

McConnell
Jan

OCCGS REFERENCE ONLY

KENTUCKY McCONNELLS

By Allys McConnell Huff

Father and Uncle came down together, and planted corn by Lex'g Town (about Lex'g town). Father said if my uncle woud go up & bring down the family that he would stay and take care of the crops (gather in the crop, and take care of it.)¹

As the seeds of our American Revolution were being nurtured in the growing colonies, parties of men were surveying the westernmost part of Virginia, known as Fincastle County. The Ohio Land Company had surveyed the land along the Ohio River while the Transylvania Company, with Daniel Boone, concentrated on the Kentucky River with headquarters at Fort Boonesborough. These western lands were offered for settlement; which started a great influx of men from Pennsylvania, Virginia and the Carolinas, determined to gain a portion for themselves. Some of them were claiming land they had earned from fighting in the French and Indian War. Others came to claim the inexpensive grants and pre-emptions allowed.

As a "settler" (one who had resided in Kentucky for one year or grown a crop of corn before 1778), a warrant could be obtained for 400 acres from the land office, which he would then have surveyed. The surveyor entered the information in his entry book. Improvements would be made on the land, for example clearing brush and trees on a portion and planting a crop of corn, or building a rough cabin structure. With his survey in hand, he would return to the land office with 40 shillings (10 shillings or \$2.25 per 100 acres) to obtain his deed or grant to the 400 acres. A settler also had the option to claim an additional pre-emption of 1000 acres adjacent to his settlement for 200£ (pounds) plus fees. Those who came to Kentucky after 1778 but before the land law was passed could claim 400 acres for 80£ plus fees. Others, coming to Kentucky later, purchased treasury warrants at 20£ per hundred acres. This amount was increased in 1780 to 160£ per hundred acres.² Notches in trees, or piles of stones were used to mark property lines with the result that many pre-emptions overlapped or were not clearly marked. The area courts were kept busy for years trying to sort out settlements.

When he got up, (to Pennsylvania) he codn't sell his farm; and only took down my mother and 2 bros. They went down in canoes. My sister and myself staid with Uncle's family, and went to school. As they went down,

¹ Draper Manuscripts, A.R.C. #1P; Interview with Sarah McConnell (January 1991) Migration

² Neal O. Hammon, Early Kentucky Land Records, 1773-1780, Filson Club Publication, p. xv.

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they were frozen up. They didn't get down till the river broke open.

In 1776, Kentucky County was created out of Fincastle County. While the Revolution raged in the east, disagreements over land holdings multiplied. Skirmishes with Indians, who were urged on by the British, increased. The Revolution spread to the western lands in February 1779, when George Rogers Clark led a small army to defeat the British in the Old Northwest Territory north of the Ohio. The final battle of the Revolution was fought in Kentucky County, when volunteer militia were led into an ambush by the Indians and British at Blue Licks in August 1782.

We brought flour and corn plenty, down the river with us. People, tho, who come through, and didn't get out of the wilderness this hard winter, saw hardships. Father said uncle raised corn at Field's S., before they went there. Not very much though: they had all to clear, and soon after they were done planting, they were taken west, way out on a campaign. Heap of people were in waiting, up in Pa. w. boats; had collected there from distant parts. Were waiting the moving of the waters, were so low, they co'd'nt get down that fall, as they had intended, and never rose till xstmas, and then froze just right up.

Many stories have been written about the well-known settlers, such as Boone, Clark, and Gist, who dared to make a place for themselves in the Kentucky wilderness sometimes called the "Dark and Bloody Ground". One family group, however, has received little attention. Among these early pioneers were members of the McConnell (McConnal, McConnel) family.

WHERE DID THE McCONNELLS COME FROM?

Several accounts place the McConnells in present day Fulton County PA (Bedford County in 1775). Both Fulton and Bedford Counties were originally Cumberland County and it is in the histories of Cumberland Co. that many McConnell men are listed paying taxes on land they owned. In tax lists from 1751 through 1770 are James, Alexander, Adam, Andrew, William, Robert, Daniel and Francis. Many of the townships listed are in the central part of the state, known as the Cove Valley, which was originally called McConnelltown.

"Most of the migrations from the Pittsburg area, down the Ohio River, were from the area of Cove Valley, Pennsylvania. From the History of the Reformed

*Presbyterian Church in America: The McConnells, who subsequently became related to the Wilson family resided in the Cove at the time of the Indian Massacre in 1756. They migrated to the Region of the Yough, in Western Pennsylvania in 1769...*³

In Biographical and Portrait Cyclopeda of Cumberland, York and Adams Counties, Pennsylvania, family members are mentioned in conjunction with the Conococheague.⁴

The Cumberland County Tax Records show James McConnell paying taxes on land in Peters Township in 1751, 1763, 1764 and Mary McConnell paying taxes in 1778. In the same township, Andrew McConnell paid taxes in 1753, 1763 and 1764; Adam McConnell in 1753; Alexander McConnell in 1753, 1763 and 1764; Robert McConnell in 1763 and 1764; and William McConnell in 1753, 1763 and 1764. (The lists for several years are missing.)

In a pamphlet of Cumberland County, PA Marriages, William McConnell married Rose Kennedy on January 26, 1790, Rev. Robert Davidson officiating. James McConnell married Margaret Houston on January 2, 1762.⁵

A published genealogy, The McConnell Family⁶, has traced the line back to Ireland. It says they sailed before 1735 to this new continent, migrating through Philadelphia. Francis McConnell was the son of William McConnell. He married Mary... One of Francis' sons, James McConnell, married Mary Duncliff in Christ Church, Philadelphia on December 29, 1758. Other early marriages mentioned were William McConnell to Eleanor Low on June 27, 1769, and William McConnell to Roseannah Kennedy in 1768. That William was born in 1743 and was a brother of Francis McConnell Sr.

*"Many Galloways, Wilsons, McConnells, Dickeys and Scotts were living in the Cove Valley."*⁷

Members of these families moved on to the rugged frontier of western Pennsylvania. Today, there is a McConnell's Mill State Park in that vicinity.

Andrew McConnell lived for about 5 yrs. about 20 miles above Pittsburgh, which was then the back woods and very little settled. Forks of Yah. My father (Andrew) had lived a little while in Pittsburgh, 1st he left us behind there - to go to school, until he moved up the river, where

³ Echoes of the Past, Stamping Ground 1775-1975, Stamping Ground Woman's Club, 1975.

⁴ Biographical and Portrait Cyclopeda of Cumberland, York & Adams Counties, PA, Southwest PA Genealogical Services, 1986, p.24.

⁵ Cumberland County, PA Marriages 1761-1817, p.25.

⁶ DeVore & Davison, The McConnell Family, 1978.

⁷ History of Fulton, Bedford and Somerset Counties, Pennsylvania.

[Continued on page 150; and in the next issue of Roots.]



Friends of Kentucky Public Archives, Inc.

P.O. Box 4224

Frankfort, KY 40604

September 13, 2001

Colonel Al Alfaro
President
Kentucky Genealogical Society
P. O. Box 153
Frankfort, KY 40602

Dear Colonel Alfaro:

On behalf of the Friends of Kentucky Public Archives, Inc., it's a pleasure to write and thank you for the recent gift to the Friends from the Kentucky Genealogical Society. The sustained support of the Friends' aims by organizations like the KGS is especially appreciated, and you and your members have been real "friends."

Your check for \$280 will enable the Friends to purchase a number of research tools for the Archives Research Room at the Kentucky Department for Libraries and Archives. These will include four rolls of microfilm containing *Freedmen's Bureau Records for Kentucky* and two CD ROMS titled *Early Kentucky Settlers, 1700s - 1800s* and *Kentucky Genealogies #1, 1700s - 1800s*. In addition, the following books will also be purchased: the *1890 Kentucky Veterans Census Index*; *Compendium of the Confederate Armies: Kentucky, Maryland, Missouri*; *Early Louisville, Kentucky, Newspaper Abstracts, 1806-1828*; and *A Student's Guide to Native American Genealogy*.

Please express my appreciation to your members for this timely assistance. We are most grateful.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Paul Coates". The signature is written in black ink on a white background.

Paul Coates
President

KENTUCKY McCONNELLS

By Allys McConnell Huff
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Continued from Winter 2001. Completed in Summer 2002.

MIGRATING TO KENTUCKY

The McConnell brothers, Francis and William, are known to have come down the Ohio River, to the Kentucky River and on up to Elkhorn Creek in 1775. They explored that area, establishing their right to land and building camps or stations. Traveling by canoe, they carried little more than a rifle, a knife and a hatchet to carve out a place in this new land. Knowing the dangers, they still determined to make a place for their families. Traveling by twos or in small groups provided more safety. Also, one man could stay on the land and take care of the crop of corn, while the other returned to Pittsburgh for more supplies and other family members who were waiting to make the trip down-river.

Sometime that summer, they were attacked by the indians. My f. at the time, was up at Harrodsburgh. There was also at that time a stranger in the house. My mother had sent out the bound boy and her 2 little twins, to the brush enclosure to suckle the calves, and bring the cows up till she wo'd milk them. The bound boy was shot, and died that night. Of the others, one was taken, and the other hid. But they were very much attached to each other, and the one that was taken, thought he co'd'nt go without the other, and pointed out where he was to the indians. When they got over among the indians town (they had passed thro 2 or 3) on their way to their own, they met a trader, who had known their father in Pittsburgh, and he knew them as soon as he saw them. He asked them if they knew him? They replied, yes! His name was Nicholson. The indian owners were reluctant to give them up, but some of the other indians made them, & he gave a rifle for them. Adam Baxter McConnell, and Wm. Barber McConnell.

By 1778, many women and children were joining the men at the stations and forts. These were brave ladies facing all the hardships of frontier life along with their maternal duties, generally without neighbors or medical help. Plus they did it while living with all the dangers of frontier life, including the threat of what were deemed as savages.

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We landed at Bear Grass, 15th of April, 1780. Perhaps 30 or 40 boats came down in the same co. Some persons were killed on boats that came down a few weeks after ours. On landing, we immediately came out to Spring S. where was not a log yet cut. Suppose they built 30 or 40 cabins there. The women were carried off to Floyd's S., till the cabins were built. Called Spring S., so many little springs, staid all summer, beautiful place. Many waters at the Spring S., I thought it as pretty a place as ever I had seen. So level. The sugar trees and buckeyes were all out. The place where you went down to the springs, was all grassy. Not hilly. All broke up. None of them had any way of living there. Some had gardens. Some raised corn; some picketting. Most of the families that came down went out to Spring S. We were just camped out by Floyd's S. The men came there at the close of the day.

These hardy women helped with the planting, prepared the meals, did what doctoring needed to be done and generally did it all alone. Women needed a broad knowledge to be able to keep their families alive. Understanding of herbal remedies was important to the survival of her family. She performed the back-breaking work of gardening, preparing and preserving food, raising and killing poultry, hauling water and chopping wood. She cared for the animals, spun and wove the cloth, made soap and candles. All these endless tasks were accomplished while pregnant, giving birth, then breast feeding and caring for the young children.

Men were often gone from the cabin hunting or serving in the militia. Neighbors might be miles away. Gathering together in the stations or forts when Indian attacks were immanent provided some women with the only chance for companionship.

Many families determined that it was all too dear a price to pay and returned to Pittsburgh. Andrew McConnell and his wife were headed back up-river when some of their party, choosing to go by land, were attacked by Indians.

After the taking of my bro's., my father determined to take back his family. A co. at that time was going up. Part divided and would go by land. My f. wo'd have gone that way too, but that he had his wife along, and the river party was the strongest. The co. my f. & m. were in, was a co. from Va. They had been out, I suppose, looking for land, and were on their way in. Some of them were pretty wild fellows. The land party were rag (sic), and they wo'dn't stay w. the other. The water party got up

unmolested. The land co. were attacked by a party of indians. The 2 co. were not far apart at this time; for some of the men went down to where the other were, on the river. One went up to Wheeling for help. A bullet was shot Mrs. Col. Robt. Patterson's arm and lodged in J... Templeton's. I saw it taken out after they got to Pittsburgh. (I saw it cut out.) He was tomahawked in the back too, and yet got off & got home to his mother's, at Cannocogig and there died of the small pox. Patterson's arm never quit running.

Those first early days were more difficult than anyone of later generations can imagine. How was this family persuaded to try again? We don't know, but owning land that needed to be cared for was perhaps the deciding factor. It was only through time, which brought increased numbers of pioneers to the area that life became safer and more comfortable.

McCONNELLS IN THE BLUE GRASS AREA

"McConnell's Stations. The city of Lexington, in Fayette County, grew out of stations established by Francis and William McConnell. The two brothers surveyed and staked claims to numerous land tracts in Fayette and Scott counties on the waters of Elkhorn Creek in 1775-76. Both men established small stations and are said to have given the name Lexington to the town they planned near the stations in 1775. Of the two stations, Francis McConnell's became the better known, after several families settled there around 1780, including those headed by the McConnells and by Robert Edmiston, David Campbell, John Brookey, John Nutt, Mathew Harper, and John Stevenson. The station reportedly broke up around 1784. Francis McConnell did not survive the pioneer era, but William became a prominent citizen and trustee of the city of Lexington."⁹

John Nutt started the first powder mill at McConnell's Station, one mile below Lexington.¹⁰

"Of those who aided Col. Patterson in founding Lexington, the most conspicuous, perhaps, was William McConnell, who with his brothers, Alexander, James and Francis was among the first adventurers to the wilderness of Kentucky."¹¹

Uncle and father raised no crop that summer at Spring S. In the fall (1780) my uncle attempted his remove up to Field's S. Above Harrod's S. Had but 2 sons. One, Adam, was yet in Pa., now at Yonia. The oldest, Jas, was in the canoe, w. his f. Just buried him in the water, so that the indians sho'd'nt get his scalp. They had to leave the

canoe. It was a wet, rainy morning, and they co'd'nt get but that one gun off, or suppose all might have been killed. (Uncle Wm. was going up in a canoe with 4 other men. He had removed his family, and part of his other things, to Field's S., near Harrod's S., or beyond there, and had come down perhaps to Louisville, gotten a canoe, and was making his way round to Spring S. when indians that were concealed under a raft, shot Wm. McConnell, who was steering, in the head, and killed him. (In the fall of 1780, think. I heard the gun that shot some man on the trace from Louisville. He was stranger to me. Suppose he must have been coming up. I was much alarmed, for my husband had started for the same place: but he hadn't the trace (kept) and never heard the gun. I was down at one of the springs at the time.

Altogether there were at least eight McConnell men who came with their families from Pennsylvania. Two were named Francis, two were named William and two were named James. Several other relatives followed them into the wilderness.

A descendant, Mrs. D.B. Harding of Lexington, KY claims that three of the men were of the family of James McConnell. They were brothers James Jr., Francis, and William. Andrew McConnell is also attributed to this group by some researchers, however, he is not included in James' will as the others are. Another source claims Andrew's father was Francis McConnell. Still others claim that Andrew's father was Adam McConnell.¹² This seems a likely parent as one of his twin boys was named Adam. The middle names of the twin boys, Baxter and Barber, repeat the last names of their grandparents.

Andrew is known to have built his cabin next to William's at McConnell's Station. It would seem that William was the uncle mentioned in Sarah McConnell January's narrative.

Mrs. Harding said the four other men were from the family of James McConnell's brother, Francis McConnell. Those four brothers were: Francis Jr., Alexander, James, and John.¹³ In the History of Fayette County, these brothers were listed as Francis Jr. Alexander, James, and William.

Of these eight cousins, four were killed by Indians during those early years of settlement.

⁸ Marylynn Salmon, *The Limits of Independence American Women 1760-1800*, Oxford University Press, 1994.

⁹ John Kleber, *Kentucky Encyclopedia*, Univ. Press of Kentucky, 1992, p.592.

¹⁰ Charles R. Staples, *History of Pioneer Lexington 1779-1806*, Univ. Press of Kentucky, 1939, p.26.

¹¹ W. H. Perrin, *History of Fayette County Kentucky*, 1882, p.230.