

This painting by Bill Puryear shows Thomas “Big Foot” Spencer hunting buffalo in Middle Tennessee.

CHAPTER TEN

BOONE AND BIG FOOT

By the middle of the 1700s, people began coming into Tennessee from the east.

We refer to the first wave of people as **longhunters**. They would take their *long* guns and go on *long* hunting trips that might last as *long* as months. (No wonder they were called longhunters!)

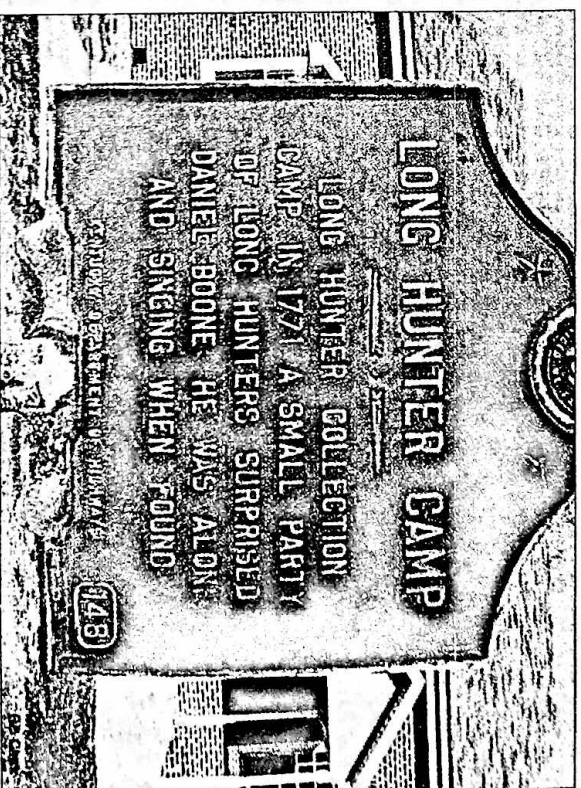
These longhunters were drawn to Tennessee because of the incredible numbers of wild animals here. At the time, Tennessee not only had huge amounts of deer (which it does today), but it also had huge buffalo herds—especially near the Cumberland River.

Daniel Boone was the most famous longhunter, and there are many legends about him. Boone was once asked if he had ever

been lost in the woods on one of his long journeys. “No,” he said, “but I was once **bewildered** for three days.”

Boone was a great hunter and **scout** (a scout is a person who guides others through the wilderness). But he couldn’t spell very well. There used to be a tree in Washington County that had the words “D. Boon cilled a Bar on tree in the year 1760.” We believe Daniel Boone carved those words.

Thomas Spencer may have been the toughest of the longhunters. Spencer was a huge man with huge feet who hunted in present-day Middle Tennessee. According to one story, another man once saw Spencer’s giant footprint on the banks of the Cumberland River and jumped in the river in terror. Because of that, many people called him Thomas “Big Foot” Spencer.



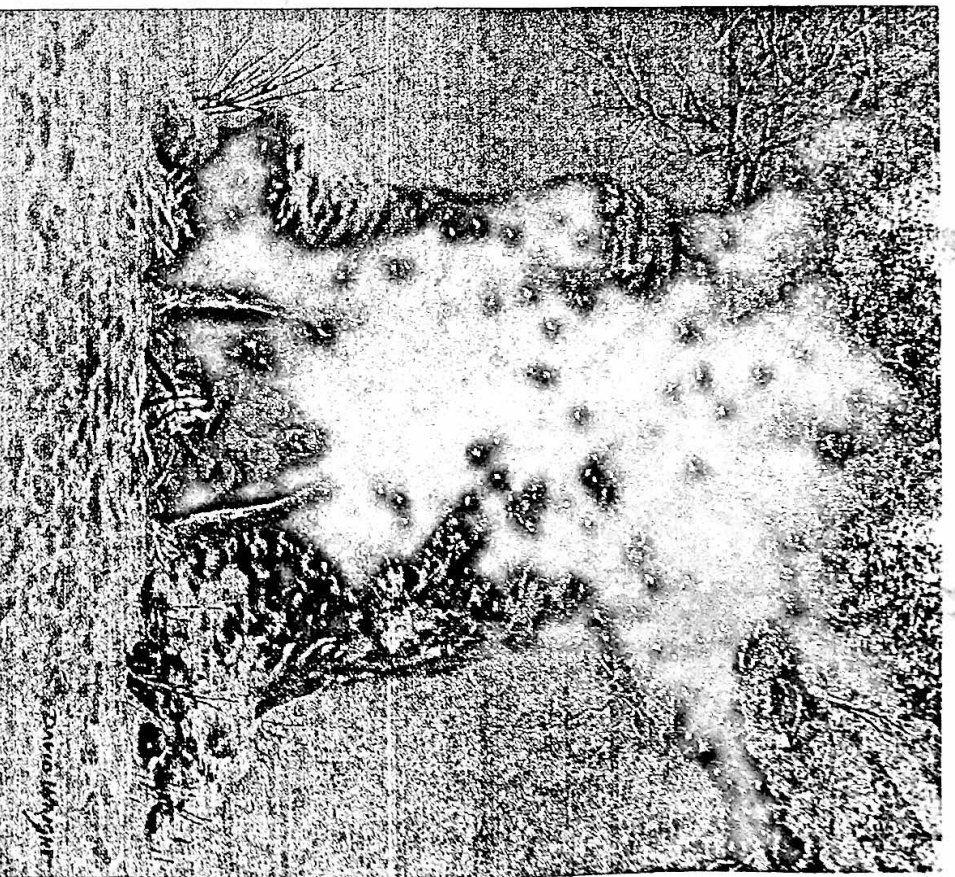
As this sign in Kentucky points out, **Daniel Boone was alone so much that he often sang by himself!** (THF photo)

Once, in a fight, Spencer picked a man up and threw him over a fort wall. When the man calmed down, he asked Spencer if he would throw his horse over as well.

At one point in the early settlement of Middle Tennessee, Spencer remained behind after all the other settlers had fled back to Virginia. With no better place to sleep, Spencer spent an entire



Long hunters spent much of their time on horseback. (Art by Jerry Johnson)



This painting by David Wright shows Thomas Spencer living in a hollow sycamore tree.

winter living in a hollow sycamore tree. Today there is a marker where that sycamore tree used to be.

Longhunters had better hunting skills, tracking skills and survival skills than just about anyone could possibly have today. The land they lived in was wild and unmapped. Besides them, the only people living in the wilderness were American Indian tribes such as the Cherokee, Chickasaws and Creeks. ❁

QUESTIONS

- 1) What are three ways to remember what long hunters did?

- 2) What do you call a person who guides others?

- 3) What was Thomas Spencer's nickname?

- 4) What did the man say after Thomas Spencer threw him over a fort wall?

- 5) What is something Daniel Boone could do well?

- 6) What is something Daniel Boone could not do well?



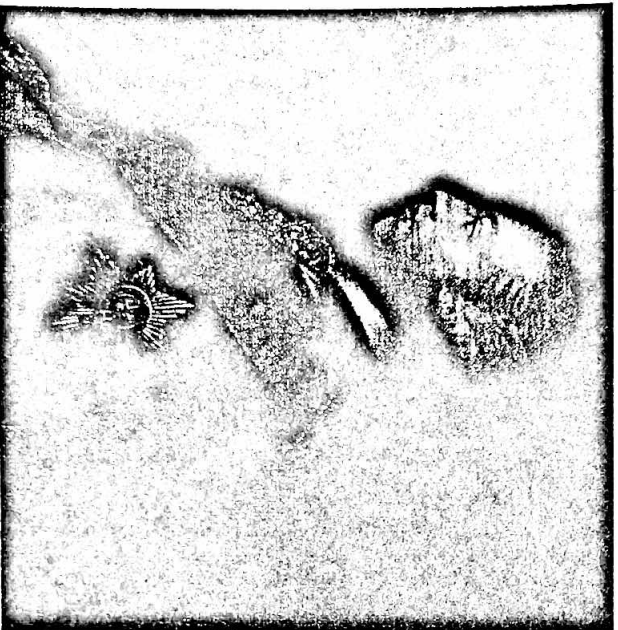
A reenactment of longhunters (Harold Jerrill photo)

CHAPTER ELEVEN LONGHUNTERS BECOME SETTLERS

Longhunters such as Daniel Boone and Thomas Spencer encouraged other people to come to the beautiful wilderness in which they were hunting. Many of these other people, however, wanted to do more than just hunt for a few months. They wanted to live in the land west of the Appalachian Mountains. They wanted to stay in the place which would one day be known as Tennessee. They wanted to be settlers, not longhunters.

However, King George III of Great Britain had other ideas. After the French and Indian War (which we will talk more about in fourth grade), King George decided he didn't want settlers moving west of the Appalachian Mountains. King George understood that wherever his colonists lived, Great Britain might be drawn into a war to defend them. King George decided that the Appalachian Mountains made a good western border for his American colonies.

King George proclaimed that settlers could not move west of the mountains. Today we refer to this as the Proclamation of 1763.



A painting of George III by artist Allan Ramsay



Many of Tennessee's early settlers lived in shelters similar to this one, near Rock Castle in Sumner County. (THFK photo)

However, a lot of people ignored King George's proclamation. One of them was William Bean, a friend of Daniel Boone's. Bean started as a longhunter but ended up as a settler.

In 1768, Bean built a cabin along the Waruga River, near present-day Johnson City, Tennessee. He brought his family from Virginia a year later. Today we believe William Bean was East Tennessee's first English settler. Soon, other settlers followed.



William Bean's cabin was near this sign. (THFK photo)

Since Tennessee is directly west of North Carolina, many people assume that the majority of Tennessee's early settlers came from North Carolina. But that's not really true, because the mountains between North Carolina and Tennessee are really high and hard to cross. Most of Tennessee's early settlers came from Virginia into Tennessee, along small valleys formed by the Clinch, Holston and Watauga Rivers.

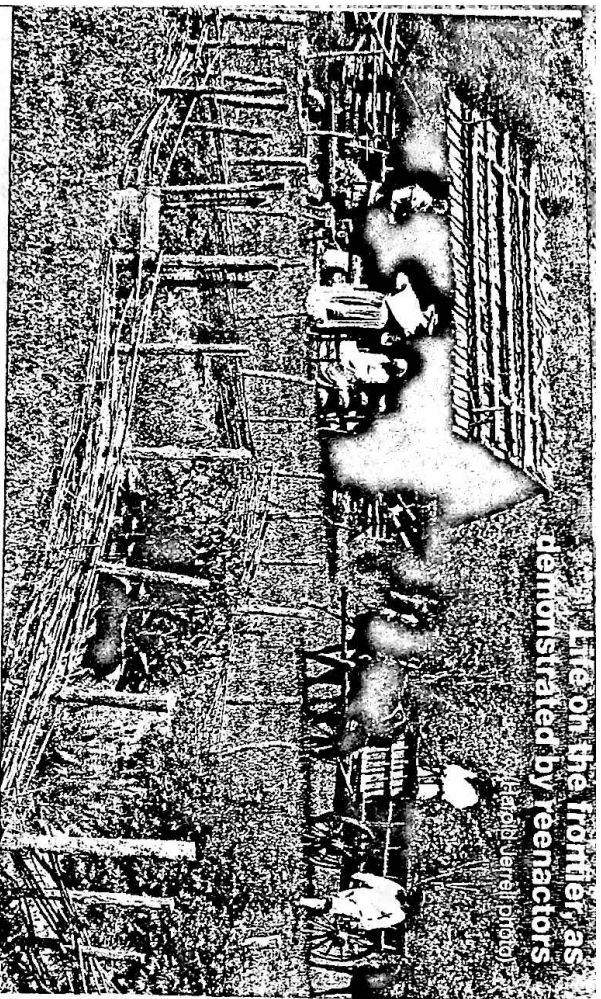
These early settlers had little more than horses, guns, axes and know-how. When they got to where they wanted to live, they cut down trees, built cabins and planted crops. 🌳

QUESTIONS

- 1) What is the difference between a settler and a longhunter?

- 2) Why did King George III issue the Proclamation of 1763?

- 3) Why was it easier for settlers to come to Tennessee from Virginia than from North Carolina?



Life on the frontier, as demonstrated by re-enactors
(Photo: Terrell photo)

CHAPTER TWELVE

LIFE ON THE FRONTIER

Since they were living near the border between European civilization and American Indian civilization, Tennessee's settlers were living on the **frontier**. Life on the frontier was nothing like it is for us today. Today, we pay people to cook for us, build things for us, and take care of us when we are sick. On the frontier, families had to "make do."

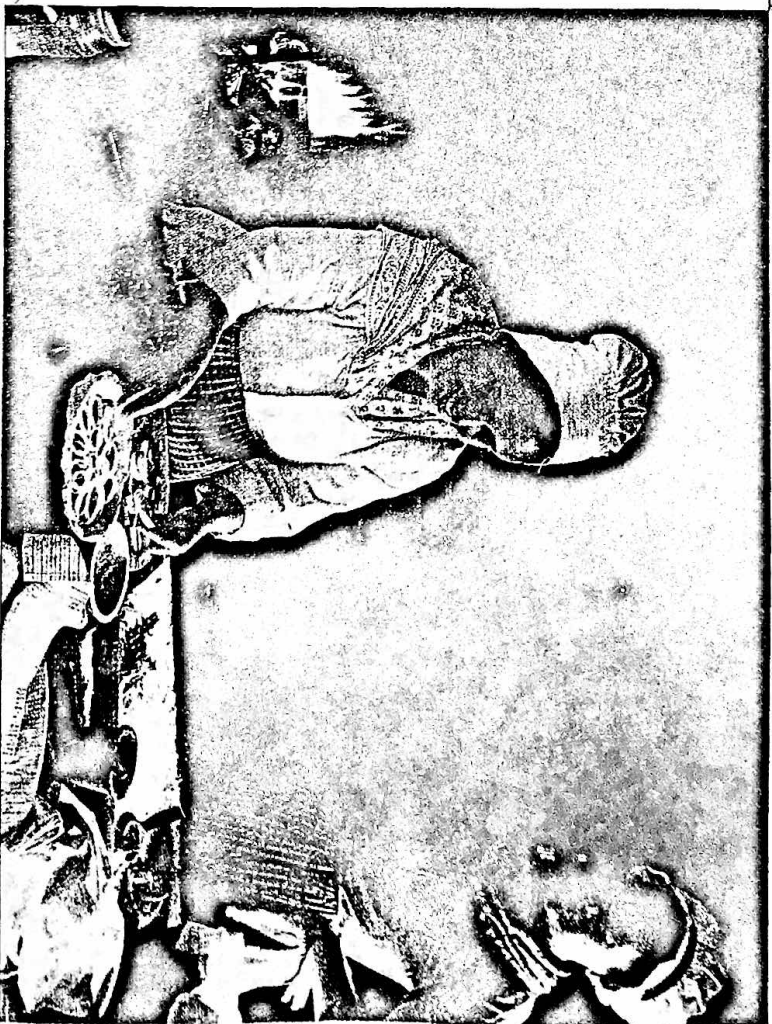
Today, most people live in a house or apartment built by someone else. Tennessee's early settlers had to build their own homes out of trees that they cut down.

Today we get most of our food from grocery stores or restaurants. Tennessee's early settlers got most of their food from animals they killed, plants they found in the wild, and crops they grew.

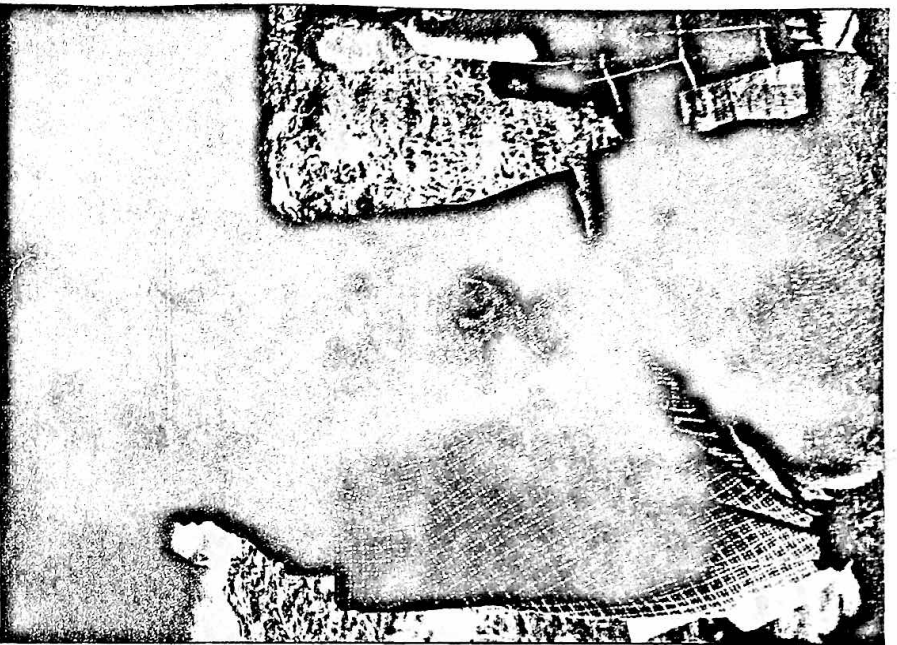
History books talk mostly about what men did because men

were the longhunters, and because men were the ones who went off to war. But women also had it tough on the Tennessee frontier. Here are some of the things women had to do:

- There were no clothing stores back then. Women had to make clothes and bedspreads out of **hemp**, **wool**, and animal hides. To do this, they had to know how to tan leather, spin cloth and weave.
- Women had to do just about anything that had to be done on the farm. They had to tend to crops, milk cows and feed the **livestock**.



As these re-enactors at the Yorktown Museum demonstrate, women in colonial America often made vegetable pies. (THFK photo)



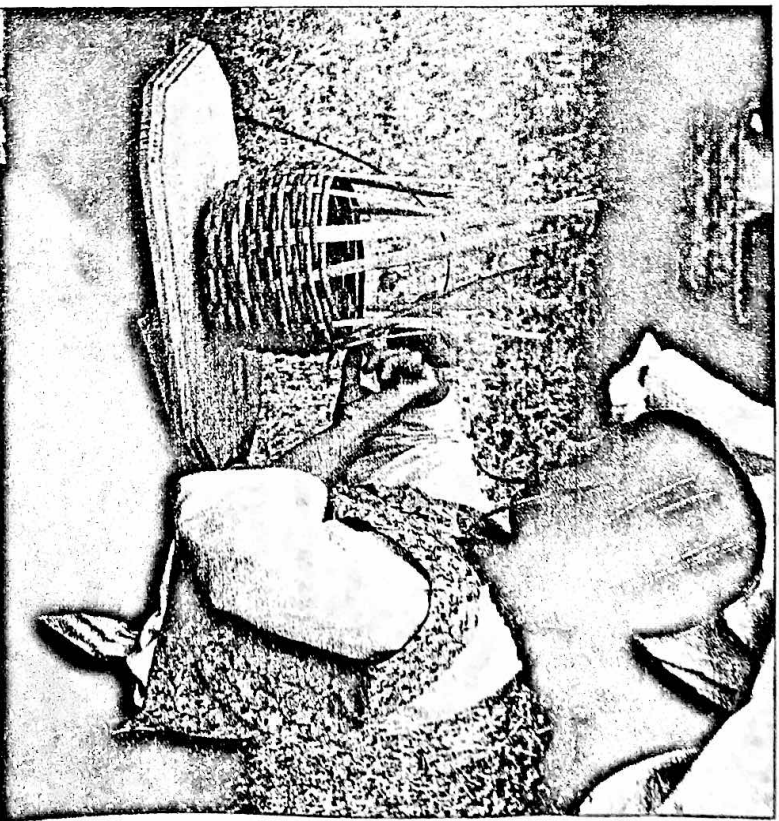
Here is something men and women would have had to have known on the frontier: how to shear sheep! (THFK photo)

- Women had to **churn** butter from cow's milk. They had to make soap from ashes and melted animal fat. They had to salt meat. (Unsalted meat has to be eaten in a day or two. Salted meat is preserved, and can be eaten months later.)
- If someone brought home a dead raccoon, squirrel or deer, it was often the woman who got to cut the **carcass** up and prepare the **edible** part for dinner and set aside the other important parts such as the fur.

Women on the frontier also had a lot of kids. In those days it was not unusual for women to have more than 10 children. Families wanted to have more children because more kids meant more help on the farm. Families also had a lot of children back then because a lot of babies died while being born, and a lot of children died from disease.

Kids were put to work as soon as they were able. Everyone from about the age of four onward was expected to help around the cabin and help with the gardening.

Another big difference between life today and on the Tennessee frontier has to do with **entertainment**. In those days, there was no



A girl makes a basket at a reenactment. (THFK photo)

computer, television or radio. Families entertained each other as best they could.

Parents told stories. Kids played with their brothers and sisters. People played musical instruments and sang.

One more thing about life on the Tennessee frontier: The families that came to Tennessee in frontier times depended on each other to survive.

When a neighbor was attacked, other neighbors came to their defense. When a family needed help building a barn, other families pitched in to help. When men were killed on the Tennessee frontier – and many were killed – neighbors stepped in and helped the household. 🌟



What entertainment on the frontier might have been like

(1841 K photo)

QUESTIONS

1) How was life on the frontier different than life today?

How was it the same? _____

2) Would you have rather lived in frontier times or today?

Why? _____
