James Daugherty illustration from Stewart Edward White's *Daniel Boone: Wilderness Scout* (1922).

The Many Lives of Daniel Boone

by Michael A. Lofaro

Mention the frontier to any American and often the first person who comes to mind is Daniel Boone. Coupled to this near-instant identification and recognition, however, is a general lack of specific information about the pioneer's life, other than his association with Kentucky, and little true understanding of the roles that he played in the ongoing formation of the new nation.

The facts of his life make clear that Boone was always on the cutting edge of the frontier. Born on November 2, 1734, two years later than George Washington, on the western edge of civilization in Berks County, Pennsylvania, as a young man Daniel led his family down the valley of Virginia to North Carolina and then, at the age of thirty-one, seeking a better home for his own wife and children, explored as far south as Pensacola, Florida. The same desire for a better home, which to Daniel meant large pristine tracts of land for commercial hunting, trapping, and speculation, placed him at the head of a band of five other men, including his brother Squire, as they set out on May 1, 1769, "in quest of the country of Kentucke."[1] Ten years later, Boone led another party of settlers, including Abraham Lincoln, the grandfather of the future president and a longtime family friend, along the Wilderness Road to Boonesborough. In 1799, the same forces that drew him to Kentucky pulled him to the new frontier of Missouri. A bit more than a decade later, he likely walked back to Pennsylvania to visit his relatives there one last time and then, after his return to Missouri, set out as a trapper and explorer toward the Yellowstone country at the age of eighty-two.[2]

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[1] John Filson, *Discovery, Settlement, and Present State of Kentucke . . .* (Wilmington, Del., 1784), 50-51.

[2] For the most recent, complete view of the events in Boone's life described throughout this article, see Lofaro, *Boone: American Life*.

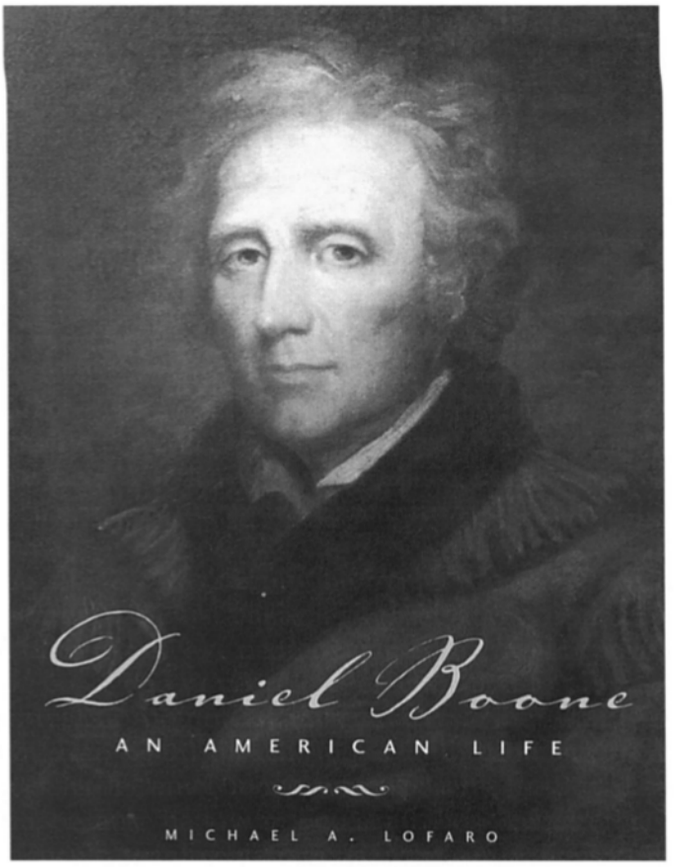
Although this bare outline of Boone's life is remarkable enough, it reveals little of the complexity, capability, and generosity that marked his actions throughout one of the most fascinating and extraordinary periods of American history, actions that inspire my title of "The Many Lives of Daniel Boone." The idea of his "many lives" informs his relationship to the political changes that occurred during his life, to the cultures that he bridged, and to his status as a heroic icon of the American frontier whose image was made to serve diverse agendas and views.

In the first case, the political, remember that Boone lived under four flags—English, American, Spanish, and French—and served honorably and well in official governmental capacities, both political and military, under each. The same, of course, could be said in regard to his service to Richard Henderson's colony of Transylvania and raise the tally to five. It increases to six if you count his time as the "son" of Shawnee chief Blackfish.

Perhaps Boone's most interesting position was an appointed one. On July 11, 1800, Spanish Lieutenant Governor Charles Delassus made him the "syndic," or magistrate, of the Femme Osage district of Missouri. Daniel already exerted much power, for he was the disburser of land to all new settlers. Now he was also the judge, jury, sheriff, and commandant of the district. In effect he was the *patron*, or Spanish *don*, of the territory. As the Lewis and Clark expedition proceeded up the Missouri River, Meriwether Lewis noted Boone's influence on the people in and around St. Charles, stating that they "yeald passive obedience to the will of their temporal master, the Commandant."[3] Although the Louisiana Territory passed from Spanish to French hands in October 1800, all these lands never drew any attention from the French authorities. Spain and her officers, including Boone, continued to govern under the French flag.

In his role as syndic, Boone held court near his cabin under what came to be known as the "Justice Tree." Not unexpectedly, this court was dramatically different from any court that Boone had ever encountered. Not only was he the judge and jury, but

[3] Meriwether Lewis, May 20, 1804, in Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, *Original Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, 1804-1806*, ed. Reuben Gold Thwaites, 8 vols. (1904-05; repr. New York, 1959), 1:24.



he also supervised the implementation of the sentence—usually a whipping with the strokes "well laid on."[4] A guilty offender could be tried, sentenced, punished, and released into society as a reputable citizen all within an hour or two. The court reflected its magistrate: honest, fearless, and straight from the shoulder. Daniel observed no rules of evidence, saying that he only wished to know the truth. His less-than-subtle justice often was a good match for the crime. Some surviving legal documents show that the district over which he ruled was far from peaceful:

[4] Peter H. Burnett, *Recollections and Opinions of an Old Pioneer* (New York, 1880), 343; John Bakeless, *Daniel Boone: Master of the Wilderness* (1939; repr., Harrisburg, Pa., 1965), 373.

June 30th, 1804

> This Day Came before me Justice of the Peace for the District of the Femmeosage, Francis Woods[,] Peter Smith & John Manley and made oath that on the 29th of June of said Month at the house of David Bryan a Certain James Meek and the Bearer hereof Bery Vinzant had some differance Which Came to blows and in the scuffle the said James Meek bit of[f] a piece of Bery Vinzants Left Ear, further the Deponent sayeth not[.] Given under my hand and seal the day and Date above written
>
> Daniel Boone [seal][5]

Those appearing before Boone's bench did not object to his rough-and-ready approach. When one offender whom Daniel had sentenced to a number of lashes was asked how he fared, he replied, "First rate. Whipped and cleared."[6] Boone's contemporaries stated that the old frontiersman had never before seemed so satisfied with his actions or displayed such dignity as he did in his magistrate's role.

While it is impossible to survey all the phases of Daniel's lives that come under the heading of political contributions, many were reinforced by military service. There is no question that he was a major player in both these areas in the settlement of the trans-Appalachian West, the American Revolution in the West, and eventually the settlement of Missouri. He also served in the French and Indian War, the Indian wars in the West, and was roundly indignant when he was refused enlistment as a volunteer for the War of 1812 at the age of seventy-eight.

The second case of his "many lives"—the bridging of cultures—came naturally to Boone in many ways. Although remembered and enshrined for his role as a pioneer, he often was happiest following the same wilderness life as Native Americans. With them, Boone was comfortable and familiar,

[5] Daniel Boone's justice of the peace notes, June 30, 1804, 15 C 65, Draper Manuscript Collection, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison (microfilm) (hereafter DM volume, series, page). In all possible instances, I cite the printed versions of the collections for the convenience of the reader. The quotations from the works edited by Belue and Hammon cited below have, however, been checked against the original manuscripts.

[6] Burnett, *Recollections and Opinions*, 343; Bakeless, *Boone*, 373.

coexisting far more in mutual respect than in warfare.

Since the Revolutionary War in the West was essentially an Indian war, a particular early example from that period does much to reveal Boone's straddling of Native and white cultures under the most difficult of circumstances. Events in the war almost immediately made the Kentucky settlements one of the first lines of defense, and at this time their situation was growing increasingly desperate. A petition to the Virginia General Assembly, endorsed on November 25, 1777, and signed by Boone, emphasized their plight: "your Petitioners are and have for some time past been almost destitute of the necessary Article Salt. That by reason of the Incursions of the different Nations of Indians this year past we have been prevented from making what Quantities would be necessary for ourselves and Families as we formerly did, for small parties would be in great Danger of being cut off and larger ones could not be spared from the defence of the Families."[7] The ability to hold Boonesborough and the other forts would be in some respects proportional to the success of Boone and his party at making salt.

On January 8, 1778, Boone set out at the head of thirty men for the lower salt spring of the Blue Licks on the Licking River. Several weeks passed after their arrival at the licks with no remarkable occurrence. Boone appointed himself one of the three hunter-scouts for the party, and on February 7, 1778, he left camp with a packhorse to get a supply of meat. (This duty gave him a chance to check his string of beaver traps as well.) He rode ten miles below the Lower Blue Licks to bring down a buffalo. Snow fell heavily by the time he had butchered the carcass and fastened some three or four hundred pounds of meat to his horse with strips of buffalo hide cut from the animal.

Seen and unable to avoid capture by four braves and taken back to their camp, Boone was stunned at what he saw: "a party of one hundred and two Indians, and two Frenchmen, on their march against Boonesborough."[8] The situation was worse than Boone's count of combatants, for the fully armed Shawnee, painted for war and under the command of Blackfish himself, certainly numbered more than 102 strong. In addition to the

[7] James Rood Robertson, ed., *Petitions of the Early Inhabitants of Kentucky to the General Assembly of Virginia, 1769-1792* (Louisville, 1914), 43.

[8] Filson, *Discovery, Settlement*, 63.

The 1769 capture of Daniel Boone and John Stewart as depicted in Cecil B. Hartley's *Life of Daniel Boone* (1865). Boone was captured another time in 1769 as well, and at Blue Licks in 1778.

two Frenchmen in British employ, the war party included two "white Indians," James and George Girty, the brothers of Simon Girty, the terror of the frontier, to help direct the attack. Daniel decided to negotiate the surrender of his men to prevent their massacre and told Blackfish that if he spared the salt boilers, he would convince the people of Boonesborough to come to live with the Shawnee next spring. Boone knew that four of his men were not in camp and could warn Boonesborough.

His offer accepted, Boone was eventually forced to run the gauntlet, survived it and a freezing winter march to Chillicothe, was adopted into the tribe as the son of Blackfish, and named Shel-tow-ee, or Big Turtle. Carefully biding his time until his escape on June 16 to warn Boonesborough of an impending attack, he fully participated in Native life throughout his stay. In fact, Boone adapted so well to his new situation that some of the other adopted salt boilers were suspicious about his loyalty. William Hancock, for example, "used afterwards to say that he could not understand how Boone could go whistling about apparently so contented among a parcel of dirty Indians when he (Hancock) was constantly melancholy." Blackfish and his

wife treated Boone with kindness, the chief always addressing him as "my son," and as a brave, Daniel did not have to do any farming, as that was women's work in Shawnee culture. As Blackfish said to Boone when he saw him working in the fields with his Indian mother: "You need not hoe corn—your mother can make enough both for my family and yours also when you bring them out."[9]

Hancock's views were understandable on two levels. First, Hancock was a poor woodsman who, as his words make clear, viewed the Shawnee only as savages. Ill-suited to wilderness life, he was predisposed to think the worst about Boone's behavior. Secondly, Hancock was right. Whatever the circumstances and no matter how much he missed Rebecca and his children, no matter that his overriding aim was the survival of Boonesborough and that his stated intent was always to escape when the time was right (views later vindicated at his court-martial when he was found not guilty of all charges of treason and promoted to major), Daniel was foremost a hunter, not a farmer, and his place in his new Shawnee family allowed him to do what he loved.

In the "autobiography" as recorded by John Filson, Boone noted that he fit in well with his Indian family and tribe:

> I became a son, and had a great share in the affection of my new parents, brothers, sisters, and friends. I was exceedingly familiar and friendly with them, always appearing as chearful and satisfied as possible, and they put great confidence in me. I often went a hunting with them, and frequently gained their applause for my activity at our shooting-matches. I was careful not to exceed many of them in shooting; for no people are more envious than they in this sport. I could observe, in their countenances and gestures, the greatest expressions of joy when they exceeded me; and when the reverse happened, of envy. The Shawanese king took great notice of me, and treated me with profound respect, and entire friendship, often entrusting me to hunt at my liberty. I frequently returned with the spoils of the woods, and as often presented some of what

[9] Lyman C. Draper, *The Life of Boone*, ed. Ted Franklin Belue (Mechanicsburg, Pa., 1998), 481 (first quote); Neal O. Hammon, ed., *My Father, Daniel Boone: The Draper Interviews with Nathan Boone* (Lexington, 1999), 62 (second quote).

Gilbert White's 1909 mural at the Kentucky State Capitol depicts the March 17, 1775, Sycamore Shoals Treaty. Boone's preliminary negotiations with the Cherokee made possible this "purchase" of Kentucky by Richard Henderson for his proprietary Transylvania Colony.

> I had taken to him, expressive of duty to my sovereign. My food and lodging was in common, with them, not so good as I could desire, but necessity made everything acceptable.[10]

Part of Boone's acculturation into the tribe as the son of the chief may also have included marriage. Boone's great-granddaughter wrote that "Grandfather Boone said he had a squaw that claimed him as her buck; said she mended and dried his leggins and patched his moccasins." Stephen Hempstead, who lived near Daniel in Missouri in 1809, remembered that Boone had said that during his captivity he "had been obliged to be married in Indian fashion."[11]

As someone who lived in and understood both Native and pioneer cultures, it was perfectly reasonable that Boone sought to avoid bloodshed, to negotiate solutions to conflicts, and literally to hold on to a shrinking geographical and cultural middle ground as the violence of native-settler conflict and of the Revolutionary War in the West escalated around him in Kentucky.

[10] Filson, *Discovery, Settlement*, 65.

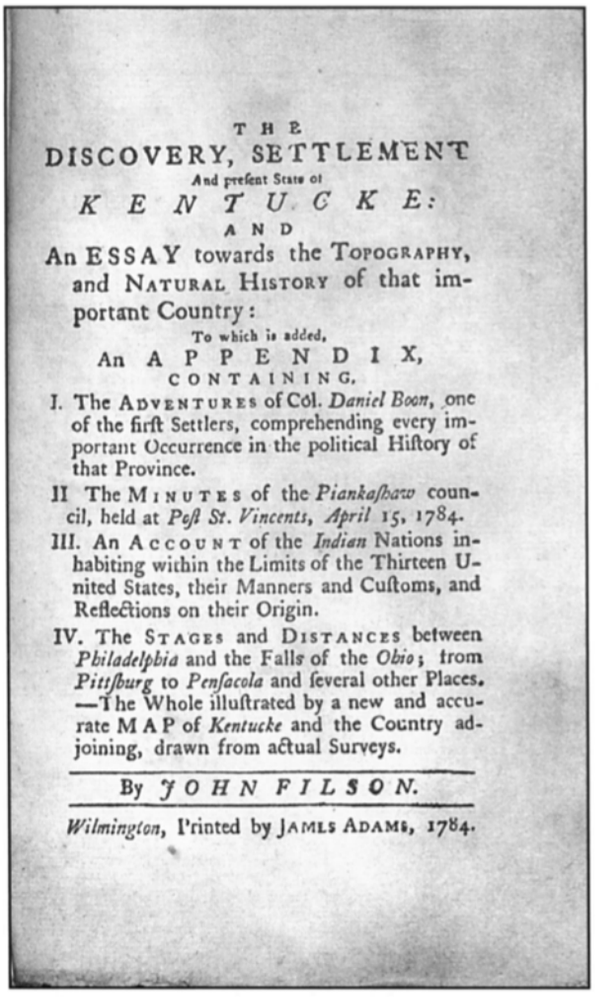
[11] Ted Franklin Belue, "Terror in the Canelands: The Fate of Daniel Boone's Salt-Boilers," *Filson Club History Quarterly* 68 (1994): 8-9.

His move to Missouri in 1799 resonated with the same spirit. In addition to renewed economic opportunities in this next Promised Land, Boone found a new borderland, a land that, like Kentucky decades earlier, struck a tenuous balance between civilization and the wilderness. Daniel found as well some of the same Shawnee and Delaware who, like him, although by different means, had been displaced by the pressures of land speculators and waves of new settlers. His relationships with all people seem to have been taken on an individual basis. Empathy, understanding, and fairness characterize his dealings with Native Americans, and his lifestyle as a hunter placed him clearly and comfortably within their world. In most instances, Boone simply took the Golden Rule as his guide. It is amazing when you realize that in battles and raids he killed their sons, they killed his, and that they both could put their bitterness and loss behind them and go on in mutual respect.[12]

The third and final case—Boone as the representative man, the iconic hero of the American frontier—is perhaps the most complex of his "many lives." Even the most cursory review of Boone's treatment at the hands of his biographers reveals multiple personalities, usually constructed from the foundation of his actual life, but manipulated and changed by the authors to reflect their view of Boone's importance to their present-day readership.

Daniel has been in the public eye since John Filson published his "autobiography" of Boone in 1784, "The Adventures of Col. Daniel Boon," as part of his *The Discovery, Settlement and Present State of Kentucke*. The first printed account of Boone's life, it made him a celebrity on both sides of the Atlantic in less than a year. England, France, and Germany loved Filson's bombastic, ghost-written retelling of the pioneer's adventures and saw him as the case in point of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's "natural man." In America, however, Connecticut native John Trumbull kept the core of Filson's narrative, stripped it of its many rhetorical overindulgences to concentrate upon its action, and, in effect, allowed Daniel to cast off the philosopher's robes that Filson

[12] Daniel's two oldest sons were killed by Indians. James (1757-73) was tortured to death after being taken in an ambush on the way to Boonesborough, and Israel (1759-82) was killed fighting alongside his father at the battle of Blue Licks.



THE
DISCOVERY, SETTLEMENT
And present State of
KENTUCKE:
AND
An ESSAY towards the TOPOGRAPHY, and NATURAL HISTORY of that important Country:
To which is added,
An APPENDIX,
CONTAINING,

I. The ADVENTURES of Col. *Daniel Boon*, one of the firſt Settlers, comprehending every important Occurrence in the political Hiſtory of that Province.

II The MINUTES of the *Piankaſhaw* council, held at *Poſt St. Vincents*, *April* 15, 1784.

III. An ACCOUNT of the *Indian* Nations inhabiting within the Limits of the Thirteen United States, their Manners and Cuſtoms, and Reflections on their Origin.

IV. The STAGES and DISTANCES between *Philadelphia* and the Falls of the *Ohio*; from *Pittſburg* to *Penſacola* and ſeveral other Places. —The Whole illuſtrated by a new and accurate MAP of *Kentucke* and the Country adjoining, drawn from actual Surveys.

By JOHN FILSON.

Wilmington, Printed by JAMES ADAMS, 1784.

had draped on his shoulders and pick up his long rifle.[13]

What Filson's and Trumbull's portrayals shared, albeit in varying degree, is the view of Boone as one integral part in the working out of what would become known as Manifest Destiny, a doctrine and a singular driving force envisioning the United States as a continental empire ordained by God

[13] Trumbull's pirated edition of Filson's book was first published in 1785. For a full analysis of the Americanization of Filson's Boone, see Michael A. Lofaro, "The Eighteenth Century 'Autobiographies' of Daniel Boone," *The Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* 76 (1978): 85-97 (hereafter *Register*).

to stretch from the Atlantic to the Pacific. The thirteen united colonies that existed when Filson wrote *Kentucke* were merely the starting point of what he and many others believed was a grand providential plan designed to civilize the West, a plan steeped in the rhetoric of early nationalism.

The floodgates of interpretation opened soon after Daniel's death in 1820 to create more and different Boones. In 1823, John Trumbull's 1785 Americanization of Filson's Boone was expanded and extended for the period after 1782 by a Brooklyn publisher known only as C. Wilder, who cast Boone in the role of a white Indian and racial turncoat by plagiarizing large sections from a John Bradford-published book, *An Account of the Remarkable Occurrences in the Life and Travels of Col. James Smith*, and having his "Boone" parrot Smith's words.[14]

Also in 1823, the poet Lord Byron included seven verses about Boone in his long poem *Don Juan*. For Byron, Boone was an ideal example of Rousseau's "natural man" whose life in the wilderness gave him spiritual purity, serenity, freedom, simplicity, and good health. Byron also promoted the colonel to general, an honor corrected in the American reprints of the excerpt. A decade later, John A. McClung gave voice to a savage Boone in his *Sketches of Western Adventure* (1832) by providing readers a Boone who pined for the "thrilling excitement of savage warfare" after Kentucky had become too thickly settled and made him an ardent supporter of "the only good Indian is a dead Indian" school of thought.[15] These manipulations illustrate how Boone's life became a public property whose story was remade, sometimes extravagantly far from the truth, to make him a man of the editor-writer's time and beliefs.

While further idiosyncratic portrayals abound, such as John Mason Peck's depiction of Boone as a pious teetotaler

[14] The Wilder edition, *Life and Adventures of Colonel Daniel Boon, The First White Settler of the State of Kentucky* (New York, 1823), lists Filson (who died in 1788) as the author, with Boone quoted "from his mouth" by Filson, with the continuation of Boone's story by "a near relation of the colonel (a resident of Cincinnati)." For the work from which the quotes were actually taken, see James Smith, *An Account of the Remarkable Occurrences in the Life and Travels of Col. James Smith* (Lexington, Ky., 1799).

[15] John A. McClung, *Sketches of Western Adventure: Containing an Account of the Most Interesting Incidents Connected with the Settlement of the West* (Maysville, Ky., 1832), 91.

Thomas L. McKenney and James Hall,
History of the Indian Tribes of North America (1838)

Ma-ka-tai-me-she-kia-kiak (Black Hawk), warrior chief of the Sauk, resisted the advance of settlers into northern Illinois and southern Wisconsin. After defeat in 1832, a forced tour of eastern states and publication of his autobiography revealed him as a heroic and poignant voice for Native Americans.

who loved farming, and that of the southern novelist William Gilmore Simms, who placed him upon a white charger as a "knight errant" and the embodiment of southern manhood,[16]

[16] John Mason Peck, *Life of Daniel Boone, the Pioneer of Kentucky* (Boston, 1847); William Gilmore Simms, "Daniel Boon: The First Hunter of Kentucky," *Southern and Western Magazine and Review,* April 1845, 226.

a book appeared in 1833 that was to solidify Daniel's image and serve as the guiding beacon for all the major treatments of Boone until World War II.[17] In that year, Timothy Flint penned the first full-length biography of the pioneer. His best-selling *Biographical Memoir of Daniel Boone, the First Settler of Kentucky* echoed Filson's trumpeting of Manifest Destiny by interpreting Boone's life in the wilderness as part of the initial stage in God's plan that would culminate in the triumph of civilization and civilized life, but more importantly drew a line that separated Boone as hero from the two other frontier heroes who emerged that same year.[18]

In the 1830s, the names Daniel Boone, David Crockett, and Black Hawk echoed from the frontiers of early America through the cities of the East and across the Atlantic. Although they never met, their lives and adventures overlapped, and they were soon intimately connected in the mind of the American public as the chief symbols of the American frontier.

At no time did this connection become more apparent than when their stories all became bestsellers after their publication in the same year—1833—and initially in the same city—Cincinnati, then the westernmost outpost of commercial publishing. These works—Flint's *Biographical Memoir of Daniel Boone*, Matthew St. Clair Clarke's *Sketches and Eccentricities of Col. David Crockett, of West Tennessee*, and the *Life of Ma-ka-tai-me-she-kia-kiak, or Black Hawk*—were all firsts. Flint's was the first full-length biography of Boone; *Sketches and Eccentricities* was the first book about Crockett; and Black Hawk's was the first full-length autobiography of a Native American. All were also extraordinarily popular books: Flint's biography of Boone went through sixteen editions by 1858; Crockett's *Sketches and Eccentricities* reached its eleventh edition published by Harper & Brothers by 1847 and had five London editions in print by 1841; and by 1845 Black Hawk's autobiography was published

[17] For a fuller treatment of Boone's changing biographical image, see Lofaro, *Boone: American Life*, 178-83; Lofaro, "Tracking Daniel Boone: The Changing Frontier in American Life," in Robert J. Higgs et al., *Appalachia Inside Out*, vol. 1: *Conflict and Change* (Knoxville, 1995), 43-50. This essay was originally published in *Register* 82 (1984): 321-33.

[18] Timothy Flint, *Biographical Memoir of Daniel Boone, The First Settler of Kentucky: Interspersed with Incidents in the Early Annals of the Country* (Cincinnati, 1833). My subsequent remarks on Boone, Crockett, and Black Hawk are derived from my current project, *Boone, Crockett, and Black Hawk in 1833: Visions of the American West*.

seven times, including once in London.[19]

With their purchases, readers again and again demonstrated their interest and confidence in these heroes as representatives of interdependent and yet competing versions of the American West, its significance, and its evolving mythology. These books set the tone and standard for how the West was to be interpreted. Together they represented both the continuity and the variety of the dominantly male American frontier experience available to readers at that time, and they intrinsically commented upon each other as well. While all three characterizations of these heroes took their cue from an American notion of Rousseau's "natural man," all offered distinctly different visions of what a life lived in nature on the American frontier could and should be.

Flint cast Boone as one of nature's nobleman and, ironically, both a willing and unwilling agent for the civilizing of the wilderness. In Flint's view, Boone felt that he was ordained to aid in the triumph of civilized life:

> Colonel Boone, in particular, felt that a firm and resolute perseverance had finally triumphed over every obstacle. That the rich and boundless valleys of the great west—the garden of the earth—and the paradise of hunters, had been won from the dominion of the savage tribes, and opened as an asylum for the oppressed, the enterprising, and the free of every land. . . . [H]e had caught some glimmerings of the future, and saw with the prophetic eye of a patriot, that his great valley must soon be the abode of millions of freemen; and his heart swelled

[19] Flint, *Biographical Memoir of Daniel Boone*; [Matthew St. Clair Clarke], *Sketches and Eccentricities of Col. David Crockett of West Tennessee* (New York, 1833); *Life of Ma-ka-tai-me-she-kia-kiak, or Black Hawk, embracing the tradition of his nation—Indian Wars in which he has been engaged—cause of joining the British in their late war with America, and its history—description of the Rock-River village—manners and customs—encroachments by the whites, contrary to treaty--removal from his village in 1831. With an account of the cause and general history of the Late War, his surrender and confinement at Jefferson Barracks, and travels through the United States. Dictated by Himself* (Cincinnati, 1833).

The Crockett volume was first published as *The Life and Adventures of Colonel David Crockett of West Tennessee* (Cincinnati, 1833), the work was retitled *Sketches and Eccentricities* that same year, and all subsequent editions used the new title and the modified text. The major differences between the two texts are that *Sketches and Eccentricities* added a brief note on Crockett's reelection (p. 209) and omitted the sentimental sketch "Billy Buck" about the death of a pet deer, a story which had no connection with Crockett (*Life and Adventures*, 197-204).

> with joy, and warmed with a transport which was natural to a mind so unsophisticated and disinterested as his.[20]

But by his success in aiding the advance of civilization, he simultaneously destroyed the wilderness life that Flint described as Boone's "real love for the hunting and pursuits of the Indians."[21] As speculators and their lawyers stripped Boone and many other of the first pioneers of their lands, Boone, according to Flint,

> was not at first disturbed by these speculating harpies; and the game being plenty, he gave himself little uneasiness about the claims and titles to particular spots, so long as he had such vast hunting grounds to roam in—which, however, he had the sorrow to see daily encroached upon by the new settlements of the immigrants.[22]

According to Flint, Boone's experience in Kentucky was soon replicated in Missouri:

> The tide of emigration once more swept by the dwelling of Daniel Boone, driving off game and monopolizing the rich hunting grounds. . . . He saw that it was in vain to contend with fate; that go where he would, American enterprise seemed doomed to follow him, and to thwart all his schemes of backwoods retirement. He found himself once more surrounded by the rapid march of improvement, and he accommodated himself, as well as he might, to a state of things which he could not prevent.[23]

Where Boone was depicted as part of the working out of a grand Providential plan that eventually passed him by, Crockett became the epitome of the comic exuberance of the legendary West, one that literally put the wild in wilderness, the tall in tall tales, and made a man into a myth in the Age of Jackson. *Sketches and Eccentricities* brought Crockett center stage through

[20] Flint, *Biographical Memoir of Boone*, 226-27.
[21] Ibid., 137.
[22] Ibid., 232-33.
[23] Ibid., 246.

Boone biographer Michael A. Lofaro speaking at the Kentucky Historical Society on Boone Day 2004.

its combination of biography and "autobiography," much of which was indeed supplied by Crockett. In a common pattern in the book, the narrator-biographer looses Crockett upon his readers. In the following example, Crockett is traveling to Washington, having been elected to Congress in 1827, and chances upon a supporter of President John Quincy Adams. Adams had been elected by the House of Representatives in 1824 because Andrew Jackson, even though he outpolled Adams in both electoral and popular votes in the four-man race, had not received a majority of the electoral votes. Adams and Jackson were currently rematched as the major candidates in the upcoming 1828 election. The narrator states:

> But in order to keep up the thread of my narrative, it will be necessary to accompany him on his journey from his residence to Washington City. "When I left home," said he, "I was happy, *devilish*, and full of fun. I bade adieu to my friends, dogs, and rifle, and took the stage, where I met with much variety of character, and amused myself when my humor prompted. Being fresh from the backwoods, my stories amused my companions, and I passed my time pleasantly. When I arrived at Raleigh the weather was cold and rainy, and we were all dull and tired; and upon going in the tavern, where I was an entire stranger, I did not feel comfortable, for the room was crowded, and the crowd did not give way that I might come to the fire. I felt so mean from being jolted in the stage, I thought I had rather fight than not: and I was *rooting* my way to the fire, not in a good humour, when some fellow staggered up towards me, and cried out, "Hurrah for Adams." Said I, "Stranger, you had better hurrah for hell, and praise your own country."
>
> Said he, "And who are yu?"
>
> "I'm that same David Crockett, fresh from the backwoods, half-horse, half-alligator, a little touched with the snapping-turtle; can wade the Mississippi, leap the Ohio, ride upon a streak of lightning, and slip without a scratch down a honey locust; can whip my weight in wild cats,--and if any gentleman pleases, for a ten dollar bill, he may throw in a panther,--hug a bear too close for comfort, and eat any man opposed to Jackson."
>
> "While I was telling what I could do," said the colonel, "the fellow's eyes kept getting larger and larger, until I thought they would pop out. I never saw fellows look as they all did. They cleared the fire for me, and when I got a little warmer, I looked about, but my Adams man was gone."[24]

This ring-tailed roarer of a Davy was the seedbed for the outrageous tall tales that later entranced antebellum readers after his death at the Alamo as his fictional persona treed a ghost, drank up the Gulf of Mexico, rode his pet alligator up the face of Niagara Falls, and twisted the tail off Halley's Comet.[25]

[24] [Clarke], *Sketches and Eccentricities*, 163-65.

[25] "The Colonel Treeing a Ghost," from *Davy Crockett's Almanac. 1844. Life and Manners in the Backwoods: Terrible Battles and Adventures of Border Life: with Rows, Sprees,*

Black Hawk's autobiography, as would be expected, presents a far different version of the American West than that of Crockett. The war chief had recently been defeated in the summer of 1832 in what became known as the Black Hawk War, a campaign in which Abraham Lincoln, Jefferson Davis, Zachary Taylor, and Daniel's son Nathan had all served. In his *Life*, Black Hawk, now a captive, raised the role of the Native American in popular literature far above that of the generic savage enemy of the white man's advance. In an important way, Black Hawk's autobiography was a dangerous and even subversive book in 1833 because it gave a widespread and first voice, however mediated by translation and editorial change, to Native Americans. Black Hawk used his story both to criticize white culture and to justify his actions in the last Indian war fought east of the Mississippi. In so doing, he and all Native Americans became human instead of savage, and he personally was revealed as a rather admirable and heroic man who possessed many of the frontier virtues that white culture prized.

The transformation from savage to human begins immediately in the book in Black Hawk's dedication to his capturer, Brigadier General Henry Atkinson:

> Sir,—The changes of fortune, and vicissitudes of war made you my conqueror. When my last resources were exhausted, my warriors worn down with long and toilsome marches, we yielded, and I became your prisoner.
>
> The story of my life is told in the following pages; it is intimately connected, and in some measure, identified with a part of the history of your own: I have, therefore, dedicated it to you.
>
> The changes of many summers, have brought old age upon me,—and I cannot expect to survive many moons. Before I set out on my journey to the land of my fathers, I have determined to give my motives and reasons for my former hostilities to the whites, and to vindicate my character from misrepresentation. The kindness I received from you whilst a

and Scrapes in the West (New York, 1844), [33]; "Crockett Drinking Up the Gulf between the United States and Texas," from *Crockett's Almanac. 1846. Scenes in River Life, Feats on the Lakes, Manners in the Back Woods, Adventures in Texas, &c., &c.* (Boston, 1846), 33; "Crockett's Wonderful Escape, by Driving his Pet Alligator Up Niagara Falls," also from *Crockett's Almanac. 1846*, [32-33]; Halley's Comet from "'Go Ahead' Reader" in *Davy Crockett's 1837 Almanack of Wild Sports in the West, Life in the Backwoods, & Sketches of Texas* (Nashville, 1837), [2].

> prisoner of war, assures me that you will vouch for the facts contained in my narrative, so far as they came under your observation.
>
> I am now an obscure member of a nation, that formerly honored and respected my opinions. The path to glory is rough, and many gloomy hours obscure it. May the Great Spirit shed light on your's—and that you may never experience the humility that the power of the American government has reduced me to, is the wish of him, who, in his native forests, was once as proud and bold as yourself.[26]

Further connections in this humanizing process become apparent as Black Hawk gave eloquent voice to his concern for his people, their culture, their honor, and for their spiritual and physical home, the land itself. In this regard he mirrored, but in a far larger and fatalistic sense, the wilderness hunter side of Boone, who likewise saw his way of life fall victim to the tide of civilization. The encroachments of white settlers and the breaking of treaties provided much of the poignancy of Black Hawk's story and chronicled part of the legacy of Indian removal epitomized five years later by the Trail of Tears, a tragedy that Congressman Crockett had earlier tried to prevent.

These three books document the broadening of the pedestal of the American hero to accept exaggerated frontiersmen and Native Americans as well as pioneers and firmly establish national heroes that are clearly differentiated from Old World forbearers or parallels. All blur the concept of the Indian as savage and the white man as civilized, and all tend to equate the two cultures on a reasonably even footing, a view that found both ardent supporters and vociferous opponents. And it is my belief that through the extraordinary popularity of these three volumes, the life of Daniel Boone, both by comparison and by Flint's intent, became enshrined as the prototype of the true pioneer.

Perhaps also through the influence of Flint's biography of Boone, another journey awaited Daniel and his wife Rebecca. After a strong appeal by the Kentucky legislature in 1845, the people of Missouri agreed to have the remains of the Boones moved to Frankfort, where they would be reinterred and pro-

[26] *Life of Ma-ka-tai-me-she-kia-kiak, or Black Hawk*, 7-8.

BOONE
PROCESSION ORDER.

It is requested that all business be suspended, and that all persons unite, and strictly observe the following *Order of Procession*, for the re-interment of the remains of the great Pioneers of the West,

DANIEL BOONE AND WIFE,

in the Frankfort Cemetery Grounds, on Saturday, the 13th instant.

PROGRAMME.

MARSHAL—GEN. JOHN T. PRATT.

No. 1. Military.

Music.

Pall Bearers. HEARSE. Pall Bearers.

No. 2. Relatives and Companions of Daniel Boone and Wife.

Marshal---Gen. Leslie Combs.

No. 3. Officers and Soldiers of the Late War.

L. HORD & JOHN WATSON, ASSISTANT MARSHALS.

No. 4. Committee of Arrangements.

Orator of the Day and Officiating Clergy.

No. 5. President and Members of the Frankfort Cemetery Company.

No. 6. Governor, Suite, and Officers of the State, and United States Departments.

No. 7. Judges of Superior and Inferior Courts, and Officers.

No. 8. Members of Congress and Legislature.

No. 9. Trustees and Officers of the City.

J. SWIGERT & COL. E. H. TAYLOR, ASSISTANT MARSHALS.

No. 10. The Rev. Clergy and Members of the Methodist Episcopal Conference.

DOCTOR E. H. WATSON, ASSISTANT MARSHAL.

No. 11. Masonic Order.

No. 12. Independent Order of Odd Fellows.

No. 13. City Fire Companies.

WM. M. TODD, ASSISTANT MARSHAL.

No. 14. Male and Female Sunday Schools and Teachers.

SAMUEL HARRIS, ASSISTANT MARSHAL.

No. 15. Day Schools and Teachers.

MARSHAL—GEN. L. DESHA.

No. 16. Officers of the Militia in Uniform.

No. 17. Military.

Music.

R. H. CRITTENDEN, ASSISTANT MARSHAL.

No. 18. Ladies and Gentlemen on Foot.

No. 19. Gentlemen on Foot.

MARSHAL—MAJ. E. H. FIELD.

No. 20. Strangers and Citizens in Carriages.

No. 21. Strangers and Citizens on Horseback.

R. KNOTT, ASSISTANT MARSHAL.

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vided, it was promised, with a fitting monument. The ceremony featured speeches, a full-dress military parade, members of the orders of Masons and Odd Fellows in full regalia, a "procession of more than a mile in length" to accompany the "hearse, decorated with evergreens and flowers, and drawn by four white horses," a salute with rifles and swords, and taps—almost all the earmarks of the civilized life that Daniel had often tried so hard to avoid.[27] No irony was intended, of course, only the greatest honor. Still, one must wonder what the pioneer really would have thought of all this pomp.

Born the year that Boone died, Theodore O'Hara (1820-67), an oftentimes soldier and the first notable Kentucky poet, captured much of the romance and true significance of Boone's life in the last two verses of his undated poem "The Old Pioneer, Daniel Boone" as he meditated about Daniel's grave and how it was perhaps fitting that no monument then marked its location:

A dirge for the brave old pioneer!
    His pilgrimage is done;
He hunts no more the grizzly bear,
    About the setting sun.
Weary at last of chase and life
    He laid him here to rest,
Nor recks [reckons] he now what sport or strife
    Would tempt him further West.

A dirge for the brave old pioneer!
    The patriarch of his tribe!
He sleeps, no pompous pile marks where,
    No lines his deeds describe;
They raised no stone above him here,
    Nor carved his deathless name—
An empire is his sepulcher,
    His epitaph is Fame.[28]

By the 1850s, Boone's story and his image as popularized by Flint had become so ingrained in American culture that

[27] J. W. Venable, "The Burial of Daniel Boone," May 4, 1855, autograph file 5, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

[28] Theodore O'Hara, "The Old Pioneer, Daniel Boone," in Nathaniel Cheairs Hughes Jr. and Thomas Clayton Wire, *Theodore O'Hara: Poet-Soldier of the Old South* (Knoxville, 1998), 58-59.

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The monument at Daniel and Rebecca Boone's grave in the Frankfort Cemetery, erected in 1862, overlooks the Kentucky River and the city.

Daniel's likeness became a key visual symbol of the country's belief in Manifest Destiny. After viewing an exhibition in New York in 1852, art critic Henry T. Tuckerman proclaimed Boone "the Columbus of the woods," equating his trek through the Cumberland Gap with Columbus's discovery of a new world as two key events in a westward movement that would forever alter the continent.[29] Such evidence abounded for Americans eager to support a growing nationalism. Jefferson's Louisiana Purchase of 1803, the annexation of Texas in 1845, the conquest of the Southwest and California in the Mexican War (1846-48), and even "Seward's Folly," the purchase of Alaska in 1867, were all events that testified to the power of belief in Manifest Destiny and the near-irresistible lure of vast tracts of land.

Thousands upon thousands followed Boone's westward journeys, moving across the Appalachians and the Mississippi

[29] J. Gray Sweeney, *The Columbus of the Woods: Daniel Boone and the Typology of Manifest Destiny* (St. Louis, 1992), ix.

and beyond to wherever a man and his family might improve their lot. Life was, or at least could be, better to the west. Often they had in mind the same belief that allowed a Methodist preacher of the time to bring his sermon on the happiness of heaven to a climax by stating, "my brethren, to say all in one word, heaven is a Kentuck of a place."[30]

But no matter what the manipulations, alterations, fictions, and political agendas of the visual images and narratives that have been and will be brought to bear upon Daniel Boone to make him the founding father of westward expansion, there is an irreducible and genuinely admirable core of meaning to his life. From his "discovery" of Kentucky in 1769 in his thirty-fifth year until decades past his death in 1820, through manifold political and socioeconomic changes in America, Boone remained a valuable constant. He epitomized the American way of life, the patterns that the Revolutionary War was fought to preserve, and the virtues deemed most important by the nation's first citizens. He was like the vast majority of them—neither wealthy nor powerful—and saw himself as a common man whose success or failure rested upon his own efforts and deeds and not upon an accident of birth.

Over the course of time, in a country whose history has been dominated by continuing migration, Boone's "many lives" have become one in the popular mind. When anyone speaks of the early frontier, he is regarded as our first and most famous pioneer, the chief embodiment of the American hero and our national ideals of independence and virtue, because of his determination, his courage, and his humanity. In a very real sense, Daniel Boone's "many lives" have become our own.

[30] Timothy Flint, *Recollections of the Last Ten Years, Passed in Occasional Residences and Journeyings in the Valley of the Mississippi* (1826; repr., New York, 1968), 64.