

CHAPTER TWO

SOURCES OF

IMMIGRATION

Any searcher into the sources of the early immigration into the Ozarks will--if he carries his researches very far from home--soon conclude that this subject has been one of much interest to a lot of prevaricators; or, that it has at least served as a 'practice track' on which junior prevaricators stepped up their speed until they qualified for prevaricating on more profound subjects. The number and variety of stories going the rounds concerning the early settlement of the Ozarks is indicated by the replies received by the writer from inquiries addressed to three different locations in the East.

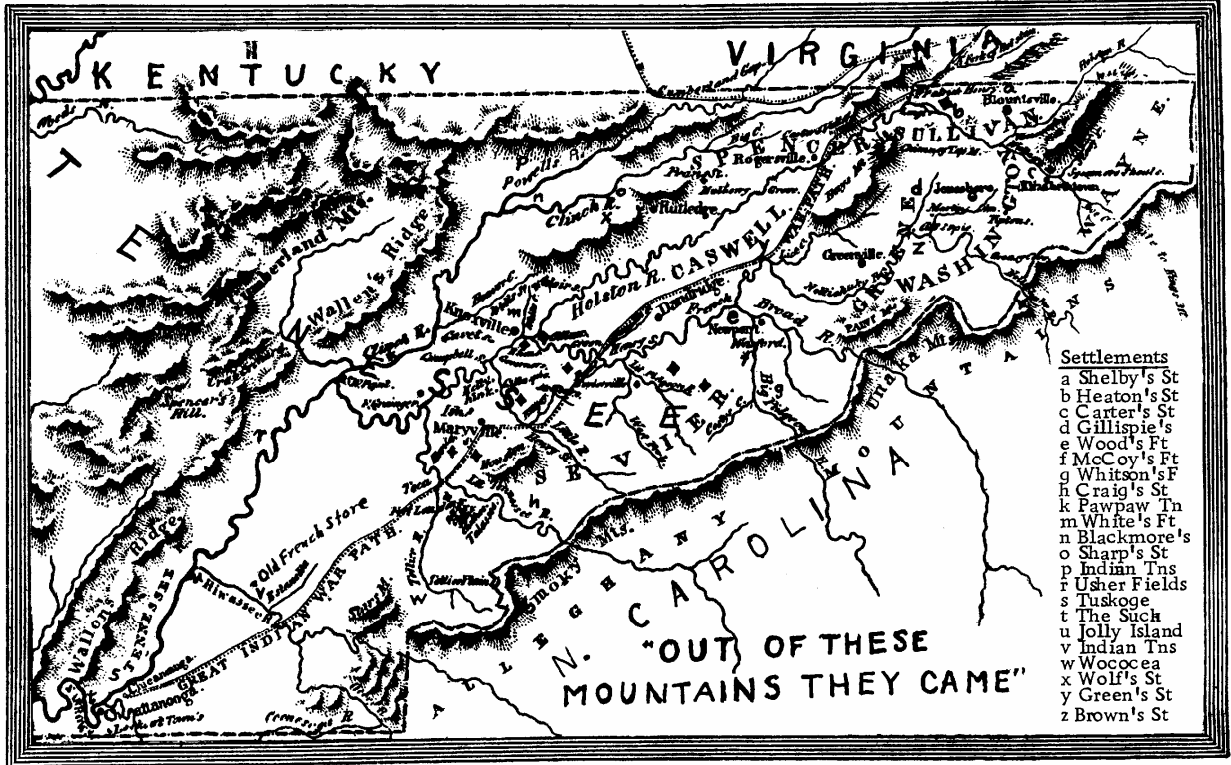
One inquiry sent to North Carolina was answered by the person addressed with the grave statement that 'we all' are descended from the lost colony planted by

Sir Walter Raleigh at Roanoke, Virginia, almost four hundred years ago. The writer gave his authority as the fact that the colony disappeared, and that it was his opinion they had emigrated into the interior as soon as Sir Walter sailed away. This same theory was published in a New York paper a few years ago in connection with a write-up of the Bagnell Dam, so it seems to have a fairly wide circulation. The likelihood of the Indians having disposed of the colonists is entirely ignored.

The second reply was to the effect that our population is descended from Hessian soldiers who deserted the English cause after being soundly licked by the patriots at Kings Mountain, North Carolina, in the Revolutionary War. This theory, if entertained, would lead to the conclusion that the 'Hessians' who deserted were enlisted in Ireland and Scotland, since very few names of German origin appear, and these can generally be traced back to the valleys in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Pennsylvania.

The third request for information was disposed of, by the reply that the Ozarks were settled by people who refugeed from the southern states at the close of the Civil War, totally ignoring the fact that this section had a stable and widely distributed population forty years before that war began. So much for theories, especially for the theories of people who live some distance away.

Any search, even the most superficial, into the ancestral home of a majority of the early settlers of this county will inevitably lead the searcher to just one place--east Tennessee. A strip seventy-five miles wide off the east end of the state will account for more than half of the people who first settled here. A similar strip off the east end of Kentucky will account for a good many more, most of whom had lived in Tennessee before moving to Kentucky. The adjacent parts of North and South Carolina, Kentucky, and a few from middle Tennessee makeup a large part of the small remainder. So a territory roughly a hundred miles square in those



states will include the former homes of three-fourths of the people who settled here prior to 1860. Most of the remaining twenty-five per cent came, or their ancestors came, from other parts of Virginia. This same search will also reveal that almost all the names of the early settlers indicate Irish or Scotch ancestry.

As far back as a hundred and fifty years ago--say to the close of the Revolutionary War--they are fairly easy to trace. Many of the first immigrants brought their Bibles and other family records, so there is no doubt; about names, dates, and very little about family relationships. Back to or about this time our ancestors lived in the laurel and rhododendrom groves on both sides of the Blue Ridge and Great Smoky mountains, mostly in east Tennessee, but a few were still on the east side of the mountains. The people on the west side had well authenticated traditions for at least a generation farther back, during which their people had crossed the mountains 'afore the war,' 'endurin' the war,' or 'after the war.' The 'war' in this case was the American Revolution, the only one these people knew about from actual contact with it.

Back to the generation living at the time of the Revolution, then, the history of our ancestors is fairly well known. Back of that, dependence must be on legend, a few known facts, and a picture-puzzle of facts, guesswork, and superstitions found here and there in other histories.

One legend, met with often enough to indicate some basis in fact, is that the ancestors of our early settlers descended from the members of a regiment variously described as the 'Irish Rigimint' or the 'Scotch Rigimint,' as the descent of the narrator guided his preference, who had settled in central and western North Carolina at the close of the French and Indian War in 1763. They were supposedly given grants of land in lieu of pay and transportation back to England. It is known that many grants to soldiers were issued in that section

of the state. It is also known that there was a large settlement of Scotch and some Irish there who were emigrants from their respective countries, and not soldiers. Quite a few, possibly most, of these people were loyal to the crown and supported England in the Revolutionary War; but their reasons were not the ones on which the colonists and England took sides, or at least they did not constitute the main reasons. To find these we must go back still farther into English history.

Charles I of England after years of civil war had been beheaded when Cromwell became dictator in 1649. The war had been long and bloody, and like our own Civil War, neighborhoods, even families, had been divided in allegiance. In a general way, though, the Scotch and most of the Irish upheld the King, so that by the time the war ended and Charles had gone to his reward Brother Cromwell had a large number of hairy-legged Scotch and shock-headed Irish on his hands as prisoners. They were his bitter enemies whom he did not dare either to kill or let go. In the meantime they were eating their heads off, even of the scanty fare furnished them. While he was in this quandary someone suggested--or perhaps he thought of it himself--that America was a long ways off. So he loaded every ship he could find with his prisoners, sent them to America, and turned them loose, trusting to distance to keep them out of his way in the future.

Ten years and more passed, and after another war the situation was reversed. Charles II ruled England after the death of Cromwell and the abdication of Cromwell's son. The Scotch and Irish who had fought for Cromwell were in turn captured and shipped to America--Charles II taking a leaf from Cromwell's book in so doing. They were turned loose to make a living the best way they could and no longer be a drain on the King's food supply. So we see in a space of twenty years vast numbers of citizens of these nations who had hated each other so bitterly in Europe found themselves

side by side again in the new country, with everything changed except their prejudices against each other.

Aside from their hatred of each other--or including it, rather--they were very much alike, so they acted very much the same. They had all been deposited in the lowlands, which they despised. So both groups made for the mountains as soon as they learned of them. Most went to Pennsylvania and Virginia, but in the course of a hundred years they spread up and down the valleys in the mountains until by the time the soldiers were settled in the Carolinas there was a large body of their compatriots already there.

Thereafter the two nationalities lived side by side. The soldiers had their knowledge of their own military service; the settlers had the word-of-mouth tradition of shadowy soldier ancestors who 'fit for the King,' or 'fit for Crummel,' as the case might be. And both sides had brought every single, solitary prejudice they had in Europe right with them to the new country and handed it down from father to son with such good effect that when the American Revolution came on the prisoners of the Roundheads, as Cromwell's men were called, remained staunch supporters of England, and the prisoners sent by the Cavaliers led the whole state in taking up arms for the new nation. Not that they were so patriotic on one side or so loyal on the other, but each was just naturally bound to be 'agin' anything upheld by the other.

The bulk of the movement across the mountains did not come until the time of, and just after, the American Revolution. It reached its height in the last years of the eighteenth century. A few of the more restless did not tarry long, but kept on going up through Kentucky, down both sides of the Ohio, and in a few years appeared in some numbers on the west side of the Mississippi. Here they met the other stream of immigration that accounted for most of the balance of our early settlers, the one from Virginia.

These people, although coming from a place very near the others, were quite a different people from the Tennesseans. In the first place, they were not soldiers--that is, not English soldiers; most of them had paid their passage from England to the new country in one way or another, either in money or a term of service after arrival. They were not of the nobility, nor of the servant or criminal class, either, both of whom were sent to Virginia in some numbers. They were the best representatives of the middle-class English, and they had one trouble common to their Scotch and Irish neighbors--they had trouble with their feet every so often, and nothing cured it except travel. Numbers of them came to the west side of the Mississippi, then supposed to be French but really Spanish, even before its cession to the United States. By 1815 or so, by which time the east Tennessee strain was arriving in goodly numbers, their aggregate reached a considerable figure, so much that the combined figures outnumbered the original settlers. As the ones who came sent back word of the pleasant land they had found the ratio soon became two to one in favor of Americans born east of the Mississippi River.

As a rule, though, the Virginians did not mix with the Tennesseans; they usually kept on up the Missouri River to the north of the mountains. It is owing to the fact that Maries County is astride the line of demarcation where the Ozark and Missouri River formations meet that we find the Virginians in this county in considerable numbers, including the Martins, Underwoods, Terrills, Hildebrands, Winstons, Tynes, Woodys, and many others.

The Tennesseans, though, were different; they ere mountain men and there weren't any mountains at St. Louis, so they struck out for the mountain areas. Large numbers of them crossed the river at St. Louis, and quite a few of them remained in that vicinity until they could 'recruit up' and get their bearings, but once

they had them, they moved on. Most of this group settled in Phelps, Pulaski, and Maries counties, and the counties farther west forming the north tier of Ozark counties.

The ones who crossed at Ste. Genevieve, Cape Girardeau, and New Madrid usually moved westward about in a straight line, and their descendants are in the main found directly west of the point where their ancestors crossed the Mississippi. The more northern emigrants had to bear somewhat southwest to get to the mountains, which accounts for their route being a little out of line with the rest, but for which they had a good road laid out and traveled for years by the fur hunters from St. Louis and known as the Illinois Trace. Most of the first settlements in Maries, Phelps, Pulaski, Laclede, and the counties farther west will be found within a few miles of this Illinois Trace and of the forks of it that led to the heads of the various branches of the Piney Creeks.