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DID DANIEL BOONE KILL POMPEY, THE BLACK SHAWNEE, AT THE 1778 SIEGE OF BOONESBOROUGH?

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Though they have never appeared in a school text, Hollywood movie, or a TV show of the Old West, Black Indians were there as sure as Sitting Bull, Davy Crockett and Geronimo.¹

Most students of Kentucky frontier history are familiar with the attack on Boonesborough that occurred in September 1778. After two days of "negotiations"—which some said were a sham, though others hoped the parleys might help avert bloodletting—the masquerade exploded and precipitated a nine-day siege in which two defenders were killed. One was a young Dutchman named David Bundrin who, shot in the head, spent his last night on earth holding his skull between his hands and wiping away his brainy ooze. The other was a slave of Richard Henderson's named London. Four—Daniel Boone, Squire Boone, Jemima Boone Callaway, and Pemberton Rollins—were wounded.²

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1 William Loren Katz, *Black Indians: Hidden Heritage* (New York: Macmillan, 1986), i. This is the most expansive monograph on the relationship between Indians and blacks.

2 For a complete overview of the siege of Boonesborough, see Lyman C. Draper, "Draper's Life of Boone," 4B:210-226, Draper Collection; Also George W. Ranck, *Boonesborough*. (2nd ed.; Salem: Ayer, 1986; originally published by The Filson Club, 1901).

No one knows if the French-Canadians who fought the Americans suffered casualties. Daniel Boone reckoned thirty-seven Indians were killed "and a great number wounded."³ It was hard to tell, since it appeared the "yellowboys" had dragged off their dead. Later, though, the telltale sight of spiraling buzzards led a search party across the Kentucky River to a rocky cache of bloated corpses.⁴

But there was one Shawnee killed whose skin was black—Pompey. His history is obscure. Pompey was one of those unique, shadowy black men of the frontier, whose fate was directly tied to that of his Indian consorts. Very few observations of such 18th-century "black Indians" in the Ohio Valley exist, thus making Pompey's history even more intriguing.

But Pompey was more than just a fugitive black. He was a trusted interpreter between the Chalahgawtha Shawnee and their white adversaries. As such, Pompey's life provides rare glimpses into the fragile, often incendiary relations between the early Kentuckians, the Indians, and their black allies. A survey of the accounts written about Pompey's death reveal a darker side of 18th-century race relations. Many folks were anxious to take credit or give credit to others—most notably to Daniel Boone—for killing him. Taking a cue from these colorful narratives of Pompey's death, several important 19th and 20th-century biographers of Boone portray him as Pompey's slayer.

The purpose of this ethno-historical study is to piece together the sparse fragments of Pompey's life. But more important to Boone researchers and frontier historians, I will prove through extensive quoting of primary and second-

3 *Ibid.*, 251.

4 *Ibid.*; "Draper's Notes," Draper Collection, 6S:143; See also Draper Collection, "Daniel Boone Papers," 24C:81(1); "Yellow boys" was a common 18th-century phrase for Indians. See 9S:15.

ary sources that it is impossible to determine who killed Pompey. Such a task becomes a fascinating exercise in the interpretation of historical evidence, and as will be demonstrated by the following passages excerpted primarily from the Draper Manuscript Collection, the testimony is often confused, convoluted, and contradictory.

Pompey's story is further blurred by the lack of primary sources on the complex relationships between Indians and blacks. Historian Charles G. Goodson called it "one of the longest unwritten chapters in the history of the United States."⁵ To many colonial whites, Africans were property, and those who joined the red foes of their white masters were hated and feared. No one cared about their history. But blacks were uniquely valuable to American Indians. Through their contact with slave-owners, they were often experts in white relations. Some possessed rare skills—such as the ability to make gunpowder and repair guns. And many, like Pompey, became bilingual and served as translators.⁶ It is easy to dismiss Pompey as some scurrilous "Son of Ham" who lived with the Indians.⁷ John Bakeless' *Daniel Boone: Master of the Wilderness* presents a typically derisive portrait:

"You black scoundrel," muttered Captain Boone as he raised old 'Tick-Licker,' . . . "I'll fix your flint for you!" At the crack of the rifle, Pompey came tumbling out of the tree, dead. When the siege was ended, his was the only body found . . . no Shawnee cared in the least what happened to the black body or the woolly scalp of a Negro slave.⁸

5 Katz, *Black Indians*, 4.

6 Ranck, *Boonesborough*, 113. Monk Estill planted and maintained an apple orchard at Boonesborough. See "George M. Bedinger Papers," Draper Collection, 1A:19. An exceptionally fragmented nation, the Shawnee were Algonquin linguistically. See William C. Sturtevant, ed., *Handbook of North American Indians* (20 vols.; Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1978-), XV, Bruce G. Trigger, ed., *Northeast* (1978), 622-35.

7 Draper Collection, 9C:43.

8 John Bakeless, *Daniel Boone: Master of the Wilderness* (3rd ed.; Lincoln: University Press of Nebraska, 1989), 218. This is *not* to be taken in any way as an indictment of Bakeless' monumental work on Daniel Boone.

Whether Daniel Boone shot Pompey will be addressed later. But it is hardly accurate to say "no Shawnee cared in the least what happened to the black body or the woolly scalp of a Negro slave." And there is disagreement as to whether Pompey's corpse was ever found.⁹

No one knows when or where Pompey was born. It cannot be determined how he came into contact with the Shawnee. Even the circumstances surrounding his death are hazy. Tracking Pompey through time is made harder because "Pompey" was a common slave name. Monk Estill—the fierce black Indian fighter who made gunpowder at Boonesborough and at Estill's Station and who once bore a severely wounded white man on his back twenty-five miles to safety and at considerable risk—was called "Pomp." So was the extraordinary black Seminole scout, Pompey Factor.¹⁰

The contemporary evidence is sketchy and conflicting. Daniel Trabue described Pompey as "a white man or half-Breed [sic]."¹¹ But it is doubtful if Trabue ever saw Pompey; Trabue was at Logan's Station during the Boonesborough siege. Another said that "the Negro belonged to someone in the fort [Boonesborough] and ran away; and early in the morning would dare his old master to come out and dine with him." Runaway slaves *were* a problem in Kentucky. Pompey may have been an ex-slave, but there is no evidence he was from Boonesborough.¹²

Mrs. Susan Howell, the daughter of Flanders and

9 For conflicting views regarding the fate of Pompey's body after the siege of Boonesborough, compare Draper Collection, 24C:81(1) with 8S:143.

10 "Virginia Papers," Draper Collection, 7ZZ:1(3); "Kentucky Papers," Draper Collection, 13CC:173-74; Katz, *Black Indians*, 85.

11 Daniel Trabue, *Westward into Kentucky*, Chester R. Young, ed. (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1981). Daniel Trabue's manuscript autobiography is originally found in the Draper Collections, "George Rogers Clark papers," 57J.

12 Draper 4C:48; For graphic primary source material on 18th-century white-slave relations in frontier Kentucky, see Trabue, *Westward into Kentucky*.



Monk Estill



Monk Estill

Jemima Boone Callaway and the granddaughter of Colonel Daniel Boone, told Lyman Draper: "[The] Indians had taken a small Negro and raised him, Pompey."¹³ Daniel Boone and Jemima and Flanders Callaway lived at Boonesborough. Boone knew Pompey. Historian Lyman Draper concluded that Pompey was "taken" as a youth—possibly from Virginia during the French and Indian War—and raised by the Shawnee.¹⁴ If this is true, Pompey would have been in his late twenties to mid thirties.

When Daniel Boone and his men were captured by Black Fish and his warriors at the Lower Blue Licks in February 1778, Pompey translated for Boone. Joseph Jackson, one of the captives, recalled "a Negro, Pompey, who acted as interpreter for the Indian chiefs, they [the Shawnee chieftains] not seeming to wish to trust the Girtys [probably James and George]."¹⁵ Pompey may have translated on occasion between Boone and Black Fish during the captives' stay in Ohio. Sheltowee—Boone's Shawnee name meaning "Big Turtle"—and Black Fish, his adopted father, spent a lot of time together. But we are not told what language they conversed in.

Black Fish *could* speak English. As the negotiations at Boonesborough reached their ominous end, Black Fish told the whites that "he must give out the big talk that all his young men might know that a firm peace was made."¹⁶ Then he mounted a stump and made a fiery speech to his warriors in their tongue. Moses Boone, Squire Boone's nine-year-old son at Boones-

13 Draper Collection, 23S:223.

14 At best this is Draper's educated guess. See Draper Collection, 4B:246.

15 Draper Collection, 11C:62(1). Of the four Girty brothers--Simon, George, James, and Thomas--the first three achieved the dubious reputation of being the most notoriously cruel "white" Indians in the history of the Trans-Allegheny frontier. See Consul Wilshire Butterfield, *History of the Girty's* (2nd ed.; Columbus: Long's College, 1950). Lyman Draper believed that Simon Girty was spying in Pittsburgh when Daniel Boone and his salt boilers were captured. See Draper Collection, 4B:152 and 11C:62(6).

16 Draper Collection, 4B:225.

borough, listened and told Lyman Draper in 1848 that “[Black Fish] had a fine voice—an eloquent orator.”¹⁷ Young John Gass, who also heard Black Fish, compared him to a well-known Baptist minister, “Old Preacher [Jeremiah] Vardeman.”¹⁸ Daniel Boone spoke Shawnee. Mrs. Delinda Craig recollected to Draper:

About 1812 two Shawnee chiefs and their squaws came and visited. . . . Grandmother [Rebecca Boone] said, “Delinda, your grandfather has got some visitors, old friends.” “Where are they, grandmother?” “Oh, they are with him—they will soon return. They are some of the identical old Shawnee with whom he was Prisoner.” [Grandfather] could speak and understand the Shawnee tongue sufficiently for the Purposes of ordinary conversation.¹⁹

No doubt Boone and Black Fish gained bilingual proficiency during the salt-boiler episode. Other captives, like Bartlett Searcy and Joseph Jackson, did.²⁰ The extent of Pompey’s contact with the Kentuckians is not recorded. But one thing is certain. Pompey’s function in tribal society as an acculturized black Shawnee was that of an official interpreter. Daniel Boone’s son Nathan recalled, “Pompey the Negro interpreter” who “spoke good Indian as well as English.”²¹

Pompey’s status as “a very important personage . . . with the Indians” was acknowledged by the people of Boonesborough. After the enemy forces arrived and planted their colors, it was

17 *Ibid.*, 9C:13(1).

18 *Ibid.*; 11CC:41; Jeremiah Vardeman (1775-1842) was an astoundingly effective Baptist preacher from Kentucky known for his forceful skill in elocution. See J. H. Spencer, *A History of Kentucky Baptists* (2 vols.; Cincinnati, 1885), 1:232-40.

19 Draper Collection, 30C:66. It is not clear how fluent Black Fish and Daniel Boone were in English and Shawnee respectively prior to the captivity of the salt boilers in February 1778. Both apparently knew a smattering of each other’s language. Yet original narratives state that when Boone was captured, Pompey acted as an interpreter between Boone and Black Fish. See Joseph Jackson’s memoirs, Draper Collection, 11C.

20 Draper Collection, 14S:66.

21 *Ibid.*, 6S:105.

Pompey who advanced under a white flag and hallooed the fort.²² John Gass, whose sister Jennie was shot and tomahawked by Wyandots at Estill's Station in 1782, watched Pompey approach Boonesborough. He recalled:

The Indians came in 300 yards. Then Pompey came half way and asked for Boone. Boone went out and met him at the fence, as freely and as readily as I would go to the yard fence. . . . they talked a while, and then went over to the main body.²³

Then the two sides began a curious charade of parleys which lasted for two days. Pompey played a pivotal role as interpreter. But his audacity rankled the whites. Moses Boone recollected:

Pompey . . . rode up two different times on an old pony and wanted to swap it for a gun—no one felt disposed to make a trade—no guns to spare, and none in any event for him: There was an ill-feeling towards Pompey . . . and some of the men declared, "if he came again, they would shoot him and let the fighting commence if it would."²⁴

Enoch Morgan Boone, Moses's older brother, added:

The Negro, Pompey rode up on a horse and with much Pomposity, and well-equipped as to horse, saddle and bridle and wanted to exchange him for a gun. No guns to spare. This was before the attack commenced.²⁵

And there are references made to a "Negro" yelling out bawdy insults about one of Daniel Boone's daughters. If this was during the siege, it was probably Pompey.²⁶ Poor Pompey! By going beyond the narrow 18th-century racial boundaries rigidly set by whites for blacks and Indians, he was guilty of several

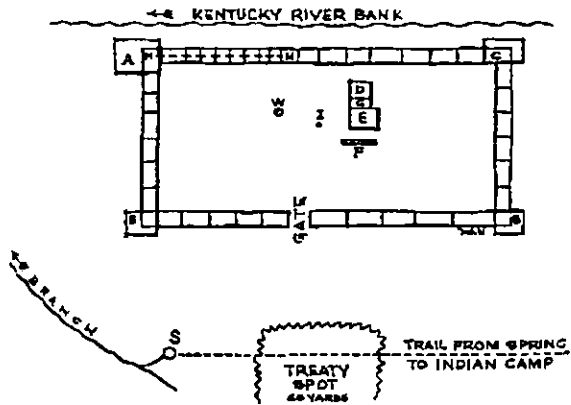
22 See *ibid.*, 24C:73(9); 4B:211; 16C:7(3-4).

23 *Ibid.*, 11CC:40-41; Jenny Gass was brutally murdered and scalped near present-day Mt. Sterling a few days prior to Estill's Defeat, 22 March 1782. See Z. F. Smith, *History of Kentucky* (Louisville, 1895), 188-95.

24 Draper Collection, 19C:11.

25 *Ibid.*, 135.

26 *Ibid.*, 9C:34(1). Daniel and Rebecca Bryan Boone had four daughters: Susanna (b. 1760), Jemima (b. 1762), Levina (b. 1766), and Rebecca (b. 1768). For a comprehensive genealogical overview of the Boones, see Hazel Atterbury Spraker, *The Boone Family* (3rd ed.; Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company, 1977).



Copy of Moses Boone's Sketch of Fort Boonesborough, c. 1778. A - Henderson's Kitchen; B - Two-Story Bastion; C - Phelp's House; D - Squire Boone's House; E - Colonel Callaway's House; F - Ball Battery; G - Boone's Gun Shop; H - Ditch or Contermine; I - Flagstaff; W - Well; S - Sulphur Spring

Neal O. Hammon

unforgivable sins. Unfortunately, his black skin made him a conspicuously symbolic target.

Popularized accounts say that as the attack on Boonesborough progressed, Pompey climbed a tree and sniped at the Kentuckians. Finally, he was shot from his perch—of course by Daniel Boone—somewhere between 175 to 250 yards! The testimony is contradictory. Some accounts confirm the tree story, while others assert that Pompey was killed in the tunnel that was dug by the besiegers to undermine the walls. Startlingly, his death is attributed to five marksmen.

Who shot Pompey? We will dismiss the least likely candidate first. E. J. Roark of Breathitt County wrote in 1885:

While the siege of Boonesborough was going on, there was a Negro with the Indians called Black Dick. Dick climbs [*sic*] up a sycamore tree so he could poke his cap on a stick just below the top of the forks—and meanwhile Boone's men, misled by Dick's trickery, would make the fur fly from his old cap. Finally, Simon Kenton said, "I see now," discovering Dick's white eye shining through the forks of the tree below

like a star in a dark cloud—"Now," says Kenton, "I will take another shot. Watch me fetch Dick." Down came Dick, sure enough.²⁷

In Roark's narrative, Black Dick is Pompey. But there is a major flaw; Simon Kenton and Alexander Montgomery were on a horse-stealing expedition prior to the siege. After it began, they stayed behind enemy lines and watched.²⁸ Since Kenton was not inside Boonesborough, it is unlikely he saw Black Dick's "white eye shining . . . like a star in a dark cloud." Simon Kenton did not shoot Pompey.

In 1844 Joseph Jackson told Lyman Draper that "the Negro Pompey was killed . . . by John Martin." Jackson also praised his marksmanship:

A couple of Indians was seen on the hillside. . . . Martin, with his old yagur [Jaeger rifle] and one-ounce balls [approximately .66 caliber], leveled away and shot one. . . . Martin raised his back sight to take aim for so long a shot.²⁹

But Jackson had been captured with Daniel Boone and nearly thirty salt boilers at the Lower Blue Licks in February 1778. When Boonesborough was besieged that September, he was being held captive at Old Chillicothe and did not return to white society until 1800.³⁰ And Jackson's account of Martin "with his old yagur" sounds amazingly similar to a another episode that occurred during the siege.

They discovered an Indian in a tree watching the movements of the besieged. One of the men named [Stuffly] Cooper had

27 Draper Collection 16C:81(2).

28 The most accessible complete account of the siege of Boonesborough is Ranck's *Boonesborough*.

29 Draper Collection, 11C:62(16).

30 Joseph Jackson fought with the British at Blue Licks in 1782 and continued to live with the Shawnee until the early 1800s. Even after considerable effort, he was never able to reacclimate to white society. Jackson hung himself in 1844.

See Draper Collection, 11CC:35,45; also Jackson's memoirs 11C.

a long range yagur gun . . . There was a stump in the fort yard and they brought out a chair and placed at the stump in which Cooper seated himself and placed his gun upon the stump. The Indian . . . came down from the tree, turned the insulting part of his body to the besieged and defiantly patted it. Cooper took deliberate aim and at the crack of his gun, the Indian jumped into the air.³¹

One rendering of this story puts the range at six hundred yards!³² And that account sounds suspiciously similar to this one:

Another adventurous Indian frequently placed himself in the fork of a tree . . . [began] pulling up his breech-clout and exhibiting his person in a bantering, derisive manner. Several shots had been ineffectively fired at him, when Captain Boone's famous "Tick-Licker," as he termed it, a gun of more than the common caliber, carrying an ounce ball [fired] . . . and the bold, saucy fellow was seen to tumble lifeless from the tree and roll well-nigh two hundred yards to the river. . . . the hogs rooted around his corpse.³³

Joseph Jackson was eighty-eight years old when interviewed by Lyman Draper, but his memoirs are articulate and lucid. If he was visibly senile, Draper would have said so. But there is no supporting evidence to verify his claim that John Martin shot Pompey with his "yagur gun."³⁴

After the ambushes with the Indians ceased in Kentucky's bloody history, the squabbles over land began in earnest. Some Kentuckians lost nearly every acre they owned and pulled up stakes, moved, and started over. This was true

31 *Ibid.*, 4C:26(11-12).

32 *Ibid.*, 24.

33 *Ibid.*, 4B:246.

34 The Jaeger rifle was the hunting gun of choice by many in central Europe from the late 17th century to the early 18th centuries. It had a 30 to 36 inch octagonal barrel and was of heavy caliber, usually .62 to .75. This was the design the 18th-century Pennsylvania gunsmiths, modified for use on the American frontier, which later evolved into the famed "Kentucky" rifle. For representative examples of Jaeger rifles and early colonial transitional firearms, see Henry J. Kauffman, *The Pennsylvania-Kentucky Rifle* (New York: Bonanza, 1960), v-vi.

not only of Daniel Boone but of others, like William Hancock, who reportedly told his neighbors in Missouri that he shot Pompey. And his wife Molly supposedly confirmed it.³⁵

William Hancock was a salt boiler held captive by the Shawnee. Although Draper writes that, "William Hancock . . . was a poor woodsman, and discontented with his captivity, moody (as he afterwards used to say)," he did not lack grit.³⁶ After Boone's escape, he too slipped away and finally made it back to Boonesborough. His return was providential. In his sworn deposition taken immediately after his arrival by Colonel Richard Callaway, Hancock grimly spoke of the coming storm:

. . . the Indians informed, that they should come four hundred strong, and offer the English flag to the inhabitants, and if the terms were rejected, they intended to batter down our fort with their swivels, as they are said to have four sent them from Detroit.³⁷

The intelligence was hastily related to Colonel Arthur Campbell on the Holston:

Boonesborough, 18 July, 1778 Enclosed is my deposition with that of Mr. Hancock's who arrived yesterday. He informed us of both French and Indians coming against us . . .

We are all in fine spirits . . . and intend to fight hard.

Daniel Boone³⁸

In 1884 Ephraim McClean, who claimed to be "a near relative to Hancock," wrote Lyman Draper that "Hancock and his wife both told me about killing Pompey. Hancock killed Pompey after the old woman's dream."³⁹ The old woman's dream? McClean wrote:

35 Draper Collection, 16C:7(3-4).

36 For a complete list of all the Kentuckians captured at the Lower Blue Licks in February 1778, see Draper Collection, 4B:156(1); regarding William Hancock's woodsmanship, see 6S:121.

37 Draper Collection, 4B:204-205.

38 *Ibid.*

39 *Ibid.*, 16C:8(1).

Billy Hancock was on the stairs firing on the Indians and his old lady had been running bullets for three days and nights, and was so overcome, that she fell asleep . . . and exclaimed, though asleep "pour it to them, Billy; the day is a rolling!" A big Negro by the name of Pompey came running up, carrying a flag, and demanded the surrender of the place. As Pompey approached, Hancock leveled his long fowling-piece on him, and dropped him.⁴⁰

It is possible that McClean misquoted Hancock. But it is also possible that he did not. Hancock at first misunderstood Boone's strategy in giving up his men to the British and the Indians. When he returned to Boonesborough after his captivity he "used to complain of Col. Boone surrendering the salt boilers." That Hancock told the distraught people of Boonesborough about Boone's apparent betrayal is confirmed by Daniel Trabue who was there:

Mr. Hancock, who had lived at Boonesborough [and] who had been made a prisoner with the Shawnee Indians and at Detroit, made his escape and came to Boonesborough and informed them that the Indians in a great army was a coming to take Boonesborough; that Col. Daniel Boone was at Detroit and had agreed with the British officers that he would come with the Indians, and that the fort should be give up, and that the people should be taken to Detroit and live under the jurisdiction of his gracious Majesty King George III.⁴¹

It was precisely this kind of talk that infuriated influential Kentuckians like Colonel Richard Callaway (whose two nephews Micajah and James were still held captive by the Shawnee) and that led to court-martial proceedings against Boone for disloyal conduct. Boone was acquitted, and years

40 *Ibid.*, 7(3-4).

41 William Hancock was amazed that Daniel Boone could appear so content while living among "dirty Indians." See Draper Collection, 6S:121; 11CC:41; see also Abner Bryan interview 4C. After Boone and the Kentuckians were captured and during the grueling march back to the Shawnee towns, Boone shared his meager rations with William Hancock. See Draper Collection, 30C:50-51; Captain Daniel Boone was cleared of all charges and promoted to major. One of the few eyewitness accounts of Boone's trial is found in Daniel Trabue's memoirs, Draper Collection, 57J.

later Hancock admitted that Boone was not to blame.

Did William Hancock shoot Pompey? Was he "just yarning?" Did Ephraim McClean embellish Hancock's story or, perhaps, just make the whole thing up? As Lyman Draper recopied McClean's "poorly written letter," he annotated McClean's inaccuracies and wrote disclaimers like "erroneous" and "probably erroneous" in the margin. Draper did not believe Hancock shot Pompey; neither did William Hancock's son Robert. Ephraim McClean's account is probably not true.⁴²

Many historians credit Daniel Boone with the dubious honor of killing Pompey. Reverend John Mason Peck, who talked with Boone in 1818 and interviewed a number of his kin, said in his 1847 edition of *The Life of Daniel Boone*:

While the Parley was in Progress, an unprincipled Negro man deserted, and went over to the Indians, carrying with him a large, far shooting rifle. . . . [and] ascended a tree. . . . when Captain Boone . . . fired and the Negro was seen to fall. After the Indians had retreated, his body was found, and his forehead was pierced with the ball, fired at the distance of one hundred and seventy-five yards. The Indians . . . would not touch his body.⁴³

Reverend Peck was the first Boone biographer—it was not mentioned by John Filson or Timothy Flint—to write that Boone killed Pompey. And John Peck sought to portray Boone accurately. After a brief criticism of Timothy Flint's highly embellished *Biographical Memoir of Daniel Boone*, Peck wrote, "That the writer has been careful to give none but such as he has evidence are authentic."⁴⁴

Was John Peck quoting Daniel Boone when he said Boone shot Pompey? He may have been — there is no way to

42 McClean also tells of Boone and Hancock escaping together and covering the 160 miles back to Boonesborough in three days--all of which is false. See Draper Collection, 16C:7; for Robert Hancock's account, see 24C:22(2).

43 John Mason Peck, *Life of Daniel Boone: The Pioneer of Kentucky* (Boston: Charles C. Little, 1947), 87.

44 *Ibid.*, 5.



Joseph Wabun's Sketch of a Shawnee Warrior, 1796.
Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, France.



Joseph Wabun's Sketch of a Shawnee Warrior, 1796.
Bibliotheque Nationale, Paris, France.

know. By his own admission, Reverend Peck was awed by Boone and "took no more than a few brief notes."⁴⁵ Present-day researchers tend to treat John Peck's biography of Daniel Boone with bewilderment. Michael A. Lofaro, who wrote *The Life and Adventures of Daniel Boone* (1978), says:

As likely the most idiosyncratic biography of the frontiersman [Boone], was that penned by John Mason Peck, who presented Boone not as a hunter or pioneer, but rather as the ideal Christian, family man, farmer, and as a pious teetotaler. Peck was an itinerant Baptist minister.⁴⁶

Colonel Nathan Boone and Olive Van Bibber, his wife, "discredited Peck's account" of Daniel Boone shooting Pompey. Was Nathan Protecting his late father's reputation?⁴⁷ Not likely. The Boones were bred beyond the frontier where death and border tragedies were rightly understood; shooting a sniper during war was not considered murder. And Daniel lived in his son's home for years and finally died there. If the aged hunter had shot Pompey, he probably would have told Nathan.

When Draper interviewed John Peck in August 1857 and pressed him for details about Pompey, Peck said:

[Boone] always disliked the idea of killing human beings—taking life when he could not restore [it]. Said he killed the Negro at the big siege of Boonesborough.⁴⁸

Yet even after talking with Peck, Draper called Peck's description in *The Life of Daniel Boone*, "A singularly confused statement." Draper believed Peck had mixed up "the Negro story" with the account of Boone shooting the Indian out of the tree with "Old Tick-Licker." Further, Pompey was not from Boonesborough and since he interpreted for Boone and his salt

45 "Illinois Manuscripts" Draper Collection, 1Z:32(4); Peck, *Life of Daniel Boone*, 187.

46 Michael A. Lofaro, "Tracking Down Daniel Boone: The Changing Frontier in American Life," *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* 82 (1984): 321-33.

47 Draper Collection, 6S:143.

48 *Ibid.*, 1Z:33(3).

boilers in February 1778, he could not have deserted the Kentuckians during the parleys.⁴⁹

Peck's account is similar to one by Elijah Bryan (b. 1799), a distant relative of the Boones, who wrote to Lyman Draper in 1883. As a youth, Bryan had talked with Boone about the siege. He recollected:

Boone said . . . "He saw the smoke of the gun away up a big forked hickory tree. [The] Negro pushed up his head in the fork of a hickory to see what his shot had done to the fort and drawing a bead on his forehead [Boone] raised a little and bang went old 'Tick-Licker'—down came the Negro like a musquash, a bear in English." Relating this, the old man [Boone] always laughed a little . . . he supposed it at 200 and 50 yards . . . This ended the siege.⁵⁰

In *Daniel Boone: Master of the Wilderness*, John Bakeless acknowledges the conflicting testimony but concluded that Boone shot Pompey because "Elijah Bryan insisted he had the story from Boone himself."⁵¹ In another letter, Bryan shortens the range to a slightly less spectacular 180 yards.⁵² But Bryan's letters contain other inconsistencies. Lyman Draper contends that Pompey was killed on the third day of the siege—his death did not end it.⁵³ Moreover, the eyewitnesses say that Pompey was shot while peeping out of the subterranean mine that was being dug to breach Boonesborough.⁵⁴

Did Daniel Boone shoot Pompey? Lyman Draper did not find the evidence convincing. He said William Collins did it.⁵⁵ Collins was in Kentucky by 1777. For a while he was in Captain John Holder's company—as was William Hancock—at Boones-

49 *Ibid.*, 4B:246.

50 *Ibid.*, 4C:33(5).

51 Bakeless, *Daniel Boone*, 451.

52 Draper Collection, 4C:48.

53 *Ibid.*, 4B:236.

54 *Ibid.*, 11CC:44.

55 *Ibid.*, 4B:236-37.

borough. Following the siege, Collins moved to Indiana.⁵⁶ John Gass, who survived the uprising at Boonesborough, told frontier historian John D. Shane in 1844:

Pompey came to the place where they had dug into the bank and put his head up two or three times. Some of the men shot, while others . . . to watch, could see the bullet[s] strike the water. William Collins, a first-rate marksman, held his gun cocked and waiting; and when Pompey put his head up again, he fired. That time no splashing in the water was seen. Pompey was not heard of again.⁵⁷

But later, Gass implies that Simon Kenton fought in the siege. And he did not. But was John Gass right? Did William Collins shoot Pompey? Lyman Draper thought so. Draper interviewed at least thirty-eight sources—including five who were at Boonesborough—before reaching that conclusion.⁵⁸ But he was not fully convinced. Years later, Draper was still wondering who pulled the trigger that killed Pompey.⁵⁹

There is no more record of Pompey. The Black Shawnee appeared and disappeared, much like an autumn leaf twisting and twirling down a dark and windy trail. He is barely a name on a few pages of yellowed parchment. Yet his niche in Kentucky's bloody frontier history remains.

⁵⁶ For more information on William Collins, see Draper Collection, 5ZZ:65; 35J:79(1); Also Ranck, *Boonesborough*, 255.

⁵⁷ Draper Collection, 11CC:4.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 4B:252(2).

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 16C:7.