of the church establishment of England,‡ but

* Has been called "Craig's Church" for more than a century and is so named on the Va. Campaign maps of the late war. It was constituted Nov. 20, 1767, and was the first Baptist church organized between the James and the Rappahannock.

** See note on page 5. Craig's earnest words at this time deeply impressed John Waller and resulted in his conversion.

† It was on this occasion that the prosecuting attorney said, "May it please your worship they (the Baptists) cannot meet a man on the road but they must ram a text of Scripture down his throat." Refusing to give security to preach no more in the county for twelve months they were sent to jail where they remained about six weeks when they were discharged without conditions. While in the jail "Elder Craig preached through the grates to large crowds and was the means of doing much good." Semple and J. B. Taylor.

‡ Before the Revolution only ministers of the State Church (Episcopal) were free to preach in Virginia. Dissenters who did so without first securing license were liable to fine and imprisonment. Craig and his followers were "Separate Baptists," who, according to Foote (Sketches of Va., p. 318, of 1st Series), "did not for various reasons obtain license for their houses of worship as the Regular Baptists generally did." In

had heard the eloquent denunciations of Patrick Henry, even then the acknowledged champion of popular rights in the colony—who had journeyed fifty miles on horseback to defend them. Many of them had heard the unflinching Craig preach through the grated window at Fredericksburg, others had ministered to him during his subsequent imprisonment in Caroline,* and all had rejoiced in the prosperity of Upper Spottsylvania Church which had continued to grow from the time he became its regular pastor in 1770 until this autumnal Sunday of 1781.

After the usual preliminary services he spoke. Only echoes of that farewell sermon have reached us. Tradition says that he recalled the sudden rise of the Baptists in Virginia ten years before the Revolution; their persistent struggle for religious liberty** and their rapid increase† in spite of oppressive laws, royal power, and a "roaring dragon."‡ That

1776 the Virginia legislature, during its first session under the new Constitution, passed Mr. Jefferson's bill repealing all penal laws against Dissenters and exempted them from contributions for the support of the Established Church. In 1779–80 the State Church was shorn of most of her remaining means of support and virtually dis-established. On the 17th of December, 1784, Jefferson's immortal bill "For Establishing Religious Freedom" was adopted, and in 1801 the glebe, or church lands, which had been declared public property, were ordered to be sold.

* He was arrested in the County of Caroline in 1771, and imprisoned for three months.

** The Baptists were among the earliest friends of freedom in Virginia and their brave struggle for liberty of conscience had much to do with the birth and growth of revolutionary sentiment. Washington spoke of them as "Firm friends of civil liberty and the persevering promoters of our glorious revolution." Sparks' Washington, p. 155, vol. xii.

† They had many accessions from "the Establishment, a patriotic fellow-feeling" being the fore-runner of closer relations as the laity of the State Church warmly espoused the cause of liberty. The Colonial families of Wallers, Dupuys and Ellis mentioned in this sketch were Episcopalian until the period of agitation which resulted in the Revolution. See Meade's "Old Churches and Families of Virginia."

‡ This season of tribulation never became tragic. John Leland, the Baptist minister and writer, who lived in Virginia during this very

he claimed for his people that though the opening of the Revolution had found them already worn and weary from the long campaign for conscience sake they had fought as gallantly for their civil rights as they had battled before for their religious freedom. That he reminded them of the encouraging fact that now, when the country was scorched and wasted and impoverished by the war, the rich and illimitable acres of a western Canaan were offered to them almost "without money and without price" and declared in earnest and impressive words that it was a higher power that had pointed out the way and that the same far-seeing Providence that had ruled all the events of their past was leading them forth to the "wilderness" and

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period, and who was personally acquainted with Craig and Ellis, says, "The dragon roared in Virginia but he was not red. No blood for religious opinion ever stained our soil." Doubtless much of the "roaring" even would never have occurred but for the clergymen of the Establishment who were mainly supplied from England and were not in harmony with the spirit of the times in the Colony. To them the success of the Dissenters meant loss of consequence and of salaries, fees, rectories, and glebe lands. That the laity were far in advance of the clergy is shown by their glorious record from the first mutterings of the Revolution of which Washington, an Episcopalian, was the military leader. The great Declaration of Rights which was adopted by the Constitutional Convention of Virginia June 12, 1776, and in which is expressed that sublime truth "that all men are equally entitled to the free exercise of religion according to the dictates of conscience" was drafted by an Episcopal delegate, Col. George Mason, and Jefferson tells us that a majority of the first legislature of Virginia, which passed laws to make that truth effective, were churchmen. It is pleasant in this connection to mention also the broad and honest treatment of the "Dissent troubles" (above alluded to) by Episcopal writers we have consulted and especially those of Virginia, their condemnation of the short-comings of the Establishment, the credit given Baptists and other Dissenters, and their delight at the separation of the church from the corrupting influences of a State connection. Referring to the sale of the glebe (or church) lands Bishop Meade says, "I have always rejoiced in the act of the Assembly so far as the church was concerned. Such has also been the feelings of almost all our clergy and laity with whom I have ever conversed."

would lead them to the end. He is said to have closed with one of his characteristic exhortations and with farewell words of solemnity and feeling as only such an occasion could inspire. The eyes and hearts of all were full indeed. How deeply they were moved we may faintly imagine when we remember that they believed as he believed and that they had passed as he had through the days and the scenes he had depicted.

Unfortunately but one other feature of these last touching services has survived—the farewell tribute offered by John Waller beginning with the stanza—

"Great sorrow of late has filled my poor heart,
To think that the dearest of friends soon must part;
A few left behind, while many will go
To settle the desert down the Ohio."*

Mr. Waller's powers as a poet were not Miltonic, but he had been to the people who heard him much more than a poet, and his sympathetic words brought many an answering sob.

The remainder of the day, after the dinner that the neighbors had provided, was spent in tearful communings, agonizing embraces and heart-rending scenes for the emigrants knew what this separation meant. Some of them were aged, some were feeble, many were helpless women and not a few were poor. A weary journey of nearly six hundred miles stretched out before them. Even "the mountains" they so much dreaded were far away, and beyond the mountains extended a long and blood-stained path which ended at last only where the tomahawk and scalping knife seemed never at rest. No wonder their hearts were breaking. They knew that for them there would be no return; that they were leaving home and old Virginia forever. They felt as the tenants of the Mayflower felt when they gazed for the last time upon the shores of England. The crowd slowly dispersed. The sun went down upon a strangely silent camp. For the first time the emigrants slept in their wagons—slept after many a prayer and many a tear.

* From Joseph Craig's "Sketch of a Journal."

Before daybreak the next morning Capt. Ellis was astir and giving orders, and the repeated blasts of a horn completely changed the scene. In a few moments all was noise and bustle and excitement. There was no time now for anything but a "campaign" breakfast, the gathering of horses and cattle, a general hitching up and the stowing away of pots and skillets and eating utensils and at the rising of the sun a mighty sound of tramping feet, clattering hoofs, creaking wagons and barking dogs announced that the start was made and the memorable journey commenced.

This modern exodus was no small affair for its day and generation. The moving train included with church members, their children, negro slaves and other emigrants (who, for better protection, had attached themselves to an organized expedition,) between five and six hundred souls * and was the largest body of Virginians that ever set out for Kentucky at one time. And not only the members but nearly everything else pertaining to Craig's Church was going. Its official books and records, its simple communion service, the treasured old bible from the pulpit—nearly everything in fact but the building itself was moving away together—an exodus so complete that for several years Upper Spottsylvania Church was without either congregation or constitution.** There were few in that long procession as it moved out upon the old Catharpin road who did not turn to give a last lingering look at that silent, sun-lit, sanctuary.† How little the sad gazers dreamed that

* John Taylor says there were 200 church members alone in the expedition.

** According to Semple it was subsequently "reinforced by some new recruits and resumed its constitution." Its 124th anniversary (from its first establishment) occurs November 20, 1891.

† It was afterwards improved but Craig's Church of to-day occupies the same site as in 1781, and includes much of the original hand-made material that existed in Colonial and Revolutionary times. It was injured but not destroyed during the late war.

The writer acknowledges his indebtedness to Rev. M. S. Chancellor, formerly pastor of this church: Rev. T. S. Dunnaway: Robt. T. Knox,

days would ever come when that quiet, unpretentious building would echo with the thunders of one of the most tremendous struggles that modern times was destined to know.*

But the lengthening distance soon cut off the dear, familiar view as the emigrants journeyed on past one great tobacco farm after another on the way up to Orange Court House and when they camped that night they had left behind them old Spottsylvania County about which the life-time recollections of so many of them clustered. Their route now led them Southward by "the mountain road" past the hamlet of Gordonsville and thence to the cluster of houses known as Charlottesville which they viewed with no little curiosity as Washington had been quartering some of his captured Hessians there and Tarleton had "raided" the place only a few weeks before. Here they found themselves in the midst of the noted Piedmont country and passing under the shadow of Monticello, so famous now through the greatness of its immortal master, their road extended from Albemarle to the James through the broken but fertile area, since divided, but then entirely embraced in the County of Amherst. By this long established route the now dusty travellers soon reached the river James and after they had slowly forded it to the little knot of dwellings on its southern bank, where Lynchburg was to be, they camped and cooked and rested. Even here, though many miles away, the Blue Ridge could be traced along the horizon by a waving line of misty azure which grew and deepened and became more real as the emigrants advanced and when the old red road through the rolling tobacco lands of Bedford had brought them to the village of Liberty they saw in all their majesty and beauty those "everlasting hills" of blue from which uprose in tower-

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Esq., and W. D. Foster, Esq., all of Fredericksburg, for information pertaining to the subject of this sketch.

* The church was located in the region in which occurred the battles of Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, and the Wilderness.

ing splendor the cloud-capped Peaks of Otter.* The emigrants were impressed but troubled. They knew that though "distance lent enchantment to the view" this was but the beginning of that great succession of mountain barriers which was to cut them off forever from home and old Virginia. They felt this more and more as they toiled over the Blue Ridge at Buford's Gap and realized it to the full when they reached the crest of the winding way and beheld the mighty and illimitable mountains that rose before them in solemn grandeur as far as the eye could reach. Some of the women were already in tears when Capt. Ellis quietly spoke to one of his negro men whose willing hands began at once to make a well-worn banjo "talk." Like magic the signal passed along the dusky lines of chattering slaves who trudged beside the wagons with their bundles on their backs and soon one of the jolliest of the old plantation songs resounded from one end of the train to the other. The merry negroes sang as only the old time "darkies" could sing, the children screamed with delight and the emigrants descended the mountain road with lighter hearts.

The Blue Ridge was crossed. But how silent and how solemn everything appeared and how few the signs of human life. Here and there was a cabin but it was deserted. The scattered settlers threatened by the Indian allies of the British and by marauding Tories of the Revolution had sought the protection of the block houses and the forts. The emigrants had travelled far already but they had never felt so desolate as now. They had left behind them the open towns and comfortable villages. They had seen the last of the old colonial farm house, the lumbering stage coach and the cheerful wayside inn. No cottage window gleamed at night, no anvil rung by day. The soul-depressing solitude of the wilderness was upon them.**

* It was the sublime scenery of this part of the Blue Ridge which so deeply impressed John Randolph as to cause him, while regarding it, to adjure his servant "never to doubt the existence of God."

** This terrible solitude—a loneliness almost palpable—was afterwards referred to by the pioneers as one of the most discouraging, misery-

They had passed the boundary of civilization. Through a region strange and wild and over a route which promised no brighter feature than a lonely post or a picketed station, the emigrants commenced their march for old Fort Chiswell,* more than eighty miles away. No danger threatened them as yet and the dry weather which kept passable the roads enabled them to still retain their wagons which became more and more precious in their sight as they realized that soon they would have to give them up. How they watched over them as they forded the Roanoke; as they heard them creak and groan up the rugged ascent of the Alleghany "divide;" and as they went down the mountain road and crossed New River through its craggy lines of curious rocks. A "long halt," as the Sunday rest was called, occurred upon the way but so complete was the organization of the church** that no feature of the regular services was omitted. But the thought that they were cut off from the world and the awe inspired by the overshadowing mountains affected every heart and the deep feeling which pervaded the congregation made tremulous the voice of the pastor and lent a touching eloquence to every hymn and prayer.

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producing features of the wilderness. It was an ever-present enemy to cheerfulness and to the end of their journey hung over them like a pall. "Even the dog partook of the silence of the desert" says Doddridge, the pioneer author. in his highflown attempt to convey some idea of the loneliness of the route.

* The name sometimes appears as "Chissel" but it was evidently named after Col. Chiswell. an English gentleman, who, according to Howe's Virginia (p. 515), first opened lead mines there. "The fort was built," says Speed in the Wilderness Road, "in 1758, by Col. Bird, immediately after the British and Americans captured Fort Duquesne from the French." Ramsey says of it—"In 1758, Col. Bird, in pursuit of the French and Indians who had recently taken Vaux's Fort on Roanoke, marched his regiment and built Fort Chissel and stationed a garrison in it. It stood a few miles from New River near the road leading from what is since known as Ingle's Ferry," p. 53, Annals of Tennessee.

** Taylor in his Ten Churches says his information was that "they were constituted when they started and was an organized church on the road."

The trip from New River to Fort Chiswell, which was located about nine miles east of the present Wytheville, was soon made and the weary Baptists gathered with thankfulness about the rude stockade. They found it occupied by State militia quartered there to protect the lead mines to which the war had given increased importance and by traders who sold supplies to the settlers who continually sought the protection of the station while on their way to the western country.* The stay at Fort Chiswell was short. The emigrants camped only long enough to barter with the traders and prepare for the changes and the difficulties which they knew must come with blazed paths and narrow traces for they were eager to push on while the weather was good. And now came the greatest trial they had yet encountered—they gave up their wagons. They might have retained them for a little while longer but at a heavy loss and as the trouble must be met this the most important station on the border was the place to dispose of them to the best advantage. So here they parted with their wagons, the only homes that had been left to the women, the little children and the sick. They had yet to realize how much the sacrifice involved. Most of the wagon horses retained were provided with pack saddles either bought from the traders or made on the route by the emigrants themselves and the bulk of the "plunder" from the wagons was placed on these. Not a few pieces of furniture were found at once to be entirely too inconvenient for horseback transportation and had to be disposed of; the renewed supply of bacon, meal and flour was distributed among the regular packhorses whose burdens had by this time been somewhat reduced and a number of the small articles constantly in use were distributed among the pedes-

* It was the great rendezvous of the emigrants, being only twelve miles from "The Forks of the Road," near New River, where the route of travel from the north through the Shenandoah Valley and the other through the Blue Ridge converged. Here small parties of travelers would wait for others sure to arrive and for mutual protection would unite forces and go as one body to Kentucky.

trians both black and white to be "toted" as each saw fit. The necessary changes and arrangements were soon made and at the blast of the horn the travelers broke camp at Fort Chiswell and filed along the road leading through the central portion of what is now the county of Wythe. This was a very different scene from the one presented at the departure from Craig's Church. Nearly all the men and some of the women were on foot, the riders being composed in the main of the aged, the delicate and the little children—these last occupying hickory baskets swung to the sides of horses. Such of the sick as were unable to ride were carried along on litters. The men and larger boys, each equipped with a flint-lock rifle, a powder horn, a hatchet, a hunting knife and a cup, and with a wallet containing bullets and bullet moulds, wadding, tow, a tinder box and all manner of hunting tools and conveniences, guarded the train, drove the live stock and as far as possible provided wild game for the company. The women carried the young babies or bags or baskets filled with lint, bandages, medicine and such other things as might be needed by the sick, the children or in case of accident. The negroes were variously engaged either in "toting" household "plunder," clearing obstructions from the miserable road, or leading the pack-horses, many of which carried well protected and well balanced bundles and packs while many others were loaded with farming implements, hand mills, parts of spinning wheels, skillets, kettles, and the more substantial domestic articles all of which had to "take their luck" with wind and weather. Not a few treasured heirlooms had to share all the chances and accidents of this hazardous mode of conveyance. A great change had taken place in the appearance of the people who now moved in a lengthened line through the mountain valley of Wythe. Knee breeches and ruffled shirts, hoops and furbelows had disappeared. The costume of the tide-water

Virginian of the day had given place to that of the pioneer for no other could stand the wear and tear of such a trip. And so they marched. And the road, now that the most of them had to walk, seemed worse than ever. It was beset continually with rocks and stumps and briers and fallen trees. It led to hill after hill that must be climbed, stream after stream that must be waded and through interminable forests of densest shade. Such travelling was especially hard upon the women and not made any the more cheerful by the reports they had heard at Fort Chiswell of fresh signs of Indians and outlawed Tories* nor by the sight of the solitary graves of murdered settlers which were met with from time to time along the lonely road. Their troubles multiplied. Now whenever they camped at the close of the day, though worn out with travel, the cooking and other duties must be attended to all the same. And there were no wagons to retire to. Each time they had to wait until some sort of shelter was provided for the night. Sometimes it was a tent-like arrangement of poles and blankets and often such a hut as could be hastily contrived by leaning thick branches against a tree or rock. Every evening the bedding and a multitude of other things had to be unloaded from the pack-horses only to be loaded again in the morning and to such sleeping places which never fully protected them from rain or cold must they go at last to rest their torn limbs and blistered feet. And never did the woods appear so forbidding and so treacherous as at night when the camp fires seemed only to increase the gloom, when the hooting of the dismal owl and the cries of wild animals were heard and when the tread of the sentinel disturbed the weary pioneers with thoughts of lurking foes.

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* The Tories in particular were especially active in this region toward the close of the Revolution. Haywood says "The Tories upon the waters of the Holston were as dangerous and as hurtful as the Indians." "The Tories (in 1781) were everywhere in arms committing the most shocking barbarities." Civil and Political History of Tennessee, pp. 63 and 99.

Fearing trouble the Pilgrim Baptists made every effort to reach the stockaded cabins that clustered about Black's Fort in the "Wolf Hills.* Foot sore but determined they pressed on through the wild but rich and romantic valley watered by the three forks of the Holston River and the close of the third week of September found them safely encamped at the desired point—now known as Abingdon**—the most important settlement in "the country of Holston"† which had at that time among the pioneers so marked an individuality.

* So named by Boone who camped there while out on one of his early hunting expeditions. Known afterwards as "Washington Court House" and later on as "Abingdon." Gen'l J. D. Imboden thus locates it: "Abingdon is only about eight miles north of the Tennessee State line and nearly in the centre of Washington County (Va.) which is drained by three prongs, the North, Middle, and South Forks of the Holston River."

** The tradition which locates the emigrants at the Wolf Hills (Abingdon) at this time is accepted as fact. They were then—according to Spencer's History of the Kentucky Baptists, p. 30—"at the extreme Western settlement of Virginia,"—just what the Holston settlement of Wolf Hills was in 1781.

†"Holston," isolated but undaunted, whose settlers figured so brilliantly at King's Mountain and to which the backwoodsmen of the contiguous regions looked so confidently for aid in time of danger, was regarded in pioneer days as a veritable district and is plainly laid down as such on Imlay's map of 1795. Other writers refer to it in the same way. Filson (1784) speaks of the "inhabitants of Holston." Marshall mentions Boone's road "from Holston." Ramsey has "Boonesborough relieved by forty riflemen from Holston." Reference is made to "the route through Holston," and Draper in the "Battle of King's Mountain" puts Seven Mile Ford, (in 1773,) "on the frontier of Holston." The descriptions of it are indefinite. Imlay, p. 15, makes it "The country of Holston upon the headwaters of the same river, on the borders of Virginia and North Carolina." Winterbotham (1796) merely calls it "A narrow strip of country surrounded on all sides by mountains," while Campbell in his History of Virginia of 1850 (p. 142) makes it identical with Washington County of that date evidently forgetful of the great reduction in the size of that county since the Revolution by the creation of other counties from it. The Holston of pioneer days, may, with reasonable accuracy, be defined as all the country between the Clinch Mountains on

The disquieting reports they had heard at Fort Chiswell were confirmed. Kentucky and the road leading to it was beset by savages and they must do like other emigrants who has arrived at the Wolf Hills before them—camp as best they could and wait for a safer time to start again. It was a terrible disappointment. The whole trip had been planned with the view of avoiding winter weather, the very calamity which this delay might bring upon them. The women were heart-sick at the prospect. Though barely three weeks had elapsed since they had started from "dear old Spottsylvania" the time had been so full of cares, discomforts and difficulties that it seemed to them almost a year. And yet only the easy part of the trip had been made—by far the hardest part was still to come for nearly two hundred and fifty miles of that terrible solitude "The Wilderness" stretched out before them. When would they get through and how? But the same faith and courage which had distinguished the members of the now Travelling Church in the historic struggle for religious liberty sustained them again. Huts were erected and occupied but the undaunted pioneers determined all the same to start again as soon as possible and such poor preparations as circumstances permitted were made for the winter travel to which they might be subjected. Bullets were moulded, ammunition gourds replenished, venison "jerked," pack-saddles repaired, extra deer-skin moccasins made, clothing given especial attention and every effort was made to strengthen the sick and feeble for the hardships yet to come. Fortunately grass was abundant in the fertile Wolf Hills "clearings," and they were able to keep their horses in good condition—a matter of the very first importance. But in their anxiety to move on the cause of the Master was

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the Northwest and Iron Mountain on the Southeast, extending from the sources of the three forks of the Holston River in what is now the County of Wythe down into that part of East Tennessee since known as Sullivan and Hawkins Counties. Though in the eyes of the pioneers Holston was substantially an independent district it never set up a government of its own as did its neighbor Watauga.

not forgotten and work was done even upon the wayside. Much to their gratification they found at the settlement a number of Baptist emigrants from their own section of Virginia and on the 28th of September* Mr. Craig aided in constituting them into a church. They had started for Kentucky the preceding December but had been delayed, as the Spottsylvania church now was, by threatened Indian troubles. For nearly a year they had experienced that "hope deferred which maketh the heart sick"—nearly a year of such waiting as had to be endured at an exposed and isolated station whose gallant defenders often during the Revolution had barely enough provisions to keep them alive. And Craig's church waited also and while it waited its pastor preached again and again and there were baptisms, washing of feet and many prayers. And at times there was a mighty lifting up of voices among the negroes for "Uncle Peter" was with them and he set the example. Uncle Peter, afterwards known as "Old Captain,** is the first negro preacher mentioned in connection with the settlement of Kentucky and was the first of his race in all probability to deliver a sermon on Kentucky soil. As Uncle Peter belonged to the Craigs—a family almost composed of Baptist preachers—it accorded exactly with the fitness of things that he was a Baptist preacher himself and he not only did well in that line but frequently assisted Capt. Ellis as a guide for he had travelled the road before. In fact it is more than likely that he was sent out to Kentucky when Capt. Ellis made his first trip to the Blue Grass Region in 1779, for one

* Spencer's History of Ky. Baptists, p. 45, extract of records of Providence Church.

** Uncle Peter or "Old Captain" was a member in 1784 of the Baptist Church at head of Boone's Creek, of which his master, Rev. Joseph Craig, was then pastor. Shortly after this Peter and his wife hired themselves and were allowed by the pioneer John Maxwell to build a cabin on his land near noted Maxwell Spring in Lexington, where Peter founded the First African Baptist Church of that city and of Kentucky. He died in 1823 at the age of ninety. Bishop's Memoir of Rice, p. 230.

writer* locates him about that time near the station Ellis and Grant founded and has him returning to Virginia for the same reason that they returned, viz: on account of Indian outrages. The savages destroyed a crop of corn Peter had planted in his master's interest and he evidently sought shelter at Bryant's Station until he got a favorable chance to go home. Peter had more reasons than one for remembering the road he was now on.

It was during this halt at Abingdon that the glorious news came of the British surrender at Yorktown and the patriotic settlers made the Wolf Hills ring with the firing of rifles and their loud rejoicing. And so passed the beautiful month of October in which the Travelling Church had hoped to complete its journey and November set in bleak and dreary. But with the cold weather came fewer reports of Indian signs, and though straggling Chickamaugas still haunted the trail one danger at least had somewhat abated. The Pilgrim Baptists therefore determined to "go forward" now while the Indians generally were seeking winter quarters, preferring to risk the chances of the weather to an indefinite delay and the increase of savages and troubles certain to come with the opening of Spring.

So early in November the poor little huts about Black's Fort were abandoned, heart-felt good byes were said, and at the sound of the horn the Travelling Church, with the riflemen in the van, started out shelterless from the last Virginia settlement on the route and was soon threading in single file the narrow, wind-swept trail which the instinct of the buffalo had selected, which the Indian and pioneer had each successively adopted and which later on, science itself accepted and broadened for the railway and the telegreph. Wading through the fallen leaves of the naked woods the emigrants slowly made their way down the valley of the Holston between the giant

* Ford in Christian Repository 1856. A family connection of some sort seems to have existed between the Craigs, Ellises and Wallers antedating the Revolution, and it is said that Capt. Ellis made his first trip to the Kentucky wilderness in the interest of all these families. They all subsequently located near each other.

ridges of the Alleghanies entering the region now known as Sullivan County, Tennessee, and winding round on Boone's old Reedy Creek trail of the Wilderness Road found themselves again in Virginia and "on the second Lord's day in November"* were camping on the margin of the North Fork of the Holston River.** It was a welcome rest especially to sufferers from "scald feet," neuralgia, and rheumatism, to delicate women and sick and peevish children who gathered

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* Christian Repository of March, 1856.

** The early pioneer route from this region to Cumberland Gap is thus detailed by General J. D. Imboden, to whom the writer returns his thanks both for information and courtesies extended during the preparation of this sketch. He says—"Big Moccasin Gap, through which Boone's old Reedy Creek trail ran, is two miles southeast of Estillville, in Clinch Mountain, where Moccasin Creek has cut it to its base. Four miles west of the Gap the creek enters the North Fork of the Holston river. Little Moccasin Creek enters Big Moccasin Creek in the North end of the Gap. Boone's trail ran up Little Moccasin to its head eight miles, thence down Troublesome Creek four miles to the Clinch River at Speer's Ferry, thence up Clinch River two miles to the mouth of Stock Creek, thence up Stock Creek four miles to within half a mile of the Southwest portal of the Natural Tunnel through which Stock Creek flows. The *original* trail then left the creek and ascended a tributary branch called "the Devil's Race Path," and crossing "Tunnel Ridge" west of the tunnel came out, at five or six miles on Flat Lick on the North Fork of Clinch River at the foot of Powell's Mountain. The Devil's Race Path was so rough that it was not long used, but a trail was opened across Tunnel Ridge about four hundred yards west of the tunnel and came down upon Stock Creek some two hundred yards above the north portal of the tunnel. It kept up the creek a mile or two and left it near the mouth of Buckeye Hollow—crossed a ridge and came out at Flat Lick. From there Powell's Mountain was crossed at right angles and very steep, the trail running almost straight up the mountain on the south side and straight down on the north side at the head of Wallen's Creek that drains the valley between Wallen's Ridge and Powell's Mountain. Crossing Wallen's Valley say a mile, the trail passed Wallen's Ridge at right angles, descending into Powell's Valley, now in Lee County. Thence the trail ran southwestwardly crossing Powell's River and entering Poor Valley a little west of Jonesville in Lee County and thence parallel with Stone Mountain to Cumberland Gap."

around a multitude of blazing log heaps under the shadow of the overhanging Clinch. And there in the midst of them, while the pickets stood guard, while the negroes watched the horses and listened and while the riflemen leaned reverently upon their guns the pastor of the Travelling Church recites again the story of the Israelitish wandering and then revived their hopes and nerved them to greater endurance by reminding them in glowing words that beyond the wilderness lay the Promised Land and that there they would surely be, not after forty years of punishment as of old but long before the coming Christmas tide. His voice echoed among the beetling crags and above the rushing of the river as he prayed that the God who had sustained his ancient suffering people as they journeyed on to Canaan would also strengthen these His modern children in all the trials and afflictions that were before them. And men and women, bond and free, all joined in a solemn and appealing "amen" for of one thing at least they were certain—greater trials were indeed before them. And they came quickly. That very night the Indians, attracted perhaps by the light of the fires, attacked the camp. But Capt. Ellis and his riflemen, many of whom had fought both British and Indians often before, were not surprised and such a stream of lead was poured into the darkness that the discomfitted savages quickly retreated leaving behind them only the bloody tracks of their wounded to be revealed by the daylight which the women and children thought, in their alarm and suspense, would never come. Fortunately the terrified negroes clung to the horses which were neither stolen nor stampeded and the emigrants were enabled to resume their journey as usual. But they were uneasy—one of the pickets was missing. They found him alas when they had gone but a little distance lying across the trace before them, dead and scalped, and halting they gave their comrade and neighbor the burial of a Christian and a soldier and a weeping family and sorrowing friends left him to his last sleep by the deserted camping-place in the wilderness.

From this time on the emigrants knew little else but difficulties, privations and suffering. The weather they had so greatly dreaded now set in, and exposed alternately to rain, sleet and snow they toiled miserably along the slippery path "soaked with blood and lined with solitary graves"* which led them straight up and down the steep and icy sides of the mighty Clinch, directly over the bare and rocky crest of Powell's Mountain across the slushy intervening valleys, and through scenes and regions which Boone and Clarke themselves had dreaded. For days the rain descended flooding the narrow trace, swelling the streams, increasing sickness and compelling delays at which times they had only such protection from the weather as sheds of bark or over-hanging rocks could give. Rafts had to be built at Clinch and Powell rivers which were too high to be forded, the pack horses had all to be unloaded so that they could "swim" them across and they travelled when they could travel at all in clothing which they could not keep dry and with their shoes and moccasins so saturated with water that they would hardly stay upon their feet. To add to their discomfort the stock of hard biscuit laid in for the trip at the Wolf Hills became mouldy and useless from the dampness and hoe cake made from corn ground in their hand-mills was their only bread as long as bread they had. Often, however, for days at a stretch and until they could supply themselves with corn at such cabins as were still occupied by daring settlers they had no bread at all,** and subsisted entirely upon such wild meat as the hunters could procure and upon beef from the dwindling herd of cattle they drove along.

* Rev. Peter Cartwright who came over this route soon after this time says—"We rarely travelled a day after we struck the wilderness but we passed some white persons murdered and scalped by the Indians."

** The same thing. which was a frequent experience of the pioneers. is mentioned by William Calk in his journal of a trip made in 1775 over the same route. (See Speed's Wilderness Road.) Calk says in one place that he had wild turkey for supper "and Eat it without aney bread." and in another speaks of Col. Henderson's company "broiling and eating beef without bread."

And thus they journeyed moving southwestwardly through noted Powell's Valley to "Martin's Cabin,"* ** one of the last log habitations to greet them on the route before they reached the Cumberland Mountain, that white, Titanic wall which had loomed up before them in terrific and depressing grandeur day after day. About the first of December,** nearly three weeks after leaving the North Fork of the Holston River, the dauntless pioneers crossed Cumberland Gap. Nearly three weeks travelling thirty miles!† What a volume of suffering is expressed in that significant fact. And as they entered Kentucky over the western slope of that stupendous pass of the Cumberland, through precipitous heights and confronted by a sea of ridges and an immensity of naked and soundless woods, they knew that many a doleful mile must still be travelled. The weather had changed before they entered the Gap and their northward way through the county of Bell and over the Pine Mountains was made in the snow. But cold as it was there were times when they dared not kindle fires when they camped for fear of the Indians who continually gave them anxiety and trouble. One of the worst experiences was at Cumberland Ford where the men had to wade through the icy water breast deep and travel 'till night in wet and freezing clothes. Subsisting mainly upon meat with little bread and no salt they made their way through the heavy cane brakes skirting the Cumberland River,‡ past the silent site of Barboursville in Knox, and following the trace directly over the spot now occupied by the court house in London, Laurel County, crossed Rockcastle River at the foot of Wild Cat Mountain

* Now known as Boone's Path," post office in the present Lee County. Va.

** Ford in the Repository.

† Chief Justice Robertson in his Camp Madison address referring to the difficulties of this route in winter speaks of emigrants travelling "two or three miles a day."

‡ Calk in his journal complains of the "terrible canebrakes" along the river.

and camped on the rugged margin of its rock gorged bed. The road all the way from Cumberland Gap to this point was so bad, the interminable hills so icy and the wind so cutting that the harassed pioneers could struggle over but few miles each day and time and again they were troubled and delayed by runaway horses* which saturated their packs by plunging through streams or lost them entirely in the interminable cane brakes. But with all their trials their hearts were lighter for the last great mountain ridge was passed, the interior of Kentucky was reached and though they were yet fifty miles from their destination blockhouses were on the route and old friends were waiting to greet them at their journey's end. The weather moderated while they were at their Rockcastle camp and inspired by the bright sunshine the irrepressible negroes sung by the hour, increasing the hope and cheerfulness of all.

Again the Pilgrim Church moved on and about five miles north of Rockcastle River, where the buffalo path led out toward the already famous Boonsborough, the pioneers entered Skagg's Trace, so recently stained with the blood of murdered settlers, and followed this branch of the Wilderness Road to the place now known as Mt. Vernon. Here, as often before, the weary little children were transferred from the cramped hickory baskets on the horses to the shoulders of the sturdy negro men who trudged along with them with infinite good nature to the next halting place at the head of "Dick's River." At this spot, betrayed perhaps by the camp fires they were again attacked by the Indians who only succeeded however in carrying off some of the horses and cattle. There was no sleep that night in the camp and by daylight a breakfast of "jerk" and corn bread had been eaten, the packing all done and

* One of the greatest drawbacks travelling pioneers had to contend with. Calk says in one place "My hors got scard ran away threw Down the Saddel Bags and broke three of our powder goards and Abrams beast Burst open a walet of corn and lost a good Deal and made a turrabel flustration amongt the Reast of the Horses." See journal, p. 35, of "Wilderness Road."

the emigrants were marching toward English Station eight miles away which they reached without further molestation and where they halted for the night with sighs of relief. They had now reached the anxiously looked-for chain of Kentucky forts and were nearing the lands on which many of them expected to settle. The long journey was drawing to a close.

The next morning with lighter steps and brighter faces than they had ever exhibited since they crossed the Blue Ridge they passed the palisaded cabins of "The Crab Orchard" and filing northwestwardly through the woods and cane brakes headed for Logan's Fort near the spot where Stanford was afterwards established. The news of their coming had gone before them. The settlers, some of whom were their own friends and kindred from Virginia, had gathered to meet them and when they appeared in sight of the stockade they were greeted with a firing of rifles and shouts of welcome which soon changed into a confused but touching scene of hearty hand-shaking, affectionate embraces, eager inquiries, tears of joy and repeated exclamations of delight. The negroes started up a favorite old plantation hymn which they sung with great fervor with a shaking of heads and a clapping of hands and a multitude of lean and excited dogs barked and capered around in excess of sympathy. The settlers with that generous hospitality which so distinguised them made them as comfortable as their limited circumstances would permit and camped once more about friendly walls the emigrants could build fires to their hearts' content and gathered around the blazing log heaps they rejoiced together that their wanderings were nearly over and that they would soon enjoy the luxury of permanent homes. But no time could be wasted and the Pilgrim Baptists halted at Logan's Station only long enough to enable chosen men to select a suitable place of settlement which was soon found. It was determined to locate on a little tributary of Dick's River, now known as Gilbert's Creek,* two miles and a half southeast

* Supposed to be have been named after Thomas Gilbert, first pastor

of the then forest-covered site of the present town of Lancaster and in that part of the original County of Lincoln which now constitutes the County of Garrard. The choice was approved by the waiting emigrants and then for the last time the pack horses were loaded for a march, for the last time a blast of the old familiar horn signaled these children of a modern Israel to "go forward" and amid farewell rifle salutes and many a "God speed" from the fort they "went up to possess the land." Dick's River was crossed, the chosen spot in the wild western Canaan was reached and there, six hundred miles away from the comforts of sea-board civilization, by a stream which for ages had refreshed the unstartled deer and in a forest unbroken from the birth of time, the final halt was made and the wanderings of the The Travelling Church were over. The long and terrible trip was ended at last but those who struggled through it remembered it forever for each could truly say as did the devoted Bishop Asbury who followed them in winter later on "How much I have suffered in this journey is known only to God and myself." How many died on the way, how many were slain by savage foes and how many were injured for life by exposure no records remains to tell nor is there a list extant of the heroic men and women who survived the perils of the wilderness and planted the banner of their faith at Gilbert's Creek. The names of some of them, however, have been secured and are herewith appended,* and many of these names it will be seen, have been perpetuated by old and prominent families of Kentucky.

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of Buffalo (Va.) Baptist Church, though if he was a member of the expedition the fact, like many others connected with the enterprise, was not made a matter of record.

* These names were obtained from family records, "Ford's Repository," "Virginia Baptists," "Ten Churches" and "Spencer's History of Kentucky Baptists." In most cases only the family name was given without either the names or number of the members of the family. The names secured are:

Spurred on by cold weather and dire necessity the sturdy Baptists quickly made a "clearing" in the leafless woods at Gilbert's Creek and established "Craig's Station" on land afterwards owned by John Simpson,* and there in that lonely outpost before the close of the second Sunday in December, 1781,** they had gathered and had worshipped around the same old Bible they had used in Spottsylvania and had been preached to by their pastor, Lewis Craig, and by William Marshall, uncle of the celebrated Chief Justice Marshall of Virginia. And so met the first church that ever assembled in central Kentucky†—a church that had been organized in a distant region long before and whose strange transplanting

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Allen.
Asher.
Bledsoe.
Bowman.
Barrow.
Burbridge.
Buckner.
Craig, Toliver & wife.
Craig, Lewis
Craig, Joseph
Cave, William
Curd.
Carr.
Creath.
Dudley.
Dupuy.
Darnaby.
Dedman.
Ellis, William, and Ellis' family of 5 other members.
Elly.
Eastin.
Garrard.
Goodloe.
Hunt.
Hart.
Hickman.
Hickerson.
Martin.
Moore.
Morton.
Marshall.
Morris.
Mitchum.
Noel.
Payne.
Parrish, Timothy
Parrish, James
Pitman.
Preston.
Price.
Robinson, and wife.
Ramsey.
Rucker.
Shackelford.
Shipp.
Shotwell.
Singleton.
Smith.
Sanders.
Stuart.
Todd.
Thompson.
Walton.
Woolfolk.
Watkins.
Waller.
Ware.
Woolridge.
Young.

* W. D. Hopper's sketch.

** Repository, March, 1856.

† Referring to the pioneer Baptists of Kentucky Davidson says—"To them belongs the credit of having been the first to inaugurate the regular public worship of God and the organization of churches." P. 86, Hist. Pres. Church in Ky. Desultory worship, which preceded the organization of churches, dates back to May 28, 1775, when Rev. John Lythe of the Episcopal church and a delegate from Harrodsburg to the Transylvania legislature conducted religious services at Boonesborough. See Henderson's Journal of 1775, and Morehead's Address.

constitutes one of the most remarkable episodes connected with the early settlement of the Commonwealth.

The fort being finished the settlers proceeded to locate land about it and cabins were soon put up outside the stockade. A church was one of the first buildings thus erected. It was situated half a mile south of the fort on a hill now included in the property of Thomas Edmonson.* This hill, which was cleared of trees, was steep enough for purposes of defence and from it danger signals at the station could be easily and quickly observed. The church, like the stockade, was loop-holed,—the settlers brought their rifles with them when they came to worship and when they bowed at prayer within armed sentries watched without. Here they joined in the services of a faith as simple as it was sincere, which knew neither creed, formula, nor abstract and which had for its watch-word "the Bible and the Bible alone," and here their beloved pastor preached to them with faithfulness and with power and comforted them in their manifold afflictions. For the winter of their arrival brought hard living indeed to men and women from the comfortable homes of old Virginia and their troubles increased as the season advanced. One of the settlers, Miles Hart, was killed by the savages close to the church which he had doubtless helped to build, and his wife and children were dragged off to a long captivity.** Other tragedies followed and some of the pioneers who had marched unharmed with Craig and Ellis through all the perils of the wilderness fell at Estill's Defeat and were seen no more in the little log church on the hill. But in spite of privations and in spite of the tomahawk and the scalping knife Louis Craig pushed on the work of his Master not only at Gilbert's Creek but at other frontier settlements also, for in 1782, that year of Kentucky's gloom and

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* Hopper. The church and its first pastor are mentioned in the "Song of Lancaster," by Mrs. E. D. Potts.

** They remained in captivity five years when they were ransomed by traders and returned to their friends. Hopper's Sketch.

sorrow, he gathered and constituted a church at the Forks of Dick's River and preached at Squire Boone's station on Clear Creek near the present Shelbyville the first sermon ever delivered in Shelby County or in that part of the State.* But the pioneer Baptists, thrifty as well as devoted, were soon attracted by the magnificent land in what is now so widely known as "The Blue Grass Region" where Capt. Ellis had already settled, and early in the fall of 1783 Craig and most of his congregation moved to South Elkhorn, about five miles from Lexington, where they established the first worshipping assembly of any kind organized north of the Kentucky River.** This removal would have been a death blow to the church at Gilbert's Creek but for timely reinforcements from the old "stamping ground" in Virginia. Craig and his party had barely reached South Elkhorn when William E. Waller, brother of the long-ago converted "Swearing Jack," and himself a Baptist minister, with a number of others of the same faith arrived at Gilbert's Creek† from Spottsylvania County, and about the same time the body of Baptists from the adjoining county of Orange that Mr. Craig had constituted at the Wolf Hills (Abingdon) came safely through the wilderness and settled near the station.‡ For the best part of three years they had watched and waited at the little post on the Holston for a favorable chance to set out on the blood-stained and Indian-haunted trail to Kentucky—a chance which came with the formal ending of the Revolutionary War in 1783. Later on in the same year John Taylor, the Baptist minister and

* Dr. Ford in Repository, 1856.

** History of Ten Churches.

† Sketch by Henry Waller.

‡ This church, according to its record, still extant, seems to have started from the Holston settlement on "the first day of September, 1783," and to have removed from Gilbert's Creek "to the north side of the Kentucky river" in the spring of 1784. Its pioneer members settled on Howard's Creek in what is now Clark County, where the church, first known as "Howard's Creek" and later as "Providence," has kept up its organization for more than a century.

historian, with his family and servants, also reached the settlement, after a three months' trip from Virginia,* and thus alternately weakened and strengthened and sometimes reorganized the church at Gilbert's Creek existed during the period of immigration and with fortunes still varying for many years thereafter. It declined during the late great war between the States and by 1865 the brick house which had succeeded the little log church on the hill had become a ruin and ceased to be used. Later on the congregation itself disbanded and now little remains to mark the site of the most notable sanctuary of the early Kentucky pioneers but the graves and gravestones of its departed members in the old church yard that surrounded it. Is there a spot in this Commonwealth more worthy of an enduring memorial than that silent hill top where finally rested the ark of "The Travelling Church"—a memorial to perpetuate the story of that heroic march and in honor of those undaunted champions of civil and religious liberty, the Pilgrim Fathers and Mothers of the West.

And Craig and Ellis—would any account of this remarkable

* He started from Virginia in the fall, coming by water, but winter had set in by the time he reached "Bear Grass" (Louisville). He says of his journey from this point to Gilbert's Creek—"Two of my horses were packed and the other my wife rode with as much lumber besides as the beast could bear. I had four black people, one man and three smaller ones. The pack-horses were led—one by myself and the other by my man. The trail, what there was, being so narrow and bad we had no chance but to wade through all the mud, rivers and creeks we came to. Salt River, with a number of its large branches, we had to deal with often. Those waters being flush we often must wade to our middle—the weather cold. Those struggles often made us forget the dangers we were in from the Indians. We only encamped in the woods one night where we could only look for protection from the Lord. One Indian might have defeated us; for though I had a rifle I had very little skill to use it. After six days painful travel of this kind we arrived at Craig's Station a little before Christmas and about three months after our start from Virginia. Through all this rugged travel my wife was in a very helpless state; for about one month after our arrival my son, Ben, was born." History of Ten Churches, pp. 13–14.

expedition be complete which did not include something more of them?

Mr. Craig was pastor for nine years of the church he organized at South Elkhorn * in 1783 and though during part of that time he was actively engaged in accumulating Blue Grass acres and in speculations which impaired both his happiness and his estate he seems never to have lost his zeal for his Master's cause. His own congregation continued large and he was connected with the establishment of most of the early churches in the Elkhorn Association, "the oldest fraternity of the kind west of the Alleghany Mountains.** In 1792 he removed to Mason County, Ky., and settled on a farm he bought about three miles from Dover.† The next year his preaching resulted in the founding of the old Bracken Church near the neighboring town of Minerva, of which church he was the first pastor, and through his efforts several other congregations in that part of the State were subsequently gathered and organized and he is justly styled "the father of the Bracken Association" constituted in 1799. Mr. Craig lived in Mason County for nearly thirty-three years and there ended his long and useful life. One writer ‡ says of him "His last days were distinguished by increased spirituality of mind. His trials had been greatly sanctified to his good and like a little child he yielded quietly to the will of his Father." He seems to have predicted his own death, which occurred at the home of his grand-daughter, Mrs. Craig Childs, who lived in the old Bracken Church neighborhood. "He died suddenly," says John Taylor, § "of which he was forewarned saying 'I am

* Preaching first in the woods and then in his grist-mill until a church building was erected. See Dr. Basil Manly's interesting sketch of South Elkhorn Church in Address of 1877.

** Spencer.

† The farm is near the turnpike leading from Dover to Minerva (both of which are in Mason County) and is now owned by Andrew Tobin.

‡ J. B. Taylor in Va. Bap. Ministers, p. 88.

§ History of Ten Churches.

going to such a house to die' and with solemn joy he went on to the place and with little pain left the world." In the case of Lewis Craig "the way of the world" is sadly exemplified. He was once "the great exhorter" and the most notable figure among the pioneer Baptists of Kentucky but for nearly three quarters of a century the year of his death has been mis-stated,* and the place of his burial has almost been forgotten. He died in the summer of 1825** in the eighty-fifth year of his age and was interred on the farm in Mason County already mentioned. His grave can be clearly identified but no stone marks the spot where sleeps the man whose name is interwoven with the history of many Baptist churches—the champion of liberty of conscience who preached through prison bars—the pastor of famous Travelling Church.

Captain William Ellis tarried at Gilbert's Creek, after the arrival of the Travelling Church there, until the following spring (1782) when he was joined by his old friend Col. John Grant and together they made a second, and this time successful effort, to establish themselves in the centre of the Blue Grass Region from whence they had been driven by the savages in 1779. The colony which now left Gilbert's Creek, was mainly composed of kinsmen and connections of Capt. Ellis† and a goodly number of their Spottsylvania neighbors all of whom had come with him through the wilderness. They went directly to Lexington station and from thence the majority of the company under the leadership of Capt. Ellis pushed on to the headwaters of Boone's Creek and there planted the settlement now known as Chilesburg or "the David's Fork neighborhood."‡ But they paid in suffering for all the land they settled.

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* We have never seen either a biography or an encyclopedia which gave the year of his death correctly.

** The full date could not be secured. His will was probated in the Mason County Court at the September term, 1825.

† The names of many of them are given in the list of names at foot of page 31.

‡ History of Fayette County, Ky., p. 232.

They had hardly built and occupied their cabins when they were compelled to seek shelter from the Indians in the adjoining forts. It was the year of "the great invasion" and they only returned to their log homes at David's Fork after the men had done their part at the siege of Bryant's Station and at the battle of the Blue Licks and after the women had nursed their wounded and agonized over their dead. In 1784, when another invasion was expected, a military conference was held at Boone's Station* a few miles from David's Fork and at the instance of Daniel Boone Capt. Ellis was designated to command a force of pioneers but fortunately the threatened incursion did not take place. Shortly after this his old friends and neighbors William E. Waller, Ambrose Dudley and Joseph Craig followed him to Fayette County and aided in the establishment of some of its earliest churches. Capt. Ellis was one of the original members of the Bryant's Station church (Baptist) and of David's Fork founded in 1786 of which congregation his descendants and family connections subsequently formed a large part. In 1786 he was married to Elizabeth Shipp. His experience as a Revolutionary soldier caused him to be repeatedly called upon in times of danger. He took part in the campaign against the Ohio Indians; served in the fall of 1790 with Col. Trotter in Harmar's celebrated expedition and the next year shared in the horrors and sufferings of the disastrous defeat of St. Clair.** He and Lewis Craig never forgot each other. To the day of his death the warmest friendship existed between them and in the name of his son Lewis Craig Ellis,† the old Indian fighter, perpetuated in his family the memory of his indomitable pastor and his comrade in the march of suffering through "the wilderness." "He was—says the History of Fayette County ‡—a man of remark-

* History of Fayette County, Ky., p. 484.

** Idem, p. 486.

† His portrait by Park, interesting as one of the first ever painted in the Western Country, is now owned by a descendant, Mrs. Ranck.

‡ P. 496.

able energy and fine character and quick to encourage every worthy enterprise. His hospitality was proverbial and dispensed with the liberality of a pioneer Kentuckian united with the charming manners of the old school Virginian. He died in the year 1800 and was interred in the family graveyard upon his farm." And there under the blue grass of the county he helped to settle sleeps the Revolutionary soldier, the old pioneer and the military leader of The Travelling Church.