

The Mercury salutes the Bicentennial

A brief account of events leading to the birth



Continued from page one

however, was of less consequence, as a sense of common danger is often more binding than the strictest discipline.

"A tumultuous consultation, in which every one seems to have had a voice, terminated in an unanimous resolution to pursue the enemy without delay. It was well known that General Logan had collected a strong force in Lincoln, and would join them at farthest in 24 hours. It was distinctly understood that the enemy was at least double in number, and, according to Girty's account, more than triple their own numbers. It is seen that their trail was for Logan, and obvious, and that even some indications of a tardiness and willingness to be pursued, had been observed by their scouts, who had been sent out to reconnoitre, and from which it might reasonably be inferred that they would halt on the way, at least march so leisurely, as to permit them to wait for the aid of Logan! Yet so keen was the ardor of officer and soldier, that all without instant notice, and in the afternoon of the 18th of August, the line of march was taken up, and the pursuit urged with that precipitate courage which has so often soon fatal to Kentuckians. Most of the officers and many of the privates were mounted.

"The Indians had followed the buffalo trace, and as if to render their trail still more evident, they had chopped many of the trees on each side of the road with their hatchets. These strong indications of tardiness, made some impression upon the cool and calculating mind of Boone; but it was too late to advise retreat. They encamped that night in the woods, and on the following day reached the fatal boundary of their pursuit. At the Lower Blue Licks, for the first time since the pursuit commenced, they came within view of the enemy. As the miscellaneous crowd of horse and foot reached the opposite bank of Licking, they saw a number of Indians ascending the rocky ridge on the other side.

"They halted upon the appearance of the Kentuckians, gazed at them for a few minutes in silence, and then leisurely disappeared over the top of the hill. A halt immediately ensued, and dozens of officers met in front of the ranks, and entered into consultation. The wild and lonely aspect of the country around them, their distance from any point of support, with the certainty of being in the presence of a superior enemy, seems to have inspired a portion of the seriousness, bordering upon awe. All eyes were now turned upon Boone, and Colonel Todd asked his opinion as to what should be done. The veteran woodman, with his usual unmovable gravity, replied:

"That their situation was critical and delicate; that the force opposed to them was undoubtedly numerous and ready for battle, as might readily be seen from the leisurely retreat of the few Indians who had appeared upon the crest of the hill; that he was well acquainted with the ground in the neighborhood of the Lick, and was apprehensive that an ambushade was formed at the distance of a mile in advance, where two ravines, one upon each side of the ridge, ran in such a manner that a concealed enemy might assail them at once both in front and flank, before they were apprized of the danger.

"It would be proper, therefore, to do one of two things. Either to await the arrival of Logan, who was now undoubtedly on his march to join them, or if it was determined to attack without delay, that one half of their number should march up the river, while the other division attacked in front. At any rate he strongly urged the necessity of reconnoitering the ground carefully before the main body crossed the river. Such was the counsel of Boone. And

although no measure could have been taken much more disastrous than that which was adopted, yet it may be doubted if anything short of an immediate retreat upon Logan, could have saved this gallant body of men from a real and cruel slaughter. If they divided their force, the enemy, as in Estlin's case, might have overwhelmed them in detail. If they remained where they were, without advancing, the enemy would certainly have attacked them, probably in the night, and with a certainty of success. They had committed a great error at first, in not waiting for Logan, and nothing short of a retreat, which would have been considered disgraceful, could now repair it.

"Boone was heard in silence and with great attention. Some wished to adopt the first plan; others preferred the second; and the discussion threatened to be drawn out at length, when the boiling ardor of McGary, who could never endure the presence of an enemy without instant battle, stimulated him to act, which had nearly proved destructive to his country. He suddenly interrupted the consultation with a loud roar, resembling the war-cry of the Indians, spurred his horse into the stream, seized his hat over his head, and shouted aloud: "Let all who are not cowards, follow me!" The words and the action produced an electric and quick effect. The mounted men dashed tumultuously into the river, each striving to be the foremost. The footmen were mingled with them in one rolling and irregular mass.

"No time was given, and none observed. They struggled through a ford as deep as well as they could, McGary still leading the van, closely followed by Majors Harland and McBride. With some rapidity they ascended the ridge, foragers had been stripped bare of all except the trunks of the cedars, and a few dwarfish cedars, and which was now derelict still more desolate in appearance, by the multitude of ricks, blackened by the sun, which were spread over its surface. Upon reaching the top of the ridge, they followed the buffalo trace with the same precipitate ardor, Todd and Trigg in the rear; McGary, Harland, McBride, and Boone in front. No scouts were sent in advance, none explored either flank; officers and soldiers seemed alike demoralized by the contagious example of a single man, and all struggled forward, horse and foot as if to outstrip each other in the advance.

"Suddenly, the van halted. They had reached the spot mentioned by Boone, where the two ravines head, on each side of the ridge. Here a body of Indians presented themselves, and attacked the van. McGary's party instantly returned the fire, but under great disadvantage. They were upon a bare and open ridge; the Indians in a lofty ravine, the center and rear, ignorant of the ground, hurried up to the assistance of the van, but were soon stopped by a terrible fire from the ravine which flanked them. They found themselves enclosed as if in the wings of a net, destitute of proper shelter, while the enemy were in a great measure covered from their fire. Still, however, they maintained their ground. The action became warm and bloody. The parties gradually closed, the Indians emerged from the ravines, and the fire became mutually destructive. The officers suffered dreadfully, Todd and Trigg in the rear; Harlan, McBride, and young Boone in front, were already killed.

"The Indians gradually extended their line, to turn the right of the Kentuckians, and cut off their retreat. This was quickly perceived by the weight of the fire from that quarter, and the rear instantly fell back in disorder, and attempted to rush

through their only opening to the river. The motion quickly communicated itself to the van, and a hurried retreat became general. The Indians instantly pressing forward in pursuit, and falling upon them with their tomahawks, made a real and cruel slaughter. From the battle ground, the spectacle was terrible. The horsemen generally escaped, but the foot, particularly the van, which had advanced farthest with the wings of the net, were almost totally destroyed. Colonel Howe, after witnessing the death of his son and many of his dearest friends, found himself almost entirely surrounded by the very commencement of the retreat.

"Several hundred Indians were between him and the ford, to which the great mass of the fugitives were bending their flight, and to which the attention of the savages was principally directed. Being intimately acquainted with the ground, he, together with a few friends, dashed into the ravine which the Indians had occupied, but which most of them had now left to join the pursuit. After sustaining one or two heavy fires, and baffling one or two small parties, who pursued him for a short distance, he crossed the river below ford, by swimming, and entering the wood at a point where there was no pursuit, returned by a circuitous route to Bryan's station. In the meantime, the ranks were crowded with the horsemen and foot and Indians, all mingled together. Some were compelled to seek a passage above by swimming; some, who could not swim, were overtaken and killed at the edge of the water. A man by the name of Netherland, who had formerly been strongly suspected of cowardice, here displayed a coolness and presence of mind, equally noble and unexpected. Being finely mounted, he had on that day, stripped the great mass of the fugitives, and crossed the river safely. A dozen or 20 horsemen accompanied him, and having placed the river between them and the enemy, showed a disposition to continue their flight, without regard to the safety of their friends who were on foot, and still struggling with the current.

"Netherland instantly checked his horse, and in a loud voice, called his companions to halt, fire upon the Indians, and save those who were still in the stream. The party instantly obeyed; and facing about, poured a close and fatal discharge of rifles upon the foremost of the pursuers. The enemy instantly fell back from the opposite bank, and gave time for the harassed and miserable footmen to

cross in safety. The check, however, was but momentary. Indians were seen crowding in great numbers above and below, but the flight again became general. Most of the foot left the great buffalo track, and plunging into the thickets, escaped by a circuitous route to Bryan's Station.

"But little loss was sustained after crossing the river; although the pursuit was urged keenly for 20 miles. From the battle ground to the ford, the loss was very heavy."

The final treaty, called the Treaty of Paris, was signed on Sept. 3, 1783. The treaty of great independence, all lands between the Appalachian Mountains and the Mississippi River from the Great Lakes south to Florida, and the right to fish in the Gulf of St. Lawrence and off the coast of Newfoundland.

It was now up to the members of the Second Continental Congress to set up a new government for this new country. The first form adopted was called the Articles of Confederation. This planned for a weak central government and most all powers delegated to the individual states. But there were many problems with this new form of government. The central government just did not have enough power under the Articles. The government lacks the power to regulate interstate trade, lacks power over foreign trade, lacks power to raise a strong central army. The Articles of the Confederation in a sense just created a sort of friendship of states.

It didn't take long for the government leaders to see that another plan for the governing of the country would be needed, so between May and September of 1787 the delegates to the Constitutional Convention at Annapolis, presently became and still is to this day, the foundation of all government in the United States. On Sept. 17, 1787, the Constitution was finally drafted and was sent to the individual states for ratification.

Despite several safeguards in the Constitution itself, many states refused to ratify it because it did not offer greater protection to the rights of individuals. They finally agreed to ratification after they were promised that a bill of rights would be added to the Constitution by amendment when Congress next met. The Bill of Rights was proposed by Congress during 1789 and was ratified by the states in 1791.

This Bill of Rights and Constitution is the basis of the liberties, securities and assurances we all enjoy today in the United States of America—200 years old.

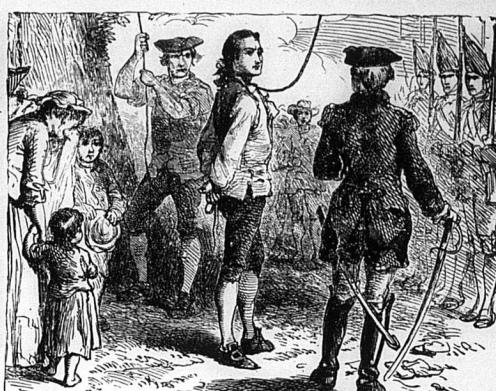
Great American Happenings

From a Great America



The winter of '77: Party season for the British. A turning point for the Patriots.

We've faced a heartbreaking retreat from New York and across New Jersey, 3,000 men are British prisoners, and Washington is foresaken by many of his own. The British generals figure it's only a matter of time before we give up and beg the King's pardon. But the British are a trifle too smug. We recross the Delaware and, battle after battle, surprise the enemy and defeat him. It's on to Saratoga, where our victory becomes a turning point. It gives us courage through the longest winter at Valley Forge. While we suffer cold, starvation and sickness at Valley Forge, the British elite continue to party with their Loyalist friends in Philadelphia. But we learn something. Not to give up. The nation learns, too. And the rest is history.

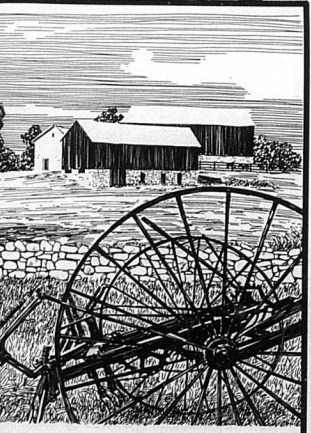


1776: We lose more than New York.

General Washington forced the British troops out of Boston all right. But he hasn't fared so well in New York. British General William Howe has a military force far bigger and far more experienced than our militiamen. We're disastrously defeated. Our morale is destroyed. We begin a long and dismal retreat. But we have some very special young officers among us. Like Nathan Hale, who offers to risk his life as a spy. He'll act the role of a schoolmaster. Penetrate the British lines. And find out what Howe's next strategic movements will be. We learn later that it may not have been necessary. Howe is a lukewarm enemy. A not too adept general. And he feels smug about his New York victory. Think, we'll give up now, and the whole thing will be over. Hale is caught. And as he stands about to be hanged, he utters some words we'll never forget. "My only regret is that I have but one life to give for my country." We lose Nathan Hale. But we'll keep his courage with us.

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a time for reeducation

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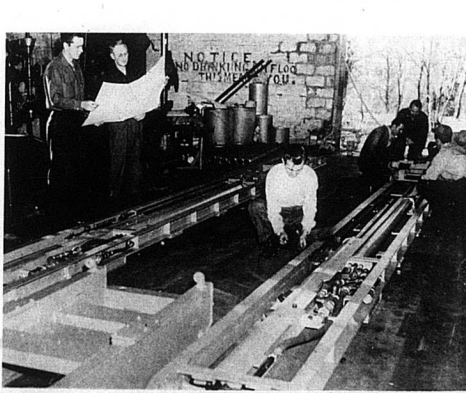
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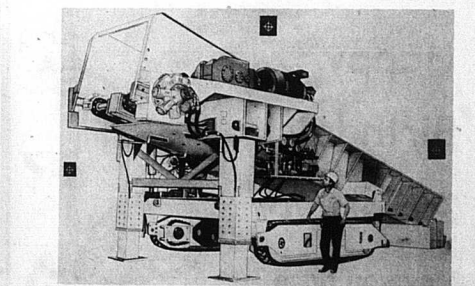
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