



1829

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John Haggin Esq.

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Recommended Citation

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Anecdote of an early Settler of Kentucky.

THE late John Haggin, Esqr. of Mercer county, came to Kentucky at an early period. On his arrival the few inhabitants resided principally at Harrodsburgh and Boonsborough. Lexington had not then been settled. Mr. Haggin, desirous of commencing the cultivation of the fertile land in this region of country, made some entries, that is, purchased several tracts from government; among the rest, one at a place near where Harrison, Bourbon and Fayette counties unite. He commenced the improvement of the place, removed some of the trees, erected a small log house and brought to his new residence some furniture; among other things a few iron kettles, to be used in making sugar from the sugar trees, which were then and are now abundant in that county. Owing to the want of roads and

means of transportation, heavy iron utensils were of great value, and but few persons had or could procure them. Shortly after Mr. Haggin commenced working on his new place, the hostility of the savages became so alarming that he was constrained to abandon his cabin and seek security in the fort at Harrodsburgh. Previously, however, to his departure he used the precaution of burying his kettles. He was accompanied to Harrodsburgh by his wife and one child, a daughter, who is now residing in Woodford county, united in marriage to a gentleman of respectability.

Mr. Haggin spent the winter with his family in the fort, where they were somewhat incommoded by the crowd of persons within so small a place. In the Spring, perceiving no indications of the savages in the vicinity, and desirous of getting out of the fort, he erected a cabin in the valley near the stream leading from the big spring towards the fort, on the side next to where the town of Harrodsburgh now is, situated less than a quarter of a mile distant from the fort, (the fort being on an eminence,) but directly in view. Mr. Haggin and family spent the Summer at their little tenement, engaged in domestic concerns and in cultivating a small portion of land; released, to be sure, from the confinement of the fort, but under continual apprehensions of a visit from the Indians. Each morning before the door was unbarred they peeped out of the cabin "illumed by many a cranny" to spy out the insidious enemy who, it was feared, might be lurking about behind logs and trees ready to rush in and murder the family. They remained, however, in a great measure uninterrupted until fall; when, Mr. Haggin determined to revisit his place on this side of the river for the purpose of removing some of his kettles to Harrodsburgh, preparatory to making sugar in winter. He sat out in company with an active woodsman that he had hired to assist him. On the second day they came in sight of Mr. Haggin's place, in the edge of what is now Harrison county; they were riding slowly and cautiously along watching for enemies, when, looking forward to the place where the cabin had stood, they perceived that it had just been burned down, and saw three or four Indians setting near the ruin.

Haggin proposed to his companion that they should fall back and prepare themselves, and then return and give the Indians battle. They retreated a few hundred yards, dismounted, took off their exterior clothing retaining only their shirts, leggings and mockasins, tied their other clothing on their horses and turned them loose, intending in case of a retreat to regain their horses; but if they could not succeed in that, they deemed it prudent to be lightly clothed that they might fly with more celerity. Having examined their rifles and seen that every thing was in order they set out to attack the enemy. It was arranged that Haggin should proceed on foremost, fire his gun at the savages and retreat to a tree; that his companion should reserve his shot until the enemy approached and then fire and retreat, thus they would fire and load alternately. But this well arranged plan like many others equally sagacious, proved abortive. Whilst Haggin and his companion were engaged in a council of war it did not occur to them that the savages had seen them and were concerting plans also.

Mr. Haggin agreeably to the mode of attack agreed on, advanced slowly, his body bent down, casting his eyes forward, intensely watching for a sight of an Indian to get a shoot at. He heard a low voice behind him, he listened, his companion cried out in a quick under tone, Haggin dont you see we are about to be surrounded, let us retreat. Haggin cast his eyes around and saw two hundred Indians rise up from among the cane having nearly surrounded him. He immediately fled, they pursued, but did not then fire lest in shooting across they should kill each other. The two flanks of the ambuscade began rapidly to close upon Haggin. He directed his steps towards his horse which was quietly feeding on the cane; Haggin was a very active man, and a fleet runner; but some of the savages appeared to equal him. He reached his horse, and sprung from the ground intending to leap into the saddle from behind. As he placed his hands on the horse's rump, an Indian run the muzzle of his gun against Haggin's side and fired. That moment Haggin leaped, at the same instant the horse being alarmed sprang also, Haggin fell and thought he was mortally wounded; but

feeling no pain rebounded to his feet and fled exerting his whole strength; The savages perceiving that he had escaped and was ahead of them commenced firing on him and perhaps one hundred bullets were commissioned to kill; but none took effect. The chase was kept up for some hours when the Indians finding it fruitless, ceased the pursuit. Haggin being very hot and much fatigued, went into a creek to cool his limbs. After he came out he sat down at the root of a tree and fell asleep, when he waked he discovered that it was snowing and the air had become cold and he was much chilled. Having time now to think, the horrors of his situation rose to his view; he had lost his horse, gun and cloths, he was forty miles from Harrodsburg and twenty-five miles from the nearest other station, which was Boonsborough; without food or the means of getting any, night coming on, snow falling, no blanket to keep him warm, nor means of striking fire, he might perhaps freeze to death. He determined to steer for Boonsborough. After indescribable difficulty in making his way through the cane loaded with snow, and suffering from cold, loss of sleep, and fatigue, he reached Boonsborough the next morning. Having eaten something he laid down and slept from that time until the following morning.

In the mean time the man who accompanied Mr. Haggin had got to Harrodsburgh and reported that he was killed, overwhelming his wife with the distressing intelligence.

Haggin on the day after his arrival set out from Boonsborough, accompanied by a Mr. Pendergrass, (the same whose family afterwards lived in Jefferson or Bullet county) for Harrodsburgh. The wife of Mr. Pendergrass had been staying for some time with Mrs. Haggin in a little tenement near the fort at Harrodsburgh. Haggin had supplied himself with clothing and a gun before he left Boonsborough. The two friends journeyed on without interruption until they arrived at a little eminence near Mr. Haggin's residence. On casting their eyes to the spot where they expected to find what was most dear to them on earth—their wives and children, what must have been their astonishment and horror when they

beheld the cabin a smoky ruin and one or two hundred savages around the place. Haggin's feelings were now wrought up to desperation he called on Pendergrass to follow saying he no longer valued life now his wife and children were murdered; that he would die but sell his life dear to the enemy. Pendergrass accompanied him, they rushed directly up to where the Indians were standing. The reckless manner in which they approached excited the surprise of the savages, they stood inactive, not making any attempt to injure the two desperate men. At this moment one or both of them, cast a look towards the fort and saw or thought they saw, their wives on the walls of the fort waving their handkerchiefs to them. The desire of living immediately returned to their hearts. They changed their course, and sprung towards the fort. The Indians raised the yell darted after them, and many guns were fired. Both the white men fell in full view of the fort; the wives screamed believing their husbands were slain. In a moment Haggin was on his feet again, he rushed forward, the savages in close pursuit, one struck him on the back with a tomahawk, it proved harmless; the gate flew open, and he was received with a shout of joy into the arms of his wife, having escaped entirely unhurt; his fall had been accidental. But poor Pendergrass fell to rise no more. His friends from the fort saw the savages take the scalp from his head.

The writer of this had this narrative from the mouth of John Haggin himself only a few years since, and also from General James Ray who was stationed at Harrodsburgh at the time it happened, and there is no doubt of the truth of the facts here stated.

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