1. The Boones of Pennsylvania

IN peaceful Devon, loveliest of the English counties, a family of English Quakers was growing restless as the eighteenth century began. Queen Anne was on the throne; Marlborough was winning renown and cash for himself, and honor for the British arms; it was a wonderful period in England's history. In London, Dean Swift was being witty and extremely caustic. Mr. Dryden had recently died. Mr. Pope's poetry was beginning to be greatly admired. But none of these worldly vanities meant much to George Boone, a humble Quaker weaver in the village of Cullompton, near Exeter.

Dissenters of every sort had troubles of their own in those days, the Quakers not least. Stories began to spread among the Society of Friends about the new Province of Pennsylvania, founded by one of the few Quakers whom the Lord had blessed with wealth and social position. In the new colony religious toleration, they heard, was complete. The Friends were really in control of the government. Further, there was land.

They were an adventurous breed, the Boones. For the next four generations they were always to be pulling up stakes and moving westward. Once, centuries earlier, they had been Bohuns, Normans. Even then they had been fighters and adventurers, who had moved westward into the newly conquered England. Even then they went to acquire land.

With their adventurous nature went a singular caution.

Any Boone would run any risk; but first, if he could, he must look over the ground, consider, ponder, reconnoiter. George Boone was middle-aged, well into his forties. The fact may have accentuated that native caution. After forty, a man looks before he leaps—that is, if there is time, and an Indian is not too close behind.

The cautious weaver of Cullompton had heard glowing tales of Pennsylvania. But a man cannot believe all he hears. A man must be sure. Sometime before 1713 his son, George Boone the younger, his daughter Sarah, and another son, Squire Boone, took ship to investigate this new land that promised so well. Squire shipped as cabin boy.

As it turned out, the new land pleased them. Squire and Sarah stayed. Their brother is said to have returned to Devon to report to his father—the elder George Boone still was cautious. If he did so, it was a hasty trip, for he was back in Pennsylvania, marrying an American girl, by May, 1713. Not for four years, however, was the rest of the family ready to leave Devon's peaceful meadows for the wild Pennsylvania country with its thin fringe of settlements running along the eastern edge. They sailed August 17, 1717. It was a long voyage, but on October 10 they were in Philadelphia, already a small city.

Though Quakers dominated Pennsylvania, complete religious freedom prevailed. The Mennonites, German pacifists and pietists, had arrived nearly as early as the Quakers. The Amish branch of the sect had settled in Berks County just before the Boones arrived and were soon followed by the German Baptist Brethren, or Dunkers, a similar sect. Each had its special costume. The Quakers wore their sober gray. The Amish, frowning upon the sinful vanity of buttons, wore only invisible hooks-and-eyes. The men bobbed their hair below the ears in "Dutch cut," and after marriage shaved only the upper lip. The Dunkers were equally sober yet equally picturesque.

The country itself was only partly cleared of forest. Even the best fields were still full of stumps. In others the farmers had merely killed the trees by girdling and left them standing, cultivating as best they could the soil between the trunks. The time had not yet come for the rich fields, enormous barns, and fat pure-bred cattle for which southeastern Pennsylvania is famous now. The livestock ran wild. Even in winter it had no shelter. Horses were almost unknown. The farmers plowed with oxen. Cattle were stunted and so poor that a gallon of milk a day was thought a good yield for a cow.

It was in some such country as this that all the Boones settled together at Abingdon, twelve or fourteen miles north of Philadelphia. But they did not stay. There was always a branch of the Boone family that never stayed. The Boones were wanderers born. They had the itching foot. Something called. Something beyond the mountains always whispered. They heard of distant lands and knew that they must go there.

Old George Boone was like that. His sons George and Squire were wanderers both. His grandsons Daniel Boone and Squire Boone the younger wandered all their lives. Daniel's sons moved with their father, west to Kentucky, westward again to Missouri. Daniel's own grandsons moved on toward the Rockies. Other pioneer families have such a history behind them, but it is marked most clearly in the Boones.

The first move was not very distant. Abingdon Meeting granted them a certificate permitting them "to settle in and towards Oley and join themselves to Gwynedd Meeting." They went to North Wales, Gwynedd Township, southwest of the city. They went because they wanted land—the Boones always wanted land. In 1718, young George Boone took out a warrant for four hundred acres in Oley Township, near Reading. The Boones were always careful to provide their sons with land, and his father guaranteed the purchase. It was the first of many

deals, which eventually made the younger George Boone an extensive land-owner.

The Boones were Quakers, but they do not seem to have been particularly devout. The younger George Boone did not bother to present a certificate from the Friends in England testifying to his "orderly and good conversation while he lived there," until he wanted to get married. His father, arriving later, took two months before producing at Gwynedd Meeting "a Certificate of his Good Life and Conversation from the Monthly att Callumpton In Great Brittain wch was read and Well recd."

Within two years, Squire Boone and Sarah Morgan, future parents of Daniel Boone, announced to the Meeting "their Intention of Marriage with each Other ye first time." The usual committee was appointed to investigate the prospective bridegroom and particularly to "inspect his Clearness from Other Women." They found no obstacle; but there were other matrimonial prospects in the Boone family about which the godly Friends held other views. Under compulsion, George Boone, Squire's father, "openly Acknowledged in this Meetting his forwardness in giving his Consent to John Webb to keep Company wth his Daughter in order to Marry Contrary to ye Establish'd order amongst us."

John Webb may have been a "worldling," or non-Quaker. More probably, however, the Meeting simply wanted more information about him. The sins of the father were not in this case visited upon the children. After a committee had been named "to Inspect into his Conversation," the Meeting relented. John Webb and Mary Boone were allowed to declare their intentions and to get married on the same day as the other pair.

On July 23, 1720, the marriage of Friend Squire Boone and Friend Sarah Morgan, daughter of Friend John Morgan, was "decently Accomplish'd" by Quaker ceremony. Marriage among

the Society of Friends was a serious but very simple affair. There was no clergyman and no ritual. It could hardly be called a ceremony at all. "Ye Said Squire Boone Took ye Said Sarah Morgan by ye Hand Did in A Solemn Manner Openly Declare he Took her To Be his Wife Promising To be Unto Her A Faithfull and Loveing Husband Untill Death Should Seperate Them And Then & There In the Said Assembly the said Sarah Morgan did likewise Declare." Then, after the usual Quaker custom, everyone present signed the marriage lines as a witness. In the early days of English Quakerism, there had been some doubt of the legality of Quaker marriage, and it had become a custom to have as many witnesses as possible at every wedding.

The couple went to live at Gwynedd. Squire Boone had learned his father's trade and settled down to support his wife as a weaver. But a mere trade was not enough. He was a Boone. He wanted land. There was a promising tract of 147 acres in New Britain Township, Bucks County. He bought it on December 3, 1728. Two years later he bought another tract, adjoining his father's farm in Oley Township, now Berks County. Here he seems to have settled and here, presumably, his sixth son was born, November 2, 1734.* They called him Daniel; it was an old Boone name. They called another son Squire—no one knows why. That, too, was a Boone name, not so unusual as it sounds in modern ears, for it turns up in at least one other colonial family.

The early life of Daniel Boone is mainly legend, but there is abundant evidence that it was exactly the kind of life a small boy enjoys. There was game everywhere—deer, bear, wild turkeys. "Flying Hill" took its name from the perpetual flutter of wild turkeys there. Even buffalo appeared in Pennsylvania,

* This is the date by our modern calendar. It is October 22, 1734, Old Style, which Boone himself insisted on using throughout his life.

though by this time they probably did not come so far east as Berks County.

There were Indians, too. The red men were beginning to move westward—where Daniel Boone would find plenty of them later on. But there were still villages of clustered wigwams in the Tulpehocken and Ontelaunee Valleys, beyond the mountains, north of the Boone farms.

The Quaker policy of peace and fair dealing had borne fruit, however. The Society of Friends had treated these Indians fairly and paid honestly for the land, even though King Charles had already awarded it to the Penns by English law. The Indians were friendly.

The peaceful Quakers were startled on one occasion by the arrival of a party of braves brilliantly painted for war. But it was a false alarm. The Indians had heard that their peaceful white brothers were in danger from other Indians and had hurried down to protect them!

On the whole, it was a good thing for the Indians that they were so well disposed. These early Quaker Boones were peaceful enough, but they were also ready to fight when necessary. Indeed, Boone pacifism was always just a little theoretical. When in 1728 Indian friendship had worn rather thin and it was feared that "the Indians will fall down upon us very suddenly," the inhabitants "Generally fled." But George Boone, justice of the peace, wrote stoutly to the governor: "There remains about twenty men with me to guard my mill, where I have about 1000 bushels of wheat and fflour; and we are resolved to defend ourselves to ye last Extremity."

By the time Daniel Boone was born, friendship had been restored, and Indians were among the child's earliest recollections. In 1736, when he was barely out of the cradle, a party of twenty-five Delawares halted one day to visit the farm of his grandfather, George Boone. Indians enlivened even the church

services. In 1742, when little Daniel was only eight, Count Zinzendorf, the Moravian missionary, held a synod in one of the Oley barns; and there was preaching to the Delawares by three recently converted warriors which lasted all through the night.

From these friendly aborigines the future Indian fighter was learning the red man's habits, character, and way of life, mastering the kinks and quirks of red psychology, gaining that amazing ability to "think Indian" which in after life enabled him, when trailing Indians, to know exactly what they were going to do next. Many a pioneer document from the desperate and bloody Kentucky years shows Daniel Boone quietly assuring his companions that the Indians would soon do thus-and-so—as invariably they did!

The fascination which the wilderness exercised on Daniel Boone to the end of his life began almost as early as his knowledge of Indians. The excitement of hunting, the odd ways of wild animals, or just the charm of complete solitude never failed to stir him. When, in 1744, Squire Boone, his father, bought twenty-five acres some miles distant from the farm, he used it mainly for grazing and dairying. The early settlers often sent their cattle miles away to graze for a whole season, and this pasture was too far away to bring the cows home at night. Year after year, from about the time Daniel was ten years old, the boy and his mother used to take the cattle out in the grazing season and live there in a cabin, while Squire Boone stayed at home, managing his blacksmith shop and the modest weaving establishment which now required five or six looms.

From the age of ten to sixteen, young Daniel did little but watch the cattle and roam the woods. The cows may sometimes have been neglected; Boone himself in after life attributed his love of the wild to the carefree roving of these early formative years. As a kinsman remarked, he remained

"ever unpracticed in the business of farming, but grew up a woodsman & a hunter."

Still too young to be trusted with a rifle, he whittled a sapling into a kind of javelin, sharpening its tough roots to a point, and managed to kill game without firearms. When he was twelve or thirteen, his father at last gave him a rifle, and Daniel Boone began that perpetual ranging of the forests, plains, and mountains that was to continue for more than seventy years. In the forests, and on the mountains around the half-settled farm land of Berks County, he acquired the iron steadiness of the rifleman's hands and learned to squint an infallibly keen blue eye along the long barrel to the "bead" above the muzzle.

As to his education, there is dispute. Scores of Boone manuscripts—letters, accounts, bonds, militia orders, survey books—show that whatever Daniel Boone's schooling may have been, his book-learning never amounted to very much. His handwriting was a scrawl. His spelling always had a wild, free, original flavor, like his life. In its way it was magnificent. It served its purpose well enough. But it was never gained by prolonged study.

"In Oley sind die Schulen sehr entfernt," observed an old Lutheran preacher in 1748, when Daniel was fourteen. Even these "very isolated" schools were Lutheran church schools to which Quakers would hesitate to send their children.

Such as it was, Daniel Boone got most of his education at home. In his father's blacksmith shop the boy acquired a practical knowledge of metal work under the tuition of his lifelong friend Henry Miller. It was a matter of some importance later, since it enabled him to repair his own rifle, and—as a prisoner—those of the Indians. The Boone family could also provide a good deal of book-learning. The family reputation for literacy has suffered unjustly from the fact that its most fa-

mous member spelled after a wild fashion of his own devising. Actually, Daniel Boone was the only bad speller among George Boone's forty-five surviving grandchildren. And even he was no worse than frontier heroes like Simon Kenton, George Rogers Clark, Benjamin Logan, and many another.

As for Daniel's forebears, they were remarkably well educated for their place and time. Old George Boone III is said to have mastered "the several branches of English learning"; John Boone, Daniel's uncle or great-uncle, became a teacher; James Boone, Jr., another relative, became a mathematician of local repute. According to Nathan Boone, young Daniel was taught by Sarah Day Boone, wife of his brother Samuel, and later taught himself to write a little better. According to another legend, Uncle John Boone took a hand, and when he despaired of Daniel's impressionistic orthography, was met by Squire Boone's rejoinder: "Let the girls do the spelling, and Dan will do the shooting"—which, as matters turned out, was what happened.

According to another tale, young Daniel attended one of the wretched little country schools of the period. It was, says the legend, taught by a dissipated Irishman, who kept a bottle of whiskey hidden in a thicket near the schoolhouse, which he visited for frequent potations to brighten his pedagogical labors. Daniel Boone, chasing a squirrel, found the flask, which the schoolboys filled with an emetic. When the schoolmaster next returned from the thicket, he was in a very bad humor. Daniel, at that unfortunate moment, made a mistake in arithmetic and was promptly flogged. There was a scuffle. The other children "shouted and roared." Daniel, being large for his age, knocked the teacher flat and ran for his life. The teacher, not the pupil, was dismissed, but young Daniel never went back to school.

The story may or may not be true. Daniel himself liked to

Apr. 11, 1778

Memorandum the two Emmitions of the Bills Emmited By Congress of may 20th 1777 & april 11th 1778 are to be Returned into Continental Loan office at or Before the 1st of June next and not Rideemable afterwards where it is to Remain for two months and the owners have it at there option to take Loan office Certificates or Receipts at the Time they Return the Bills.

This Was Coppyed by the Clark and is awl Wright
Daniel Boone

DANIEL BOONE MAKES A LEGAL NOTE

The document is an extract from legal records, in a clerk's hand. The annotation is by Boone, who habitually used this spelling. Reproduced by permission from the original in the Durrett Collection, University of Chicago Library.

tell his children that he never went to school a day in his life, but that may have been just a manner of speaking. At least, the schoolhouse story is part of the Boone myth.

Quaker pacifism never appealed very strongly to Daniel Boone. He was a fighter most of his life, when there was need of fighting; records of fisticuffs with other small boys begin early. Nor did he confine his battles to small boys. Frontier humor was crude and hearty rather than subtle; and the ideas of chivalry entertained by small boys are often a little mixed. Hence the two playful girls who emptied a pail of fish entrails upon little Daniel Boone as he lay sleeping under a tree went crying home to their mother with swollen faces and bloody noses. But maternal complaint to Mrs. Squire Boone about her ungallant son's misdeed brought a tart response: "If thee has not brought up thy daughters to better behavior, it is high time they were taught good manners."—Well, Sarah Boone stood by her son.

Young Daniel and his friend Henry Miller were a lively pair. The young blacksmiths knew all about taking wagons apart. Farmers who affronted them were likely to find their wagon wheels depending from tree-tops or tucked away on the barn roof. An incautious neophyte who borrowed a long musket from Daniel's father for his first deer hunt was knocked sprawling at the first shot. The two boys, already experienced hunters, had quietly withdrawn the ball and put in five or six extra charges of powder. The victim was so startled by the tremendous bang that he did not even notice he had killed the deer he was aiming at, until the repentant Daniel went out and hunted up the carcass.

Another illicit excursion ended in disaster when Boone and Miller tried one night to jump Squire Boone's horse over an old cow resting in the fields. Unhappily, the cow rose just as the horse was in mid-air above her. The nag crashed down and

broke its neck. Matters looked serious. Quaker lads were not encouraged to go gallivanting about by night. The demise of the horse would be hard enough to explain; the little nocturnal excursion would be still harder. The boys, since no one knew they had the horse out, slipped saddle and bridle back into the barn, leaving the head of the family to speculate in vain how his steed could possibly have perished in so strange a way.

Still another escapade of Daniel Boone's childhood is a good example of the impatience of restraint which marks his later career. Smallpox, scourge of the frontier, developed near the Boone homestead. To protect her children from the disease, Sarah Boone kept them at home. Finding confinement irksome, Daniel and his sister Elizabeth decided that if they once caught the disease and became immune, their mother would let them go where they pleased. Slipping out of bed one night, the two children ran off to a neighbor's house, crawled into bed with a smallpox patient, and then came home undiscovered, cheerfully anticipating the worst. It soon happened.

When the disease developed, their mother got the story by taking her son aside with an admonitory: "Now, Daniel, I want thee to tell thy mother the whole truth."

Daniel confessed, and Sarah Boone was immensely vexed. But one cannot punish a smallpox patient, and the small boy, who with his sister had endangered the entire household, got off with a very mild scolding: "Thee naughty little gorrel, why did thee not tell me before so that I could have had thee better prepared?" All the children escaped with light cases and Daniel was again free to wander. The smallpox had, on the whole, been a great success.