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# Early Adventurers On The Western Waters

Volume II  
The New River of Virginia  
in Pioneer Days  
1745-1800

by  
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In 1781 James Crockett served as ensign in Captain Edwards' Company, and his brother Andrew served as first lieutenant. In 1781 and 1785 James Crockett served on a jury and was selected to act as appraiser of the estates of Michael Dougherty and Joseph Baker. In 1786 James took up lands in Tennessee at the same time his brothers John and Andrew selected lands there. (Summers, *Annals*, pp. 752, 776, 784, 812; French and Armstrong, *Crockett Family*, pp. 580-584; Kegley, *Militia*, p. 14).

James Crockett served as a road viewer in connection with the road requested by Samuel Ingram and David Crouch in 1785. In 1787 numerous persons in the neighborhood requested a road from James Crockett's to Nathaniel Buchanan's on the New River, and he was to serve as one of the viewers (Summers, *Annals*, pp. 606, 789, 794).

In 1796 and 1797 there was increased activity in land acquisition by James Crockett and his brother Andrew. Either jointly or alone, James Crockett added seven tracts totalling over 1,200 acres in Wythe County by first obtaining surveys for the lands with the grants coming a few years later. These included 250 acres granted James and Andrew Crockett 1799; 150 acres both sides Reed Creek and 60 acres on Reed Creek both granted to James and Andrew Crockett in 1799. In his own name James received a grant for 300 acres in 1799, and 45 acres in 1800. To these grants James Crockett added by purchase, 187 acres from Daniel Miller who had part of the tract formerly belonging to John Baker, 297 acres from Francis and Esther Carter, 186 acres from John Baker, 53 acres of the John Craiger land which had escheated to the Commonwealth, and a small tract purchased from David Sloan. These lands extended from Reed Creek to Cedar Run, taking in the lands on which the forge and furnace were located (Wythe County Survey Books 1, pp. 286, 316, 317, 343, 349, 431; 2, pp. 44, 274; Wythe County Deed Books 3, p. 152; 5, p. 116; 6, p. 416; 11, p. 593).

It is not known exactly when James Crockett began his furnace operation on Cedar Run, but Colonel Robert Sayers recorded in his account book that he purchased 300 pounds of iron from James Crockett in April 1799. The apparent and sudden increase in land holdings begun in 1796 and 1797 would appear to be in connection with the iron business and a survey made in 1796 mentions Crockett's ironworks. In 1801 when an entry was made in the name of James and Andrew Crockett for ten acres of land on both sides of Reed Creek, the survey was to include the ironworks (Wythe County Survey Book 1, p. 316; Wythe County Entry Book; Robert Sayers account book, private collection).

In writing of Cedar Run furnace activities, Watson mentions three stacks in that location beginning in 1800. Although he gives the Grahams the credit for establishing all three, it would appear that the first stack was operated by the Crocketts. This vast acreage did not become Graham property until 1826 (Watson, *Mineral Resources*, p. 452; see also, Kegley, "Squire David Graham," *Wythe County Historical Review*, XVI (July 1979), 1-9).

In December 1804, numerous Wythe County petitioners signed a document protesting the obstruction of a dam erected by Andrew and James Crockett at their ironworks on Reed Creek, and requested that they be compelled to erect a slope "in such manner as shall be sufficient to admit the passage of the fish." Jacob Davis, who had lived in the area for about sixteen years, indicated in his statement that he had caught catfish of six, seven, eight and ten pounds, and that there were quantities of such fish sufficient to supply the inhabitants who were situated near the creek, prior to the time that the Crocketts erected their dam about six years before. Davis claimed that since the dam was erected it "has never been worth a man's time to go a fishing" because he never saw a catfish since then and fish were very scarce. Those who signed the petition were as follows: Peter Straw, Robert Robertson, Joseph Howel, John Fanning, Edward Murphy, Peter Kinder, John L. Lindenberger, Daniel Wiseley, Robert Rogers, John Walters, Henry Wyrick, William Hannon, Robert Doak, Michel Brown, William Finley, John Atter [Eitter], Jacob Davis, Isaac Simpson, Martin Wyrick, Samuel Atter [Eitter], George Wirrick, Frederick Repass, John Trubling, Jacob Kinder, Nicolas Wirrick,

Andrew Castle, George Moyer, John Wyrick, Martin Wirrick, William Gullion, John Wirrick, Jacob Been, Peter Creager, William Cooper, John Harkrader, John Cooper, William Cooper, Juner., Eli McLaughlin, Barnabs. Johnston, Joseph Leadey, John Finley, James Phipps, Jacob Jonas, Samuel Finley, Am. [Abraham] Ryno, Nicoles Lorazer [Loozer?], Isaac Phipps, Jno. Bradley, Lewis Cakeley [Kegley], Christian Cakeley [Kegley], Anthony Blessing, Tarlton Brooks, William Phipps, Daniel Johnston, Michel Creager, Juner., Peter Moyers, Michel Kinser, Peter Kinser, Frederick Kinser, Jacob Kinser, Senr., Jacob Kinser, Junr., Nicolas Kinser, Nicholas Lowzer [Loozer], Peter Moyers, John Moyer, Mountain John Moyers, Frederick Moyers, Jeremiah Boys, John Wampler, William Phipps, Senr., Warner Nip [Knipp], John Nip [Knipp], Phillip Nip [Knipp], Duncan Gullion, John Gullion, Peter Stephy [Steffey?], Peter Hetrick, Jacob Hetrick, Charles Fulling, Jonas Umberger, Jacob Umberger, John Umbarger, Michel Creager, Jacob Grubb, Lewis Grubb, John Grubb, Isack Grubb, Peter Stroup, Joseph Davis, A. Marshal, Jas. McCampbell, Joseph Irwine, John Houndshall, Andrew Houndshall, John Houndshall, Juner., Simon Riggle, Andrew Brown, John Brown, Stophel Brown, Larking Johnston, John Davis, Henry Bean, Samuel Darr, Peter Newmen, George Newman, George Johnson, Palser Johnson, John Darter, Nicolas Darter, Jonathan Leady, John Leady, Samuel Repass, John Repass, Frederick Leonard, Nicolas Felty, John Cooley, George Angle, Matthias Angle, George Jones, Hugh Johnston, John Johnston, Bernabus Messersmith, Peter Messersmith, Phillip Harkerayder, Samuel Steel, Edmond Steel, William Steel, Peter Lampert, John Lampert, George Lampert (Wythe County Petitions, December 15, 1804, Virginia State Library, Archives).

On January 2, 1805, an Act appointed Stephen Sanders, James Newell and Thomas Whitlock, Gentlemen, to examine the dam and to hear evidence from the inhabitants residing on or near the creek and to report back to the General Assembly whether the Crocketts should be compelled to make a slope to the dam or leave the dam as already constructed. It is not clear from the records but an entry in 1815 seems to indicate that the court allowed James Crockett permission to build a dam and forge on Reed Creek. However, there is no mention of the slope. The forge was located at what is now Graham's Forge (Whitman, *The Iron Industry of Wythe County From 1792*, p. 27).

In 1813 James Crockett and his wife Mary sold to James McGavock, their son-in-law, three tracts of land, being the home tract and the lands adjoining. McGavock later added 438 acres from David Graham on the south side of the Purgatory tract which included 350 acres surveyed for James Crockett. These tracts later came to the Richardsons as heirs of James McGavock, Jr. In 1829 James McGavock received the title to 199 acres, the west end of the Purgatory tract following a lawsuit brought against the heirs of Andrew Boyd, Andrew and James Crockett and John Mallory. The Samuel Crockett land came into the hands of the McGavocks and their descendants (Wythe County Deed Book 11, p. 321).

James Crockett wrote his will on May 16, 1823, and it was probated March 14, 1826 (Wythe County Will Book 3, p. 189). To his son Samuel he left the tract of land where he was already living plus forty acres on the south side. To his son John, he left an equal amount on Lante Nipe's (Knipe's) branch south of the furnace, including the place where David Miller formerly lived which was marked by two or three apple trees. The executors were to lay off the tract without impairing the furnace tract or the operation of the furnace, to include as much as 100 acres but no more, because John had been provided for in the right and title to lands in Wayne County, Kentucky. To sons James, Abraham, and Nathaniel he left one dollar each, as they had already received their shares in the estate. To his daughters Sarah Herbert, Esther Carter, and Mary McGavock he left one dollar each, because they had also received their shares of the estate. To his son William Crockett and his daughter Elizabeth McGavock, wife of Lysander McGavock, he left all the property remaining after the debts were paid. William was to have one-fourth more in value than Elizabeth. They were also to have the ore bank

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James Whitman, "The Iron Industry of Wythe Co. From 1790  
79-116 HIGH ROCK FORGE

BELL OR PEIRCE FORGE

The two oldest Forges in the county were at what are now Poplar Camp and Peirce's Mill. The latter was erected by Wm. Bell and Wm. Herbert on Cripple Creek about 2 miles from Ivanhoe. It is known as the Bell-Herbert Forge and was erected before July 1, 1794.

We have not been able to obtain the date of the Poplar Camp Forge.

The land was presumably patented by Charles Nuckolls who, according to record at Wythe County Court House, on April the 9th, 1793, sold to William Bell and William Herbert 500 acres of land on Cripple Creek.

On July 1, 1794, William Bell and William Herbert sold to Hugh Montgomery and Daniel Carlin 500 acres of land with Forges, Houses, Dam, etc., for operating the same. Thus it will be seen that the Bell or Peirce Forge was erected between April 1793 and July 1794.

On July 23, 1799, Hugh Montgomery and Robert Carlin sold to Robert Sanders 500 acres of land on Cripple Creek, with Houses, Forges, Barns, etc.

On December 9, 1800, Robert Sanders sold to David Peirce the 500-acre tract with the Forges, etc.

On March 11, 1806, David Peirce agreed to furnish Sampson King and Trigg \$2,553.92 merchantable bar iron at \$123.33 per ton of 2240 lbs.

On March 12, 1806, David Peirce gave to William King and John J. Trigg a mortgage on a 500-acre tract of land known as the Peirce Forge for the faithful performance of the above-mentioned contract.

On December the 10th, 1838, the 500-acre tract was partitioned among the David Peirce heirs.

A saw mill and grist mill was also operated at the Peirce Forge. The grist mill is still in existence.

Some of the later operators were: James Wilkinson, William Hiley and Robert P. Williams. The latter was probably the last person to operate the Forge. Mr. Williams lived to be nearly 94 years of age and died April 2, 1922.

High Rock was located in the extreme east portion Wythe County on Little Reed Island Creek and was quite a business center, dating back to the latter part of seventeenth century. There was a postoffice called High Rock, which was later changed to Patterson; thus a place of historical interest lost its identity.

The history with the changes of ownership follows:—

On May the 8th, 1805, Thomas and William Herbert bought of Thomas Whitlock 340 acres of land on Reed Island Creek. On this tract a Forge was erected by the Herberts before 1811.

On October the 22nd, 1811, John Evans bought of Thomas Herbert 200 acres of land, on Reed Island Creek, known as the Forge tract.

On June the 10th, 1817, David Peirce purchased from John Evans 200 acres of land on Reed Island known as the High Rock Forge tract.

On March 19th, 1842, James Stephens purchased from David Peirce heirs 200 acres of land on Reed Island Creek known as the High Rock Forge tract. The land remained in the Stephens family for many years and the mineral was sold to the Pulaski Iron Company, who mined a large quantity of iron ore, which was shipped to Pulaski where it was manufactured into pig iron.

At the site of the High Rock Forge, resided Samuel Wheeler, who later operated a grist mill, sawmill and furniture plant. Wheeler manufactured all kinds of furniture and specialized in coffins, that being the only plant of the kind in that section. The High Rock Roller Mills are in operation at this time at the site of the Wheeler activities and the High Rock Forge.

CROCKETT OR GRAHAM FORGE

A survey was made for James and Andrew Crockett of property at Reed Creek, February the second, 1796. The deed states that Purgatory branch flows through the property.

James S. Prosser, 102, Wythe Co. Chapters (Pulaski, Va.: 1972)

erty. This branch flows into Reed Creek a short distance below the Graham's Forge site. We think this indicates that James and Andrew Crockett were making preparations for the erection of the forge and iron works at that place in the 1790's.

From the Land Entry Book, Wythe County, Virginia, 1801, Nov. 2, Andrew and James Crockett by virtue of part of a land office treasury warrant of 20000 acres, enter ten acres of land on both sides of Reed Creek to include their iron works.

Andrew and James Crockett

Richmond State Archives, Vol. 17, pages 174; Jan. 2, 1806, Andrew and James Crockett of Reed Creek:—"Whereas it is represented to this present General Assembly that Andrew and James Crockett of the County of Wythe have erected a dam across Reed Creek, to the manifest injury to the inhabitants of the said county by obstructing the passage of fish up and down said creek. For remedy whereof be it therefore enacted that Stephen Sanders, James Newell and Thomas Whitlock gentlemen, be and they hereby are appointed commissioners whose duty it shall be to examine the said Creek and dam and to hear such evidence as may be offered them, either by the inhabitants residing on or near the said Creek and to report to the next General Assembly whether it will be of the most public utility to compel the said Andrew and James Crockett to make a slope to their dam for the passage of fish or to suffer the said dam to remain as at present erected, for the purpose of carrying on their iron works."

From 1935 edition: In D. B. 6, page 517, is recorded a court order, granting James Crockett a permit to build a dam and Forge on Reed Creek and appointing a commission to assess damages, if any, to property owners. Order dated March 5, 1815.

This Forge was located at what is now known as Graham's Forge and was purchased from Crockett by David Graham,

who enlarged the plant and installed a number of iron working machines which were modern for that day (The purchase was prior to 1828, and at that time the plant consisted of Forge, Rolling Mills, Nail Works, three Heating Furnaces, five Nail Machines, one Hammer. The property is now owned by George L. Carter, who has a large grist mill and wood working plant on the site. This is possibly the only nail making machine ever operated in Wythe County (the other process in vogue at that time was the blacksmith shop.) W. R. Crockett, who resides south of Wytheville on Route 21 states he worked on one of the nail machines when a boy.

Another product at that time were wood heaters of a peculiar type. There was a draft at each end of the fire box and a large open space in the center. The writer remembers seeing two of these stoves with the name "David Graham, Graham's Forge," thereon. One was used a number of years ago in Old Fleming church on Cripple Creek and the other in Crowder's Tailor Shop, Wytheville.

TONCRAY FORGE

From information gleaned from old records and physical facts, recently obtained, there is no doubt that a forge was built and operated at what is known as Kent's Mill place on Reed Creek east of Wytheville the latter part of 1700 or early 1800.

In Entry Book 1, page 117 we find "Anthony Toncray had 200 acres, 50 of which was by part of a warrant assigned him by William King and dated December the 25th, 1785."

The Annals of Southwest Virginia by L. P. Summers, "Anthony Toncray was granted license Sept. 1, 1789, to keep an ordinary at his house at McCall's. An old map shows that McCall's was at what was afterwards called "Bellfield", the present home of Mr. A. B. Newberry. This property passed from the Toncray's to the Crockett's and from the Crockett's to the Kent family and thence to Newberry, the present owner.