

CHAPTER 05

THE SETTLERS WIN A 3-YEAR BLOODY DEBATE

Pages 28 – 33

(Transcribed by Dorothy Harlan)

The Second War With England Sends Indians on the Warpath in the Boon's Lick Country--Sarshall Cooper, Invoking God's Blessing, Writes Governor Howard That the First 300 Will Defy the Jaws of Death--Hannah Cole, Pioneer Mother, Averts Massacre While Hunters Are Absent From Stephen Cole's Fort--Besieged Rangers Pick a "Naval" Fight, Win From Frenchmen and Confound Savages--Thrice the Whites Thwart Major Offensives and Consistently Strengthen Their Frontier Footholds--Breath-Taking Adventures, Narrow Escapes, Mayhem and Murder Are Frequent With No Quarter Given or Asked--General Dodge's Rangers Help to Capture Miamis and Benjamin Cooper Quarrels With His Superior for Protecting the Redskins as Prisoners of War--Sarshall Cooper Is Murdered at His Fireside--The Slaying of Samuel McMahan Precipitates the Building of Hannah Cole's Fort, Discourage Further Attacks and Ending Three Turbulent Years.

RUMORS of impending war with England filtered into the wilderness late in 1811, bringing misgivings.

Governor Benjamin Howard sent a messenger from St. Louis to Boon's Lick advising settlers to move east for protection. Captain Sarshall Cooper replied:

We have maid our hoams here & all we hav is her & it wud ruen us to Leave now. We be all good Americans, *not a Tory or one of his Pups among us* & we have 2 hundred Men and Boys that will Fight to the last and we have 100 Wimen and Girls that will tak there places wh. makes a good force. Se we can Defend this Settlement wh. with Gods Help we will do. So if we had a flew barls of Powder and 2 hundred Lead is all we ask.

In 1810 the men living north of the river, most with families, included Kentuckians, Tennesseans, Virginians, Georgians, Carolinians and southeast Missourians. Kentuckians predominated. A count of noses revealed the following groups:

From Madison County, Kentucky--Benjamin, Francis, William, Daniel, John, Sarshall, Braxton, Joseph, Stephen and Robert Cooper and Braxton Cooper, Jr., James and Albert Hancock, William and John Berry, Robert Irvin, Robert Brown, Joseph and William Wolfscale, William, John, Josiah and James Thorpe, Gillard Roupe, James Jones, John Peak and Adam Woods.

From Estill County, Kentucky--Amos, Otho and Jesse Ashcraft and James Alexander . . . From Tennessee--John and Henry Ferrell and Robert Hancock . . . From Virginia--James Kile . . . From South Carolina--Gray Bynum. . . . From Georgia--Stephen Jackson . . . From Ste. Genevieve County, Missouri--Peter Popineau. . . . Previous residence unknown--James Middleton and William Anderson and John Busby.

SOUTH of the river were the two Cole families, the Widow Hannah and her nine children: Jennie, Mattie, Dickie, Nellie, James, Holbert, Stephen, William, and Samuel; and Stephen and his wife, Phoebe, and their five: James, Rhoda, Mark, Nellie and Polly. The Cole parents originally were from New River, Virginia, emigrating west first to Wayne County, Kentucky, and then to Loutre Island, below the Gasconade river.

During the winter of 1811 and spring of 1812 the Cole settlement was augmented by arrival of the following, most with families.

Joseph Jolly, Joseph Yarnell, Gilliard Roupe, Muke Box, Delaney Bolin, William and John Savage and Walter and David Burress.

WHEN the Indians became morose and restless the settlers built strongholds. *Stephen Cole's Fort*, built in 1812, was located east of the site of Boonville on a river bluff north of the present Henry F. Stretz farm.

Forts Cooper, Hempstead and Kincaid were reared in the Boon's Lick neighborhood. Fort Cooper was southwest of the Lick Kincaid nine miles to the southeast and Hempstead just short of two miles north of Kincaid.

A COMPANY of 112 rangers was formed, commanded by Sarshall Cooper. The rangers were as colorful and daring in their day as the Rough Riders in the Spanish-American War.

Captain Cooper's muster-roll:

First lieutenant, William McMahan; *second lieutenant*, David McQuilty; *third lieutenant*,

End of page 28

John Monroe; *ensign*, Ben Cooper; *first to fifth sergeants* in the order named: John McMurray, Sam McMahan, Adam Woods, David Todd and John Mathews.

Corporals--Andrew Smith, Thomas Vaughn, James McMahan, John Busby, and James Barnes.

Privates--Jesse and Otho Ashcraft, Jesse Cox, Sam Perry, Solomon Cox, Henry Ferrill, Harmon Gregg, Robert Cooper, Gray Bynums, David, John, William, Joseph, Braxton, Francis and Stephen Cooper.

Abbott Hancock, William Thorpe, William Reid, Stephen Turley, Thomas McMahan, James and William Anderson, Stephen Jackson, John Hancock, Robert Irvin, Benoni Sappington, James, John and Joseph Cooley, Nathan Teague, James Douglass, John Sneathan.

William and Peter Cresson, William and Ervin McLane, James Turner, William Baxter, David Burness, Price Arnold, John Smith, John Stephenson, Alfred Head, Gilliard Roupe, Daniel Durbin, James Cockyill, Jesse Tresner, Mitchell and Robert Poage, John Townsend and Robert Brown, John Arnold, Francis Berry, Lindsay Carson (father of Kit Carson, the western scout), David and Joseph Boggs, Jesse Richardson, John Peak, John Elliott, Andrew Carson, Reuben Fugitt, Seibert Hubbard, William Brown, Francis Woods, William Allen, Robert Wells, Joseph Moody.

Joseph Alexander, Amos, John and Abraham Barnes, Daniel Hubbard, Harris Jamison, William Ridgeway, Enoch Taylor, Mathew Kincaid, Henry Waldon, John Pursley, William Monroe.

Isaac Thornton, Stephen Feils, Dan Monroe, Giles Williams, Henry Barnes, William, John and James Savage. Thomas Chandler, John Jokley, Stephen Cole, William Robertson, William and Delaney Bolen, Muke Box, Sabert Scott, James and Stephen Cole, Jr., John Ferrill, Joseph McMahan and Robert Hancock.

The muster roll reveals names of many arrivals after 1810.

CAPTAIN SARSHALL COOPER did not overestimate his rangers. During three years of war *the Indians failed in every major offensive*. Thrice they descended stealthily with from 300 to 500 braves but never surprised the settlements. They were promptly repulsed by effective fire from the long hunting rifles of the frontiersmen, many of whom could hit a squirrel's eye at 100 yards.

At first sign of trouble in 1812 settlers on both sides of the river abandoned their meager farm operations and "forted up." Hunters brought in ample game, and scouts the latest information.

The Indians proceeded to steal horses, drive off cattle and murder settlers caught off guard.

THE first victims were *Jonathan Todd* and *Thomas Smith* of the settlement north of the river. While hunting stray horses on Thrall's Prairie near the present line between Boone and Howard counties, they were attacked by 200 Sacs and Foxes.

They gave a good account of themselves and sold their lives dearly. Firing effectively during a mile retreat, they gave the savages a fore-taste of what war against the white man would mean. They killed four or six Indians. Reports vary. Then they were killed near each other.

The Indians scalped them, cut off their heads and stuck them on poles beside the trail. Rangers who brought in the bodies captured a spying Indian. While they were taking him to Kincaid for questioning he broke away and unable to overtake him, they shot, killing him instantly.

The murders of Todd and Smith whetted the Sac and Fox thirst for blood but they felt unequal to attacking the populous forts north of the river.

SO THEY crossed the Missouri toward Cole's Fort. The bad news had reached the south settlement and *James Cole* and *James Davis* were out investigating.

The rampant, yet crafty braves cut off their return. Silently, that the Cole garrison might not know, the tribesmen bore down from the west. A marathon of 25 miles ensued with the pursuers, sometimes within range. At dusk the pair gained Johnson's "factory," a deserted trading post 200 yards above the mouth of Moniteau creek in what is now Moniteau County.

The Indians surrounded the factory but deferred attack. Cole and Davis removed a floor plank, found a canoe and floated downstream.

Entering the river an unlucky stroke of a paddle betrayed them. Hiding in thickets along the south bank, they crept west, and with daylight made a run for it.

Close pressed near Big Lick, they turned, fired and each killed an Indian. Their fire was returned without effect. They reached the fort safely. The Indians skulked about for two days but did not attack.

SHORTLY thereafter, however, 400 Indians suddenly appeared in a wide semi-circle along the forest's fringe beyond Stephen Cole's fort. Two parties of hunters were absent from the garrison.

When a pair name *Smith* and *Savage* returned they were pursued and attacked. In the first fire Smith was mortally wounded. He staggered to within fifty yards of the refuge. Then two more shots dropped him. Handing Savage his gun he gasped, "Save yourself; I'm done."

Through a hail of bullets Savage gained safety. The Indians scalped Smith, mutilated

End of page 29

his body and danced and yelled while the settlers peered from behind their wooded enclosure. The warriors waved the gory scalp.

Samuel Cole, 11, begged his mother to let him shoot. Hannah refused, saying that since the fort was not fired on it would be folly to invite attack with some defenders absent.

The Indians finally withdrew. That night the other hunters slipped home.

NEXT DAY, with Cole's Fort surrounded on three sides, *the intrepid settlers exposed themselves on the river to vanquish a new foe*. They captured a French keelboat laden with powder and lead for trade with Indians at Council Bluffs.

They confiscated its 25 kegs of powder and 500 pounds of balls, a magnificent arsenal compared to the homemade powder Joseph Jolly manufactured of saltpetre from a cave near Rocheport.

The rangers then calmly used the big craft to remove their families, live stock and all other possessions across to Fort Kincaid.

This accomplished, they kicked the Frenchmen in the pants, shoved them aboard and told them to get down the river. A return would mean hanging.

LATER during the summer of 1812 *Samuel* and *Stephen Cole* and *Muke Box*, hunting on the south side, were fired at and retreated to the river, only to discover their canoe had been stolen.

While one fired to hold off the attackers the others lashed clothing and guns to logs and the party swam alongside back to Kincaid.

That night eight Indians reconnoitered the fort. Next day with 42 reinforcements the garrison surrounded the prowlers in a hollow four miles northwest of the site of New Franklin. A long battle ensued, with much random

firing. Four Indians were killed. The others, wounded, escaped after nightfall. One ranger, Adam Woods, was shot, but recovered.

The whites' warfare was pushed again next day. The rangers followed a bloody trail to the river where they found the Cole canoe stolen two days before. There was much blood on it. The quarry had limped and floated away in the night.

The force and fury of manpower in that man-hunt must have impressed the tribes. Autumn and winter passed without further trouble.

BLACKHAWK, the former running mate of Samuel Cole, had wandered far from his boyhood haunts and few Indians just then roamed the bluffs about Stephen Cole's abandoned fort near the crowded citadels north of the river.

Blackhawk, merely a brave in peacetime, as a leader in war, won the rank of chief. He was a lively, ambitious, crafty youth who got around and, in time, knew his way about. His Indian name was *Ma-ka-tai-me-she-kia-kiak*, meaning Black Sparrowhawk.

Around 1810 and later he dwelt for some time at the house of Adam Zumwalt on the south side of the Cuivre river in northern St. Charles County. Zumwalt, a small time distiller, had four beautiful daughters. Blackhawk became enamored of one and offered to buy her for 12 horses. The girls utilized Blackhawk's infatuation to make him bring water from the spring, chop wood and do other chores. That was the way to win a white wife, they said. He attended dances, learning the quadrille. He was well treated, settlers there depending on his influence for peace.

In 1812 the British gave him a uniform, called him "*General*" and gave him command of 500 Indians. He then made a special request that he be permitted to attack the St. Charles settlements, saying he was familiar with the country. Doubtless he yearned to assign Miss Zumwalt to chop wood.

The British, however, vetoed the idea and sent him into Michigan and northern Ohio. Temporarily the theater of war was removed from the Boon's Lick Country.

WHEN tiny leaves appeared in the spring of 1813 the "forted" families felt the urge to dig in the soft, warm earth. Several months of quiet had reassured them. In a general exodus the defenders of Cole's Fort returned to their homes south of the river, anxious to grow crops, for there had been no harvest in 1812.

All settlers south of the river lived close to Fort Cole. As corn was planted and cultivated *a guard stood in each corner of the field*. Farming of necessity was communal. Many a plowman carried a gun slung over his shoulder.

A man found asleep on guard duty must grind a peck of meal for each widow in the community. There were seven widows at Fort Hempstead.

EARLY in the spring of 1813 Indians appeared north of the river. *James Alcorn, Frank Wood* and two other men making salt at Burekhardt's Lick to supply the forts were attacked by 20. They killed three, wounded others and drove off the rest. Wood killed two, although suffering from a severe wound

End of Page 30

in the arm received from Indians a week before.

In another attack on salt-makers there, *John Austin's* mount was shot in the head and fell on him. As he was trying to extricate himself from under the dead animal the painted warriors advanced. *George Huff* killed two Indians with one shot and others fell back. Austin and Huff then raced to Fort Kincaid and to safety.

DURING July, 1813, about 500 Miami Indians were camped near the site of Miami, Saline County. About 100 of them, possibly with some Quapas, slipped across the river and down to the settlement in the bottoms four miles northwest of the site of Boonville. They were disguised as Sacs and Foxes.

Campbell Bowlin and *Adam McCord* were tying flax at Bowlin's cabin. The Indians fired on them when they went out into a field to investigate moccasin tracks. Bowlin was killed. McCord escaped to Kincaid.

Settlers traced the moccasin tracks to the Miami village and Colonel Benjamin Cooper of Fort Cooper wrote to Governor William Clark in St. Louis, asking that proper action be taken against the Miamis.

On receipt of Cooper's letter Governor Clark dispatched General Henry Dodge with 350 mounted rangers to go to relief of the settlers. However, communication and transportation being slow, it was September, before the command arrived in the Boon's Lick country.

IN THE MEANTIME, earlier that month *Braxton Cooper, Jr.*, was killed two miles northeast of the site of New Franklin and within a mile of Fort Cooper. He was alone, cutting logs for a cabin.

Young, well armed and fearless, he fought against overwhelming odds. That night, guided by mournful howls of a faithful dog that stayed by his dead master, David Boggs and Jesse Turner, crawled out to where Cooper lay face down, a knife, bloody to the hilt, clutched in his right hand.

An Indian's buckskin hunting shirt, bloody and having two bullet holes, lay nearby. Cooper had not been scalped. Evidently *he put his assailants to flight before he died.*

WITH indignation at fever heat General Dodge's companies from St. Louis, Loutre Island and Cape Girardeau appeared, commanded by Captains W. Compton, Issac Van Bibler and Daugherty respectively. He also had as scouts 40 friendly Delawares and Shawnees from along the Mississippi.

Dodge joined Captain Sarshall Cooper's company of Boon's Lick rangers by swimming his cavalry to the south bank at a point near Arrow Rock. The crossing required two hours. General Dodge, carrying blank commissions, made Benjamin Cooper, elder brother of Sarshall, a major. Nathaniel Cooke and Daniel M. Boone also were majors, coming with the expedition from St. Louis.

After the scouts located the Miamis the force surrounded the savages who had thrown up earthworks at Miami Bend. One look at the preponderance of whites, and the Miamis proposed to the Shawnees that they be accepted as prisoners of war.

Dodge conferred with his staff. All agreed to it. But after the surrender the frontiersmen discovered among possessions of the Miamis the rifle of Campbell Bowlin.

Major Cooper and the Boon's Lick rangers gathered about General Dodge with cocked guns, demanding the Indian guilty of murdering Bowlin be delivered to them for hanging, or they would kill all the prisoners--31 braves and 122 squaws and children.

Without looking at his men, Dodge drew his sword, pointed it close to Major Cooper's breast, reminding him of his pledge to protect the prisoners. He cautioned that if the threat were carried out Cooper would be the first to feel the consequences.

Major Boone rode up at that tense moment and, going to Dodge's side, announced he would stand by him to the end. Cooper and his men yielded to their superior officer. The Miamis were herded to St. Louis.

General Dodge later was governor of Wisconsin Territory and twice United States senator from Wisconsin. However, for years he was unpopular in the Boon's Lick country. *Frontiersmen gave and expected no quarter in Indian warfare.*

REMOVAL of the Miamis did not stop outrages. *William McLean* was killed near the site of Fayette a few weeks later -- in October, 1813.

The same month *Joseph Still* and young *Stephen Cooper*, returning from scouting the Chariton river, were intercepted by about 100 unmounted Sacs. With rifles cocked the scouts rode to the line, fired and spurred through.

Still wounded a brave and Cooper killed one. Still was shot dead from his horse. A rain of lead and arrows missed Cooper, and his steed soon out-distanced his pursuers.

Joe, slave of Samuel Brown, was slain near the site of Estill.

Two slaves of *James and John Heath*, cutting wood for making salt on Heath's creek in the present Blackwater township, were captured by Indians. A posse of 60 whites pursued them to the Chariton but they escaped with their prisoners.

In 1814 *William Gregg*, who lived in a family blockhouse on the south side of the Missouri above the site of Arrow Rock, was ambushed and killed. His daughter Patsy, a prisoner, rode behind a brave. She spied a relief posse.

Slipping the Indian's knife from its sheath, she cut the thong that bound an arm to one of his, and leaped from his mount into the brush. The posse then opened fire and scattered the savages.

THE MORALE of the settlers was most severely shaken by murder of *Captain Sarshall Cooper* on the stormy night of April 14, 1814. An Indian slipped inside the stockade of Cooper's Fort. He removed chinking from between logs, unheard above the crashing elements.

As Cooper sat before his fireplace he was shot dead in the midst of his family. The Indian escaped.

Cooper was buried inside the stockade to prevent mutilation of his body. The fort site was lost under six feet of silt from the flood of 1844. After the flood of 1903 it was relocated by the skeleton of Sarshall Cooper, disturbed by the second inundation. Dr. M. S. McGuire, now of Boonville, helped remove the bones to a grave in the Cooper Burying ground on a nearby hill.

WHILE Cooper's murder depressed the people, a later slaying stirred them to decisive action.

Samuel McMahan, living in what is now Lamine Township in Cooper County, was ambushed by Indians near Boonville December 14, 1814, exactly eight months after Cooper was slain. McMahan's horse was killed and he was wounded. He ran down a ravine toward the river. The Indians overtook him, thrusting three spears into his back. They beheaded and mutilated the corpse.

Next day a party including men from north of the river brought in McMahan's head wrapped in a sheepskin and the body. Burial was under a linden tree about which the center ring in Missouri's first state fair ground was made near the site of St. Joseph hospital. A child of David Burress, burned to death, also was buried under that linden.

THE DAY of McMahan's burial settlers gathered at the home of Hannah Cole to build a fort larger than Stephen Cole's. All were not felling trees, driving teams that dragged trunks or hewing and raising logs into walls. Some were pickets, for an Indian attack was expected.

In a week the stronghold was completed. Standing a-top a cliff washed by the river, a long log with windlass attached projected from the fort on the river side so that water could be drawn up any time.

Stephen Cole's Fort, on a bluff a mile east, was then abandoned.

MAJOR STEPHEN COLE, leader of the settlers south of the river, survived the war but his love of adventure took him to death by Indians in 1822 while in the Santa Fe trade on the Rio Grande, about 60 miles southwest of Santa Fe.

End of Page 32

The murder of Samuel McMahan was the last serious Indian outrage in Cooper County or vicinity during the war. *Hannah Cole's Fort* and the fighting spirit of the settlers discouraged further attack.

Even during the war a few additional settlers entered the region.

WITH PEACE and resumption of normal frontier farming, the settlers were faced with a severe shortage of horses and cattle. The aborigines had stolen, killed or run off nearly all live stock.

New treaties between the United States and Indian nations removed all tribes from the present central Missouri. The Sacs and Foxes were ordered off to Grand river. Others were sent to southwest Missouri and to the Indian Territory.

EARLY DAYS IN OTTERVILLE AND LEBANON AREA

THOMAS J. STARKE contributed a comprehensive sketch of the history of Otterville and Lebanon townships to the first history published of Cooper County. It was written by Henry C. Levens and Nathaniel M. Drake, and published in 1876. Mr. Starke's article was read in Otterville at the centennial celebration, July 4, 1876.

He obtained much of his information from early settlers--Samuel Wear, George W. Smith, James H. Cline, John W. Parsons and Thomas C. Cranmer.

Samuel Adams and Samuel King founded New Lebanon Presbyterian Church. It was built of logs 24 feet long, mortised in the middle of the house into an upright post, making the church 48 feet long. It was 30 feet wide. Used until just before the Civil War, it was razed, and a brick church built in its place.

THE FIRST SCHOOL in Otterville township was taught in Otterville by "Long George" Wear, a Kentuckian who settled near New Lebanon in 1817.

Robert Kirkpatrick, a Revolutionary soldier who lived near New Lebanon cemetery, was the father of the Reverend David Kirkpatrick, prominent Cumberland Presbyterian minister, who was thrown from a carriage in a runaway, necessitating amputation of a leg. He died soon thereafter.

John Burns, who lived near New Lebanon, fought at New Orleans in the War of 1812.

Hugh Wear, a Kentuckian, was too young to enlist in the Revolution but accompanied his enlisted father, to evade the Tories. Hugh was the father of the Reverend William Bennett Wear, a Cumberland Presbyterian minister.

The Reverend William Cavanaugh, Presbyterian from Kentucky, could preach louder and longer than any contemporary.

William Bryant, Kentuckian who settled at New Lebanon, fought with General "Hickory" Jackson at New Orleans.

A man named Smith operated a "band mill" a type of horse mill, and a small distillery on the side.

THOMAS PARSONS, born in Virginia in 1793, settled in southwest Cooper County when only three other families lived west of the Lamine in that vicinity. The others were James G. Wilkerson, William Reed and William Sloan. Mr. Parsons established the first hatter's shop south of Boonville. He was an excellent craftsman. He lived to be 98, and when he died, September 7, 1875, he was the oldest Mason in Cooper County, having belonged to the Order nearly 60 years.

William Reed, Tennessean, was the first white man to settle in southwest Cooper County. He was noted for his integrity and piety.

James Brown, Kentuckian, who settled in the neighborhood in 1827, hunted with Daniel Boone. He also was a hard-working farmer. On the other hand, Elijah Hook, who also arrived in 1827, coming from Tennessee, depended entirely on hunting and trapping for a living for himself and family.

JAMES DAVIS, Tennessean who arrived in 1827, was a champion rail-splitter.

Frederick Shurley, mighty hunter arriving in 1827, fought with General Jackson against the Creeks in the memorable battle of Horseshoe Bend, a muzzle to muzzle conflict. The Indians, fired with religious zeal and directed by their prophets to make a last stand there, were sent 500 strong by Jackson and Coffee to their happy hunting grounds.

George Cranmer, millwright and mechanic, was born in Delaware and reared in Kentucky. He located in Boonville in 1828, and settled at Clifton in 1832, giving the place its name. He built Cranmer's Mill where the Missouri-Kansas-Texas railroad crosses the Lamine. Later it was called Corum's Mill.

End of Page 33

End of Chapter 05