

PRESENTATION #3

Last of a Series of Three Talks on the Ethnic Origins
Of the Peoples of Southwest Virginia

THE SCOTS-IRISH IN VIRGINIA

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Contention and argumentativeness accompany the Scots-Irish wherever they have gone. Even the terminology used in discussing them is contested even to this day. There is an ethnic strip across Britain which lies between Scotland and England, and which has been contested throughout history. At times the Scots possessed it, and at times the English did. The people who lived there grew to hate both, as the coming of armies from either direction spelled trouble for them. They were neither truly Scottish nor truly English. The first term applied to them was 'Lowland Scots'. The more modern term in current academic use is 'the Border People'. The borderlands were finally conquered by the English, who assumed ownership of the land and rented it back to the natives. The plots were very small, an acre being a large tract. These people were then called 'crofters'. They eked out a starvation level existence until the English invented steam powered machinery to make woolen cloth, such as the spinning jenny, and the steam loom. At this point it became far more profitable to consolidate the crofts into massive sheep raising pastures. This created a massive surplus of populations in the Border Country. The crofters were displaced and sent off to Northern Ireland, or Ulster. The term 'Ulsterman' was born. They did not get along with the native Irish Catholic. When the English Colonies in North America opened up, large numbers of these people migrated to Boston, which had been started by fellow Calvinists; to Philadelphia where the Quakers offered freedom of religion; and to Virginia which offered them land in the Valley where they would serve as a buffer between the English in Tidewater, and the Indians to the West.

What to call these people quickly became an issue. Regional differences developed, and continue to this day. In Boston they are known as 'the Lace Curtain Irish', as opposed to the later arrived Irish Catholic, who is referred to as 'the Shanty Irish'. During the American Revolution many of these people moved to Ontario, where they are known simply as 'the Irish'. From Pennsylvania on South the terms of either 'Scotch-Irish' or 'Scots-Irish' prevail. Though these terms go back to Elizabethan times, these settlers in America originally referred to themselves simply as 'Irish'. It was only after the arrival of large numbers of Irish Catholics that the American descendants of the Border People began to distinguish themselves from the later arrivals as Scots-Irish.

From 1710 until the Revolution over 200,000 people emigrated from Ulster to America. Accurate records were not kept, and people today argue whether most went first to Pennsylvania, or straight to Virginia. In the late 1720's an Ulsterman named James Patton started a shipping business in Britain, having as a partner an English merchant named Walter Lutwidge, who bankrolled him. Patton was from a low level of Irish gentry, and married well into the same class. In 1730 he began to import Irish indentures into land in the Great Valley that was in litigation between Lord Fairfax and the Governor of Colonial Virginia. His method of operation was to bring his ships into the headwaters of navigation on the Rappahannock River at a place then known as 'Rob's Hole', now as Tappahannock. Indian trails from there passed through the Blue Ridge through several gaps into the Great Valley of Virginia. On his return trip to Ireland Patton took tobacco, and furs which he exchanged for more indentures. Among those Irish who came to Virginia by this manner was John Lewis, whom Patton transported in 1732. Patton made himself wealthy in this trade.

In 1736 William Beverly patented 118,941 acres on the Little Cow Pasture River, encompassing what today is most of Augusta County, which contains the City of Lexington. It included the land where Patton had been settling his Irish indentures. The dispute between Lord Fairfax and the government of Virginia had been settled. That same year William Penn kicked out of Pennsylvania several Irish because, being Irish, they had settled where they had been told not to do so, that is to say on land reserved by treaty to the Indians. This land in Virginia was officially named 'Beverly Manor', but on the practical level it was soon to be called 'the Irish Tract'. That year the Irish who had been run out of Pennsylvania came to Beverly Manor, settling mostly to the northwest of Lexington on what was then called Tea Creek, but soon acquired the name Kerr's Creek (Carr's Creek).

In 1737 Beverly made a deal with Patton and gave him 1/4th of Beverly Manor in exchange for bringing in more Irish settlers. Without benefit of divorce, Patton married Beverly's daughter, Mary. Patton also embezzled Walter Lutwidge, which led this worthy to remark, "Of all ye Knaves I ever met with, Patton has out don them allHell itself can't outdo him." Their daughter, also Mary, married Captain William Thompson, Jr., whose descendants settled Thomson Valley of Tazewell County. Their daughter, Margaret, married Col. John Buchanan, of whom we spoke in the talk on Virginia's German immigrants. He will appear again in this discussion about the Irish in Virginia. Patton brought over his former brother-in-law, John Preston, who married Thompson's sister. The Prestons loom huge in the history of the Abingdon area. John Lewis and Patton formed a partnership, and got a grant for 10,500 acres on the Calf Pasture River.

Major Charles Campbell was born in Ireland and immigrated to the Irish Tract with his father, Patrick. They were neighbors of Capt. James Patton and Benjamin Burden, whose name was frequently listed as "Borden". Burden had been administrator of Lord Fairfax's land, the Northern Neck, in Virginia. Charles inherited Patrick's one-fourth interest in Beverly Manor. Charles was the father of

General William Campbell of Royal Oak, which during the Revolution was renamed Marion after Francis Marion. Charles was also the discoverer and owner of the salt deposits at Saltville.

Charles Campbell married Margaret Buchanan, the daughter of Col. John Buchanan of Aspenvale, who was the son-in-law of Col. James Patton. Buchanan had earlier settled at Cherry Tree Bottom, which was the first name for the town that was later named after him. He then got a grant for Aspen Tree Bottom just west of Seven Mile Ford, and built his estate there, which he named Aspenvale. Charles worked for Patton as surveyor during the Patton Expedition of 1748. In the 1740's the Royal Governor and the House of Burgesses set up the Loyal Company, which received a massive land grant that included most of the Great Valley of Virginia. James Patton received his own land grant, and also served as agent for the Loyal Company. Patton led an expedition to at least Kingsport, Tennessee, and perhaps to Middlesboro, Ky., to discover and to survey the land. These interrelated families got the cream of it.

In 1753 Col. John Buchanan also got the original grant for Royal Oak. In 1769 he conveyed it to John Campbell, who months later conveyed it to Arthur Campbell, Charles' nephew.

At some point Charles Campbell came to live at Aspinvale, which became known as his estate.

Charles was one of the fifteen men who signed the "Fincastle Resolutions". Charles died in 1767, and his son William inherited the Salt Lick Tract from him.

The Aspenvale Cemetery, located between Chilhowie and Seven Mile Ford, is the first cemetery in Virginia to be designated as a National Historic Site. Buried there are General William Campbell, Elizabeth Henry Campbell Russell, Henry Campbell, General Francis Preston, and Sarah Buchanan Campbell Preston.

General William Campbell was born in Cross Creek Township, Pa.. His father was Charles. His wife was Elizabeth "Betsy" Henry, sister of Patrick Henry. They had several children, but only Sarah survived. He fought at Point Pleasant in Lord Dunmore's War, and was leader of the militia that won the Battle of King's Mountain, and died 1781 serving under Lafayette at the siege of Yorktown. William's Elizabeth remarried General William Russell of Castlewood, and became known as "Madam Russell". She was Russell's second wife, and not the mother of Henry Russell, who was killed by Indians along with James Boone, the son of Daniel.

Let us return to John Lewis, who was in partnership with James Patton on the Calf Pasture River. He became a Col. in the Augusta Militia. He was the father of Brigadier Andrew Lewis, of whom we will discuss later. Col. John, under the name the 'Greenbier Co.', got a 100,000 acre grant in the Greenbrier Valley of what is now West Virginia. The major town there, Lewisburg, is named after him. This was

considered by the French, fortified at present Pittsburg, to have been hard-core French territory. Indeed, Greenbrier is but the English translation of the French term for the place, Ronceverte.

The French and Indian War broke out in 1754. Ownership of the Greenbrier Valley was one of the root causes. Andrew Lewis by this time had succeeded to his father's position within the militia, and in 1755 he accompanied the Virginia Militia at Braddock's Defeat. This disaster left the Virginia frontier wide open to attack, and the French allied Indians attacked the settlers in the Greenbrier, and in the New River Valley. James Patton was one of the ones killed at the Draper's Meadow massacre on what is now the Virginia Tech campus that year. The French and Indians correctly viewed the Irish Tract as the basic source of their problems in the Greenbrier, and they conducted the Kerr Creek massacres there in 1759, 1763, and in 1764.

In 1756 South Carolina and Virginia agreed to cooperate in building a fort near the mouth of the Little Tennessee River about 30 miles to the southeast of present Knoxville, Tennessee to protect the Cherokee from the French. Andrew Lewis, under the command of Col. William Byrd III was dispatched to build a road to this site, and to build Fort Loudon there. The road started in 1760 at Fort Chiswell, Virginia, and became the first improvement to the west on what is now I-81. As the road got no further than the Long Island on the Holston at present Kingsport, it became known as the 'Island Road', a name that it carries to this day.

In 1774 the Shawnee again started an invasion of Virginia. Andrew Lewis led the Virginia Militia out of Fort Frederick located on the old Dunkard's Bottom settlement of Mahanaim near the I-81 bridge over the New River at Radford. They collided with the Indians at Point Pleasant, where the Kanawha River flows into the Ohio. The Kanawha is the name the New River assumes in its lower course. The Battle of Point Pleasant was the most major battle fought between Indians and the settlers in what was to become the United States.

Andrew Lewis, Jr. was active as a militia officer during the Chief Benge raids in Southwest Virginia in the 1790's.

Another line of famous people with connections to the Irish Tract would include that of Judge Alexander Moore Stuart, who was born in the Irish Tract of probable Irish lineage. He was the grandfather of two important men – Confederate General Jeb Stuart, and his brother William Alexander Stuart. Jeb needs no discussion. His brother, William Alexander is little known, but of equal importance. Before the Civil War he worked at the bank in Fort Chiswell. That bank served as the financial house for Southwest Virginia's two biggest industries, the Lead Mines of Austinville, and the Salt Works at Saltville. It sat on the main highway in that part of the world, about half way between the two. Just before the war began, the families who had owned and operated the Salt Works had petered out, and had sold the business to a New York salt broker named George Washington Palmer. Palmer

was a smart man. He saw the war coming with greater clarity than most people, and understood the major role that the Saltville Salt Works would play in it. He also knew that he, as a Yankee, would need Confederate cover. Because of his banking background, and because of who his brother was, Palmer chose William Alexander Stuart to be his partner at the Salt Works. Together they made themselves incredibly rich from the war. When Jeb Stuart was killed, his brother brought his widow, Flora, to Saltville, and set her up as a school teacher. That combination home and school still stands in Saltville. After the war, Palmer bought William Alexander out. Stuart took his money and bought up several bankrupt plantations across Clinch Mountain and combined them into the Stuart Land and Cattle Company, the largest farm east of the Mississippi. This farm still exists in the Elk Garden section of Russell County. It contains several historic mansions of significance. William Alexander's son, Henry Carter Stuart, became Governor of Virginia. The Stuart family's neighbors are the descendants of some of the people who were driven out of Kerr's Creek during the French and Indian War. These folks carried with them the name of a massive mountain buttress from Kerr's Creek to Elk Garden, in both cases "The Loop".

The brothers William and Col. James King were born in Ireland and immigrated to Southwestern Virginia. There is no record of any connection to the Irish Track. William settled in Montgomery County, and soon moved to Saltville, where he became closely associated with the Prestons in the ownership and management of the Salt Works. James acquired 50,000 acres around present Bristol Virginia / Tennessee. He may have also passed through Montgomery Co., as his wife was from there. He fought in the Revolution, and was at Yorktown. After the war he started an iron foundry in Bristol, and later a mill at the mouth of Reedy Creek. Just downstream from the mill at the head of flatboat navigation on the Holston River, at the Netherland Inn, he built a boat yard. The boats carried his iron, and his brother's salt, to market. The City of Kingsport is named after him, as is King's University in Bristol.

We have already mentioned three of the sisters of Patrick Henry, who is customarily regarded as Virginia's most famous Scots-Irishman. Patrick owned land near Hansonville in Russell County, and had loose connections to the plantation owners of Elk Garden. However, he does not completely fit the definition of the Scots-Irish we have been using. His grandfather, Alexander, was born in Aberdeenshire, Scotland, which is well within the Highlands, and not at all the Border Country. Patrick's father, Col. John Hendries Henry, whose place of birth is unknown, appeared in Hanover County near Richmond, Virginia. Patrick was born in Studley in that county, with no known ties to the Irish Tract. There is no doubt that the Henry family associated with, and intermarried with, the traditional Scots-Irish of the Valley.

In summary of this series of three essays on the dominant ethnic origins of the people of Southwest Virginia, let us say that the Spanish Berber got here first, and by about a century. This gave them roughly a five generation head start on

peopling the region. The English settled Tidewater, and strove to make a little England out of it. They did not want settlers in it who were not English, and certainly not dissenters from the Church of England. Therefore, they directed the German and Scots-Irish to the Great Valley of Virginia. They had hardly gotten there when the French and Indian War drove many of them into North Carolina. The Regulator Revolt of 1771 drove many back into Virginia, through the mountain passes such as Mouth-of-Wilson. The Scot-Irish became the upper class, but the three groups intermarried to produce the mountaineer of today.

Bibliography

Several previous essays were used as source material for this one. To access specific sources for the material, the reader may access the previous essays at:

A – “James Patton” -

<http://bigstonegappublishing.net/JAMES%20PATTON.pdf>

B – “Killmachrenan” -

<http://bigstonegappublishing.net/KILLMACHRENAN.pdf>

C – “Kerr’s Creek” -

<http://bigstonegappublishing.net/THE%20KERR%20CREEK%20MASSACRES.pdf>

D – “Tour of the Battle of Kings’ Mountain” on file at the Southwest Virginia Museum and State Park at Big Stone Gap, Virginia