THE DOUBLE GRAVE

A Chapter in the early history of NICHOLAS COUNTY

By

C. W. Bell

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This book is affectionately dedicated to the memory of the pioneers of Nicholas county.

By The Author.
PREFACE

Carlisle said, "History is a mighty drama enacted on the theatre of time, with suns for lights and eternity for a background."

Shakespeare said, "All the world is a stage and all the people merely players."

This little book depicts the first appearance of Nicholas County on the stage of civilization.

C. W. Bell.

Zela, W. Va.
August 15, 1929.
The Double Grave

Selim, the Algerine, or the stray sheik, came up the Great Kanawha Valley in the autumn of 1759 as he was making his escape from the Shawnee Indians. He followed the "Old Pocahontas Trail" from the mouth of the Great Kanawha, and as that trail led up Kelly's Creek and down Bell Creek and Twenty Mile and thence up Gauley River to the mouth of Rich Creek; he was therefore in the lower end of Jefferson District. So far as is known he was the first white person who made "moccasin tracks" in Nicholas County.

The first cabin on the Great Kanawha River was built at Elk River Two Mile (near Charleston) in 1771, by three hunters and trappers, viz: Simon Kenton, Yeager and Strader. They were attacked by the Indians in the spring of 1773. Their cabin was burned and Strader killed, Kenton and Yeager making their escape.

Adam Stroud, the pioneer, built the first cabin on the waters of Gauley River at Stroud's Glade about one mile from Allingdale in what is now Webster County, in the spring of 1772. While he was away from home that summer his wife and children were murdered by the Shawnee Indians, his cabin burned and his stock driven off. The only Indians then living in what is now West Virginia were five families of friendly Indians (Delawares) who came from New York about 1768 and settled at a salt spring on the Little Kanawha River in what is now Braxton County near Bulltown. They were murdered in retaliation for the murder of Stroud, an example of the innocent suffering for the guilty.

Walter Kelly built the first cabin on the Great Kanawha at the mouth of Kellys Creek (now Cedar Grove) in the spring of 1773. He established himself by taking a "Tomahawk title" to several hundred acres of land. It was known that the Indians were preparing to attack the whites and he settled there against the advice of his friends. However in the spring of 1774 he sent his family to Fort Savannah (now Lewisburg), but refused to leave himself. That very day he was killed by the Indians.

William Morris, Sr., was born at Scotland Yards near the city of London on the first day of January, 1722. When he was a boy about twelve years old an acquaintance was leaving for America. He was informed that the ship then in the harbor would remain until morning. He went on board and was talking with his friends. The first thing he knew the ship had started for America. Young Morris then gave expression of his grief. He was informed that the ship after making the trip to Philadelphia would return and that he would be at home again in four months. But the captain received orders to go to the West Indies. Young Morris was taken to the captain's own home, soon gained the love and esteem of his family, and he remained with them until he was twenty-two years of age. He then went to Orange County, Virginia, where he married a young lady by the name of Stepp. He afterwards went to Culpepper, Virginia. He came to the Great Kanawha Valley in 1774 and brought his family, which consisted of...
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eight sons and two daughters together with their families. They were sufficient to withstand an ordinary prowling band of Indians. He settled at the place where Walter Kelly had made his settlement, and his family found homes in the Great Kanawha Valley. Thus the William Morris family were the first permanent settlers of the Great Kanawha Valley.

William Morris, Sr., died on the first day of December, 1792, and in his last Will and Testament, which was admitted to probate in 1793, he names his children as follows: William Morris, Jr., (Major Billy) Henry Morris, Leonard Morris, Joshua Morris, John Morris, Carlos (or Caroll) Morris, Levi Morris, Benjamin Morris, Elizabeth Morris, and Franky Morris.

But few settlers came to the Great Kanawha Valley until 1788, and when Kanawha County was organized, in 1789, at the first election held in the new county, though the polls were kept open three days, only thirteen votes were cast. Daniel Boone wrote to the governor of Virginia, in 1791, that there were only sixty-eight men capable of bearing arms in the county.

In the fall of 1775 William Morris (Major Billy) and Peter Morris (colored) came up Gauley River on a hunting tour. They camped on a creek afterwards called Little Elk. One day they became separated and Peter followed the trail leading up Little Elk and came through the divide and down Otter Creek to Peters Creek. He returned to camp that night and told his master of his following the creek, going through the divide and down another creek which flowed into a large creek flowing in another direction. He also described the fine bottom land along the new creek. His master told Peter that on the morrow he would go with him, and in case what he said was true the new creek should be called Peters Creek. Morris came with Peter and was so pleased with the fine bottom land that he and Peter built a bark camp about one-half mile above the mouth of Line Creek. Later Morris went home and left Peter to hold possession of the tract of land. The winter set in bad and Morris did not return until spring when he found Peter alive and doing well, he having lived on wild game and things taken from the forest.

However, William Morris, Jr., did not wish to settle on that tract of land, and sold it to his brother, Henry. Henry Morris moved his family to Peters Creek, in the spring of 1776, and built a log cabin near where Fairview Baptist Church now stands. He was for a long time the only settler in what is now Nicholas County. He had to leave on one or two occasions. Whether he left the Great Kanawha Valley at the time of the "Frontier Retreat" I do not know.

A. N. Morris says, "Henry Morris was an intelligent, industrious boy, and his early life was passed amid wild, romantic scenery in a wilderness. The country was so thinly settled and opportunities for attending school so few that we presume his education was limited. He had, however, ample opportunity for developing his gifts and talents in a way that proved to be of great value to himself and others. The bleating of the deer, the howling of the wolf, the screaming of the panther, the gobbling of the turkey, the incursion of the bear when he wanted a fat hog to feast upon, the occasional visit of the Red Man, induced him to take practical lessons in the science
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The first white grave in Nicholas County.
of gunnery." When General Lewis marched down the Great Kanawha Valley, in the fall after he had come to the valley, he and his brother, John, accompanied the army and participated in the Battle of Point Pleasant, October 10, 1774.

This battle was fought in what was then Botetourt County, Virginia. It was the most closely contested battle ever fought between the White men and the Indians. The battle commenced early in the morning and lasted until sunset.

"Where all day long the battle rolled;
Where all day long, the fearful and the bold
Behind their slender bulwarks, stern and pale,
Stood face to face beneath the leaded hail;
Stood face to face the white man and the red,
Their cause the same, the same their gory bed."

But there was a far different scene among the hills of "Old Augusta" far away.

"They thought of dear ones far away across the hills,
Of West Augusta's hills, where warm and bright
The firelight gleamed on household gods at night,
And dawn awoke each weary, weary day,
When bright eyes waited, watched the western way,
For forms those eyes might never, never greet,
For forms then sunk in death, where two great rivers meet."

Throughtout the day the scentorian voice of Indian Chief Cornstalk could be heard above the din of the battle as he called to the untrained warriors of the forest, "Be strong! Be strong!" The whites were being slowly driven towards the forks of the rivers. In the afternoon General Lewis sent a detachment along the bank of the Great Kanawha River and up Crooked Run and attacked the Indians in the rear. The Indians, thinking the whites were being reinforced, began to give way and retreat across the Ohio River.

Henry Morris was with the detachment that went up Crooked Run and attacked the Indians in the rear. He and a man by the name of Wilson saw an Indian draw bead on them. They both leaped behind the same tree which happened to be too small to protect them both. Wilson was shot in the head, and some of the blood and brains flew in Henry's face.

When Henry Morris grew to manhood he selected for his life companion Mary Byrd of Bath County, Virginia, and probably a more suitable one could not have been selected. The Indians made an incursion in the vicinity of Fort Dinwiddie on the Jackson River in September, 1756, in which they killed thirteen people and took twenty-eight prisoners. Among the slain was John Byrd. His wife and six children were carried into captivity. Mary Byrd remained with the Indians until Bouquet's treaty with the Indians in 1764, when the Indians gave up all their captives. One of Mary's sisters had married an Indian, and when the captives were released she chose to remain with the Indians and was never heard of afterwards.
The Monument erected in memory of Elizabeth and Margaret Morris at Summersville, W. Va.
In the spring of 1791 Edward McClung built a cabin at McClung's Meadows (now Kesler's Cross Lanes) and moved his family to that place. Captain George Fitzwater came with McClung and lived with him for a short time. Conrad Young came about the same time and settled about one mile from Henry Morris on what is now known as the Robert Nell place and on the opposite side of Peters Creek.

On a May day in 1792, Henry Morris went hunting up Otter Creek and crossed over to Little Elk. In the afternoon he was returning home when he was near the mouth of Otter Creek his dogs came to him with their "bristles up". He knew by this that Indians were in the vicinity. He hurried home and found John Young there. Morris inquired about the girls (Elizabeth and Margaret) and was informed that they had gone to drive up the cows. At that time the cows were driven in one direction and the calves in another and the girls would drive them up. Elizabeth was fourteen and Margaret eleven or twelve, and they would frequently take their little brother, John, with them. Morris told Young he knew there were Indians in the vicinity by the action of his dogs and proposed going up the trail to meet the girls. However, they decided to discharge their guns and re-load with a heavier charge to be prepared for the Indians. They discharged their guns, but before they could reload they heard the girls screaming in the woods. Morris and Young ran to meet the girls. They found Margaret about sixty rods from the cabin scalped and with her back broken. The dying girl exclaimed: "Father, I am killed. A yellow man has killed me." She expired in his arms before he could bear her to the house. Elizabeth was not found until the next morning. The children had gone up the path or trail about half a mile to where two Indians were sitting by a "gnat smoke" evidently watching the path between the Morris and Young cabins. They were in all probability contemplating a night attack upon one or both cabins. The girls had not seen the Indians until too late. They both started for home screaming at the top of their voices. Elizabeth was overtaken, tomahawked, and scalped. Margaret had outrun the Indian who was pursuing her, about one hundred-fifty rods and would evidently have escaped had her dress not caught on a limb or snag and thrown her down. Before she could again get on her feet the Indian was upon her, and giving her a quick jerk backward across his knee, breaking her back; then scalping her, he sprang into the dense forest and escaped.

The same day Edward McClung and Captain George Fitzwater were out hunting in different directions from McClung's cabin when they heard the report of a gun. Captain Fitzwater also heard someone blow a charger. They decided that the gun had in all probability been fired by an Indian, and both hurried back home (to McClung's cabin). They decided to sit up that night expecting an attack by the Indians. Before midnight Mathias Young, who had traveled about eight miles in the dark through the woods, arrived at McClung's and told about the murder of the Morris girls. They kept watch until near morning when they started for the Morris cabin. Each man carried a child on his back and they were accompanied by Mrs. McClung and a team of bear dogs. The Morris girls were buried the next day in one
GEORGE H. ALDERSON
grave. The following day all the families left for Fort Kelly (now Cedar Grove). Thus all the inhabitants of Nicholas County had fled before a savage foe.

The next day a company of men from Fort Kelley came back but could see no further trace of the Indians. They went to the cabins of McClung, Young, and Morris, and having collected their few belongings, returned to the fort. The Indians had had so much start that no attempt was made to follow them. Edward McClung was drowned that fall in the Great Kanawha River near Moles Island. Henry Morris and Conrad Young returned in the spring of 1793. They were never molested by the Indians again. This was one of the last Indian depredations in what is now West Virginia.

Shadrach Harman was killed by the Indians at Venables Branch, near Charleston, in 1794. He was the last person killed by the Indians on the Great Kanawha River.

Henry Morris spent the rest of his life on his farm on Peters Creek, his dwelling house being about one-half mile above the mouth of Line Creek. He lived to be nearly eighty years old, dying in 1824. He was buried beside his murdered daughters.

A. N. Morris says: "No detachment of state troops attended his funeral, no soldiers fired a parting salute over his grave, nor was he laid to rest with military honors; but a few sorrowing friends and relatives gathered around the dead hero, and having taken a last view of the venerable and stately form, lowered it into its house of earth, where he calmly and peacefully sleeps undisturbed by the storms, the wars and commotions of life."

When Peter Morris spent his first winter in the bark camp it was in Botetourt County; when Henry Morris received the grant for his six hundred acres of land it was in Greenbrier County. His daughters were murdered in Kanawha County. He died and is sleeping the long sleep in Nicholas County.

For more than one hundred years the Morris girls slept in an unmarked grave. Through the efforts of George H. Alderson a suitable monument was erected to their memory in the public square at Summersville, W. Va., in 1916, and three years later a suitable slab was set up at the grave of the girls just to the left of the State road and nearly opposite Fairview Baptist Church.
NANCY HART

(Taken from Photographic History of the Civil War, published by Review of Reviews Company).

This engraving was made from a tintype taken while Nancy Hart was in prison at Summersville, and is a good likeness of the girl who led Major Bailey's Cavalry to Summersville, July 25, 1862. At that time the entire Union Post was captured.

"Nancy Hart, the Confederate Scout and Spy," is the title of one of C. W. Bell's forthcoming books.

In case you want a copy when published, send him a post card and let him know.
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