Walter Kelly
Records of Augusta County, Virginia, 1745-1800, Vol II

"Peter Shoemaker, in February 1773, started from Muddy Creek in Greenbrier County, Ohio, for Kenawha, in company with James Campbell, James Pauley, and Walter Kelly, and went as far as Gauley River, where Walter turned back. The Indians shot deponent at Powell's Valley. Deposition of John Jones, a settler, as to Walter Kelly, Napper Thomas Alsberry, William Teamster. They were greatly harassed by the Indians. They arrived at New River April 6. They made improvements and set out to return home.'

Birthplace from Mary Nell Franks.

Early Settlers of Kanawha County

Between 1780 and 1790 the Hudnalls and Proctors had gone with Capt. John May from eastern Virginia as tenants to settle and mature his newly acquired title in Kentucky county, which was then Virginia's most western county. Proctor and Hudnall, some twenty years before, in emigrating west, had followed the wilderness trail blazed out by Walter Kelly, the first settler of the Kanawha Valley, to Kelly's Station, at the mouth of Kelly's creek, where the emigrants had to wait for the building of a moving boat. The time was spent in providing wild meat for their voyage on westward. Proctor and Hudnall had noticed the creek bottom, surrounded by rugged mountains that at that time were filled with buffalo, elk, bear, deer, wild turkey and smaller game. And when the settlements drove the game from their Kentucky home their recollection and to Kelly's creek.

Kelly's Creek Settlement

In 1774 Walter Kelly and family settled on what is now called Kelly's creek, which empties into the Kanawha river twenty miles above Charleston. Here he established himself by taking a "tomahawk title" to several hundred acres of land, built a cabin and cleared the timber, undergrowth, &ampc., from a field for farming purposes. In fact, he permanently located at this point; and his settlement was advertised accordingly. The nearest white settlement was in Greenbrier county, where a fort had been constructed for a protection against the attacks of marauding Indians, who infested the country on every hand. His westward advance had been made contrary to the wishes of his friends, and against the better judgment of the Greenbrier colony; but Mr. Kelly, being of adventurous nature and roving disposition, would not be controlled by the advice of his friends, and so, striking out towards the setting sun, he had made a camp for himself and family on the creek which took his name, in this county, fully eighty miles from Donnally's fort, in Greenbrier county, then the western limit of civilization.

A "tomahawk title" was a tacit agreement among hunters, trappers, and settlers that by cutting a tree, near a spring or watering place, the number of acres of ground he desired to locate, giving the date and the name of the claimant, the tract was located, and no one ever disputed the right of such a party to the title of the land claimed. Another title to land, called the "corn title," was also quite common among the earliest settlers. For example: A settler desiring a "corn title" to an additional piece of land, goes to work, clears the same number of acres of his own land and plants it in corn, and thereupon receives a "corn title" to as many acres of additional tract as he has thus planted in corn. I make these explanations at this time for the reason that it will be necessary to refer to these kinds of land titles quite frequently, before I close the history that I am writing.

Soon after Mr. Kelly located in the Kanawha Valley, it was ascertained that the Indians were preparing to make a general attack upon all of the frontier white settlements of Virginia. Colonel Charles Lewis, who was in command at Williamsburg, sent Captain John Stuart westward, with instructions to apprise the whites along the Greenbrier river of the intentions of the savages. He came as far as Lewisburg, and dispatched an express to the Kelly settlement, on the Great Kanawha. I quote from the "Chronicles of Border Warfare," the following paragraphs, which detail the sad fate of poor Walter Kelly, the second white settler in Kanawha county:
"When the express arrived at the cabin of Walter Kelly, twenty miles below the falls, Captain John Field, of Culpepper (who had been in active service during the French war, and was then engaged in making surveys) was there with a young Scotchman and a negro woman. Kelly, with great prudence, directly sent his family to Greenbrier, under the care of a younger brother. But Captain Field, considering the apprehension as groundless, determined on remaining with Kelly, who from prudential motives did not wish to subject himself to observation by mingling with others. Left with no persons but the Scotchman and negro, they were not long permitted to doubt the reality of those dangers of which they had been forewarned by Captain Stuart.

"Very soon after Kelly's family had left the cabin, and while yet within hearing of it, a party of Indians approached, unperceived, near to Kelly and Field, who were engaged in drawing leather from a tan trough in the yard. The first intimation which Field had of their approach, was the discharge of several guns and the fall of Kelly. He then ran briskly towards the house to get possession of a gun, but recollecting that it was unloaded, he changed his course, and spring into a corn-field, which screened him from the observation of the Indians; who, supposing that he had taken shelter in the cabin, rushed immediately into it. Here they found the Scotchman and the negro woman, the latter of whom they killed; and making a prisoner of the young man, returned and scalped Kelly.

"When Kelly's family reached the Greenbrier settlement, they mentioned their fears for the fate of those whom they had left on the Kenhawa, not doubting but that the guns which they heard soon after leaving the house, had been discharged at them by Indians. Captain Stuart, with a promptitude which must ever command admiration, exerted himself effectually to raise a volunteer corps. and proceed to the scene of the action, with the view of ascertaining whether the Indians had been there; and if they had, and he could meet with them, to endeavor to punish them for the outrage, and thus prevent the repetition of similar deeds of violence.

"They had not, however, gone far before they were met by Captain Field, whose appearance of itself fully told the tale of woe. He had run upwards of eighty miles, naked except his shirt, and without food; his body nearly exhausted with fatigue, anxiety, and hunger, and his limbs grievously lacerated with briers and brush. Captain Stuart, fearing lest the success of the Indians might induce them to push immediately for the settlements, thought proper to return and prepare for that event.

"In a few weeks after this, another part of Indians came to the settlements on Muddy creek, and as if a certain fatality attended the Kelly's, they alone fell victims to the incursion. As the daughter of Walter Kelly was walking with her uncle (who had conducted the family from the Kenhawa) some distance from the house, which had been converted into a temporary fort, and, in which they lived, they were discovered and fired upon; the latter was killed and scalped, and the former, being overtaken in her flight, was carried into captivity.

The Morris Settlement

A few months after Walter Kelly located at Kelly's creek, came Major "Billy" Morris, his family, and three brothers, all of whom settled at the same place. They were, therefore, the first permanent settlers in the county, (Kelly having been killed by the Indians.) The history of this family, if fully written, would make a large volume, and of course cannot be presented in this chapter. As I desire to devote an entire chapter to them hereafter, I will, for the present, pass them by with the simple observation that they are the most remarkable family that has yet been mentioned in our border history.

Settlement at Point Pleasant

I have no means of arriving at the exact date when Point Pleasant was first settled; but am led to believe, from the best information which I can obtain, that it was not prior to the year 1774 - the year which Kelly located at the mouth of Kelly's creek, eighty miles from the mouth of the Kanawha. I am quite sure that the fort at Point Pleasant was not erected previous to the campaign of 1774, and hence conclude that there was no permanent settlement of white at that place prior to that year. The greater portion of Western Virginia, up to the close of the campaign of 1774, was infested with tribes of Indians
who were continually on the war-path, and were constantly committing depredations upon the white settlements, from Wheeling to Lewisburg; hence I conclude that it would have been impossible for the whites to maintain a position at the mouth of the Great Kanawha without a stockade; and, inasmuch as there was none, the inference is that they had no settlement there before the date I have mentioned.

Another fact may be cited as proof of the position above taken, that all the territory of south-western Virginia was settled by pioneers from the eastern portion of the State, and not from the north-west. Greenbrier was first settled by Marlin and Sewell, in 1749, and Fort Union (Lewisburg) was constructed as the extreme western stockade. Next we hear of Stroud, on the Gauley, in 1772; next Walter Kelly, on the Great Kanawha, in 1774; and next the fort at Point Pleasant looms up, in the latter part of the same year, as the great break-water against the almost resistless incursions of the Indians who had been forced west of the Ohio river. The truth that "Western, the star of Empire takes its way." has been doubly verified in the peopling of the great stretch of country in Virginia by the Caucasian race, from the Allegheny mountains to the Ohio river.

Apr. 1794
Petition of JOHN MURPHY and ELEANOR his wife in dower in lands of ANDREW WALKER, dec'd. Writ of admeasurement do issue. ELIEZAR ALEXANDER and WILLIAM KELLY - by the petitioners JOHN KIRK and MATTHEW KIRK for the tenant JAMES WALKER, JOHN SIMPSON by the court.

Fayette County History
Fayette County was created by an act of the Virginia General Assembly in 1831 from parts of Greenbrier, Kanawha, Logan and Nicholas counties. It was named in honor of the Marquis (Gilbert Motier) de LaFayette (1757-1834), French military hero and American ally during the American Revolutionary War.

An expedition led by Captain Thomas Batts, Thomas Wood and Robert Fallam were the first Englishman to reach the present site of Fayette County. They reached the Kanawha Falls on the afternoon of September 16, 1671. Walter Kelly was the first English settler in the county, arriving in 1773. Soon afterwards, he was killed by Indians for trespassing on their hunting grounds. The following year, William Morris, Sr. became the first permanent English settler in the county, building a cabin at Cedar Grove at the mouth of Kelly's Creek in 1774.

Walter and his brother Timothy arrived in Barbados ca:1735, probably from County Galway, Ireland. He was born ca: 1715. He and his brother were claming land in South Carolina ca: 1750. He and his wife Sadie settled a farm on Muddy Creek in Greenbrier County, NC sometime prior to 1770. He and his family moved to the frontier, about 80 miles to the west of Greenbrier ca: 1773. They established their farm at the mouth of Kelly Creek on the Kanawha River about 12 miles above Present day Charleston West Virginia. Present day Cedar Grove is located at the mouth of Kelly Creek. In 1773 The Shawnee Indians went on the warpath in Virginia. Walter sent Sadie and the children back to Muddy Creek. In July 1774, Walter was scalped and killed on his farm on Kelly Creek. A few weeks later, on the family farm on Muddy Creek, Indians killed Walter's brother and kidnapped his youngest daughter. Subsequently, Sadie, the children and the dog Bruno made their way back to Cheraw County, South Carolina. I believe they lived out their lives in a small village named Kellyville. Branches of the family settled on Loop Creek in the vicinity of Robson, West Virginia. We are attempting to fill in as completely as possible the descendent tree of Walter Kelly.

Walter Kelly of Johnson County, North Carolina a deed sq. 10 September 1748 to Benjamin Forbes of Beaufort County, 440 A land on Tar. R./ Wit: James Ellison, John Forbes and Enich Hall, JP. (This was found in Leonardo Andrea Genealogy Folders copied by the Mormon Church on microfilm.)
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They arrived at New River, April 6. They made improvements and set out to return home.

There were 2 stories about Walter Kelly One that there were three brothers who came to America with Walter. Walter landed in Maryland and one brother landed in Virginia.

Walter came from independent people, not too religious, from an orthodox standpoint. The old Kelly standard was to believe in the purity of men. The same was expected of the women. It was a proud family that believed in the best morals.

Walter was scalped by the Indians, while he and other white men were distilling sea water to get salt, their only means of getting salt at that time.

1774
William Morris, Sr., becomes the first permanent English settler in Kanawha county, building a cabin at Cedar Grove at the mouth of Kelly's Creek. [Walter Kelly had arrived in 1773 but was killed by Indians for trespassing on their hunting grounds. Morris bought the land abandoned by Kelly.]
Fort Fincastle (renamed Henry, in 1776) built at Wheeling. Prickett's Fort built near Fairmont.
Oct. 10. The Battle of Point Pleasant between Virginia settlers and militia and a confederacy of Shawnee, Delaware, Wyandot, Cayuga, and other Indian tribes led by Cornstalk. The Virginians win the battle, concluding the campaign known a Lord Dummore’s War, and extract a treaty from the Indians that forces them to give up much of the disputed land.

James Kelly
This family to Greenbrier County, Virginia, shortly before Revolution and there father (Walter)killed by Indians, so family returned to Pittsylvania and soon after to "Cushaw" (Kershaw) district, South Carolina, where soldier married and had seven children and remained there 14 years, then to Greene County, Tennessee, for many years, then to Williamson County, Tn. for 2-3 years, then to Maury County, Tn., for many years, then to Hickman County, Tn. (where soldier originally applied 1833 in Cooper County, Missouri.

In his Revolutionary pension file, James Kelly, at the end of the war in the Carolinas went back to the Greenbrier country to serve under Captain Mathew Arbuckle against the Indians. James says he wanted to fight his father's killers, and he did so for two years. Granted pension on his application executed 28 April 1835 while residing in Maury County, Tennessee.

None of this is proven but just a suggestion to help us find the truth of the Kelly's.