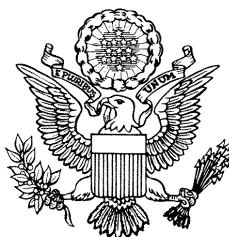


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Journey to Kentucky in 1775

Diary of James Nourse, Describing His Trip from Virginia to Kentucky
One Hundred and Fifty Years Ago, When Harrodstown and
Boonesboro Were the Only Kentucky Settlements. Nourse
Rode from Piedmont, Virginia, to Pittsburgh, and Then
Went Down the Ohio and Up the Kentucky River in
a Flat-Boat, Walking Ten Miles Further to
Harrodstwon, Now Harrodsburg

(Continued from Volume XIX, Number III)

TRAVELED NORTH along a buffalo path, till we came to a Creek
Supposed either Eagle creek that runs into the Kentuke or Licking
Creek that empties itself into the Ohio above the Bone lick about
25 yards wide but little water in it—except in the flat places, camped there
and rode about—came back and lay in the morning—Sat. June 24th Centd
at the buffalo crossings of Eagle—Supposed Licking creek. Beginning I
mark a large ... on north Bank and a shell bark hiccory on the south bank
as Corner trees between Mr. B. Johnston and myself—a small creek then
dry coming in Eastward of it on the north side of the River thence about 3
Mile up the river on the North side then cross the river to the South bank

markt two hoopash trees and a sycamore—markt then back for quantity 3000 Warrant—700 Head rights—no probability of a Spring and the land rather more hilly near the Creek than I would chuse, farther back to the south prettier lands, but then all dry tho the appearance of having had much water in them and has water in the deep places, but none running,—by making small dams, suppose water enough for Cattle may be kept all the year here for pasture grounds—before I came away makt the upper corner on the south side the river on the sycamore tree between the 2 hoopashes. I.N.—then returned South which brought us to a dry run, which running South is pretty near my eastern boundary—and being our way home blazed the buffalo path all the way travelling near due South came back to Gist's Camp at a Buffalo lick where on one of the Trees is markt I.R. another the path to be taken, I.N. Harrod and Johnston being gone after a deer they shot at—Johnston, tho he has wrote upon the corner tree between us warrants for 2000 now says he shall only enter 400:—continued our road back along a Buffalo path the course being still near south; crossed 6 running creeks and the 7th we crossed 4 times encamped at night by the side of it. Johnston liked the land markt it and said he would enter 400 acres on it, Col. Harrod said he would also enter 400 for his cousin Moore Joining him and 400 for the same Joining above me on my river—Sunday June 25th—Johnston and Harrod went out to look at the land talks of laying an order of Council he has for some gentlemen in Virginia for 10000 acres here. Killed a fatt buffalo and bro't the best of it into Boonsburg; last night cold; the day cool—arrived about 12 oclock having traveled all the way due North. Johnston found the land he was about to take, already surveyed. Memorandum for going to the land I have taken upon river or creek—cross at Boonsburg. Kep the left hand path to David and John Gist cornfield and spring from thence keep a north course across the brows of 2 or 3 hill down to a run—up the north and Main Branch a good way—then keep still North—cross some highish land to a Buffalo path—trees blazed all the way, at about 15 miles come upon a running creek, where there are some trees markt and Johnston wrote upon on of the trees surveyed 10000 acres—by order of Council—continue the buffalo path still keeping the whole way north where the buffalo path fails continue course till you meet with paths that run that way, follow them and they will lead you to a very plain buffalo path (by a wett lick and old camps) continue till you come to a broad run blazed a tree upon the path to be taken markt I.N. which will lead to the upper corner tree—the other is about 3 mile down the river, the corner a large fork elm, and on a large white oak wrote on at the corner tree between Johnston and myself.

If instead of keeping down the run you continue the plainest buffalo path to the westward of north I believe it will lead to the lower corner, as it appears to be at the largest buffalo Crossings—Monday June 26th.—discharged and paid Tom Ruby—forgot I did not the outing [?] he had to be deducted out of money I have to pay Col. Harwood—Agreed with Cols. Henderson and Harrod that the latter is to look me out a place on Cumberland river. Mr. Moore is to join my line at Hereford, but Harrod agrees I may enter what I will higher up the river, if I choose it, and Mr. Moore's entry is to join mine. Tuesday 27 at 12 o'clock, having waited for getting up horses—set off for my return with Wilson, Alexander, Jennings and 2 sons full grown and negro boy. I was glad to find our Company increase; at first I had engaged only Mr. Wilson and they all agreed that the most likely place of seeing Indians is abt the head of Cumberland—traveled about 13 mile and encamp and super some two cutts of cold venison and a little buffalo we were to had plenty of. Col. Henderson but the heat of the weather had spoiled all his meat. Made a Mush with some of my flour and buffalo suet—slept well till three,—dressed and lay down till 4, then got my horse, fed him and called up my companions. Wednesday June 28 set off by 5, they shot a buffalo bull, but not being fatt enough, having formerly been wounded in two places, they only took the tongue and the meat on one side the back bone; arrive at the old fort Trytlys [Twettys?] Stopped not—left the road and fell into a buffalo path,—passed through very fine land and some water, to lick called the Blue Lick in order to kill to barbacue for our journey. Disappointed—found no buffalo there, Breakfasted 12 o'clock on what we had taken from the bull,—traveled and missed our way, got up a steep mountain beat all about the ridge,—at last found another very steep place where we got down off the Mountain whose sides were in general perpendicular; we had a view of a fine country to the west. Traveled without being able to keep any course till night—made a fire and suped. David Wilson and Worth Alexander would not have belled their horses but Jennings and his sons would not acquise, and wanted a fire all night to dry their shins by, but I took the liberty to disperse it and about put it out. Thursday 29th Got up and settled that we should steer something to the south and west—which we did brought us to a large lick—kept down the buffalo path—then crossed a large meadow at least a hundred acres—still keeping our course, about nine o'clock got into the right path at 1/2 past ten arrived at water where there was an Indian mark on a tree. All but Wilson and myself went a hunting. Alexander soon returned having met with a fresh camp of last night, which he supposes Indians. So Wilson, Alexander, and self resolve to hunt no more but to keep our track as far as we can and trust to Providence for something

coming in our way—I proposed going to see the camp and found it not to be an Indian Camp by settler's marks on the trees. Jennings killed buffalo cow it had no calf along—got some milk—very good Barbacued the Beef, and each pakt up for his own Carriage what ever he chose,—traveled about 10 miles to head waters of RockCastle—went off the road, about a hundred yards made no fire, and Jennings promised to stop his Bells, but we had not been lay down above an hour before the old man's bell began to ring. Fryday 30th June. Set off early cool night and day. Traveled to Rockcastle river—near as big as the Shanadore—went up it a long way north then up another creek east. Camp about sunset—I took care Jennings should stop his bells—being by all acknowledged to be in so great likelihood to see Indians as any where on our journey. But being on a creek there were many knats—so nothing would content him, but he would lie by a fire—on which I went up a high Mount, very steep on all sides, and lay me down soon after his two sons and negro boy came up also. Wilson and Alexander went and lay in the weeds by the Creek side. Saturday July 1st. Got up at 4 all safe, passed a mountain, crossed a creek 13 times, then over a place called the brush saw an Indian Galows Found a beautiful vine, shape and growth like a [___] [___] purple, and crimson—passed some fine bottoms but mostly mountains. Stopt and eat lean buffalo and bear fatt. Jennings this morning killed a buck but bro't none of the meat. It was shot away from the road, so that I saw it not.—set off and traveled to an Excellent spring. Thirsty—drank most heartily—greatly refreshed—proceeded about 3 mils farther—bad water but better food for the Horses. Sunday July 2 traveled till 12 o'clock. Dined upon some venison that I took out of a deer thigh, that one of the Jennings killed—made bread and dined—most excellent had not airy bread since Saturday. continued out to a flat lick on the Indian war path and there encamped. the Knats being very troublesome. Old Jennings will have a fire,—travel this day through good land, specially bottoms but the highlands hilly. The old man let his fire out betimes so lay not far from him. Came to a lick, but nothing there—stopt for horses to rest, and not having any to eat lay along a log when they wake me to go find the very people I had treated last night with my venison eating their dry buffalo, when they saw that I perceived them, they then asked me, took a bit and on we went. Monday July 3. Jennings went off to the lick by day break; heard him shoot e times when he came said he had wounded a deer. Took the dogs but found none. Crossed Cumberland river, stopped at a river near the foot of Cumberland Mountain—the old man went out a hunting—traveled over the mountain—Alexander wants to leave them—a Good Gap, and having left the Indian war path about a mile, my fellow travelers thought themselves safe, but the next morning

we had not traveled 8 miles, before we learnt that the Indians had been doing damage in the neighborhood. Here we found corn fields and settlements, the first we had seen since we left Boonsburg. As soon as we passed the Gap of the Cumberland mountain, we came into a valley which is called Powell's Valley—the chief settler here is a Mr. Joseph Marten, who gave us a diner. If you should see him I beg you will assure him of my grateful remembrance of it, and that I shall be happy to have an opportunity to return him more than words. There is much good land in this valley—tho' varrying—sometimes barren and Rocky—it is finely watered—Wednesday July 6th. Traveled through hilly and barren land. Thursday July 7. Provisions scarce—Wilson and Alexander left us. Jennings went hunting—killed a buck—passed over Powell's mountain but not the waggon road, which they allow would have been the better road. The way we came very steep and bad—traveled near an East Course—came to a lick Mountainous land down to a bad Stony Creek. Bank high and miry near 10 mile—then something mended—to a larger which we passed and then Camped—Fryday July 7 [?] came to the Cross roads—where we met other passengers and having breakfasted together and one Ambrose Fletcher intending to go by Capt. Shelby's, parted with my fellow travelers—they taking off to the left for Clinch settlement—which is nearer way but the road not near so good—I understood the mountain was barely passable for loaded horses. Tom found none, and my fellow travelers who yesterday morning were above taking any venison, help me to eat it so that they fare at my [Tom] traveled. Crossed Cumberland River, came to Clinch river; good land on bank but the bottom narrow covered with cane. 2 Cabbins that seemed lately deserted—some cows about on of them. July 8 got up Holston mountain and Camped. Rose at 4 oclock in hopes of reaching Capt. Shelby's by night. Intended to ... the block house to breakfast but having taken a left hand path, traveled to a tiresome, poor valley known by that name,—at length made Holston river, without seeing a Settlement, On the east side was a plantation of one Levington—the husband was gone to Kentuke,—the wife received us kindly, frying bacon, potatoes and hominy, and plenty of Milk and butter, and in return left her what flour I had left, which was to them as great a treat—from hence 14 miles to Capt. Shelby's, We traveled 7 of the most hilly and rocky country I had seen since I came out—at sunset made Isaac Bledsoe's, who treated us plentifully supper and breakfast and would take nothing. Sunday July 9th Having again gotten into the road we had left, soon came to the great road, and a part of Capt. Shelby's land—N.B. It is at the ferry of New River called now or formally, Maj. Engles ferry, which is twelve miles from Col. Preston's, that you are to enquire and leave word for Robert. Robert may come in with

Pharaoh as soon as he has Secured the three thousand and seven hundred acres, and assisted James & Charles to secure theirs and Joseph's. If Robert chuse to stay and improve the land, Pharaoh must be sent by some neighbor. From Maj. Engles Ferry to Fort Chisett 25 miles. From thence to Col. A. Campbell's 33—to Capt. Thompson's 17—to Wolf Hills where then was a smith shop 20—to Capt. Shelby's 14. To King's Mill 14. To the Block house 8. To the Ford of Clinch 15 to Powell's valley 56. To Boonsburg 150. From Piedmont to Staunton 120. To the North river 30. To the ferry on James river 12—To the town of Fincastle 46.