



Daughters  
of the  
American  
Revolution  
MAGAZINE

**PUBLISHED BY THE NATIONAL SOCIETY  
DAUGHTERS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION**

AUGUST 1956

# The Story of the Siege of Bryan Station

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**T**URN your imagination back 174 years to August 16th, 1782 and imagine that your home is in a tiny log cabin forming part of the 300 ft. long, 150 ft. wide pioneer fort at Bryan Station in what was then Fayette County, Virginia.

On that morning 174 years ago all of the 45 men, 34 women and 65 children living in the little cabins at Bryan Station were tense and frightened because, during the preceding night (August 15th, 1782) a huge army of savage Indians, led by British and Canadian officers and soldiers had suddenly and silently surrounded the little fort. Captain Robert Johnson, the military leader of the settlement, was far away in Virginia. Captain John Craig, next in command, took charge and issued orders. Two of your friends had crept out in the darkness to run to other small settlements for help. At daybreak, Jemima Johnson and Polly Hawkins Craig led the way as all the women, girls and some of the little boys carried the heavy piggins and noggins down to the spring for water. The men stood at the loopholes with their long hunting rifles ready to fire at any movement or sign of the enemy. What joy filled your heart as the last one of the brave party returned safely to the fort gates with the precious water!

Later on this morning, August 16th, (1782) you heard the instructions given to some of the larger boys as they mounted horses and were told to ride out fast, shooting and yelling, and to circle around to the opposite gate of the fort; you held your breath until the last one of them had come racing back in safety and the big wooden gate was closed behind them!

With unspeakable terror you had seen the great number of painted warriors rise up to begin the attack! You heard men of the Fort shout that the renegade white men known as Simon Girty and Alexander McKee were with the Indians, urging them to

greater efforts against people who had once been their own friends. You saw the red coats of the British and Canadian officers mingling with the Indians! Hour after hour you saw every man, woman and child rushing here and there to lend a hand where it was most needed. You were conscious of many things as you, too, ran hither and thither in answer to frantic calls for more bullets; for more water; for another gun, or for a pole to fill an opening in the stockade walls. You saw lighted arrows set fire to two of the cabins! You saw women lift the smaller boys to the sloping roofs, give them wet garments and water to beat out the fires. As you ran past a cabin you heard a very old man praying that God would turn the wind to the opposite direction and save the fort, and later, you vaguely realized that his prayer had been answered—the fires were out! The wind blew directly in the opposite direction!

You saw women melting their precious pewterware for bullets; a young girl throwing her treasured gold beads into the melting pot and shouting she hoped to make a gold bullet which would find its way into Simon Girty's heart—he who had long boasted no mere leaden bullet would kill him! Perhaps you saw another young girl snatch her baby brother from the sugar-trough cradle and put out the burning arrow which had fallen upon him. Little did you dream, in that hour of great terror, that the baby, Richard Mentor Johnson, would grow up to become a Vice-President of the then unborn United States of America!

So the horrible hours of August 16th, 1782 passed. Each man loading, re-loading, firing over and over again and again at any sign of an enemy high in the tree-tops or from behind nearby stumps in the clearing. Through openings in the stockade wall you saw the fine gardens, the

good crops, trampled and destroyed; all the houses outside the stockade wall burned; the cows and hogs killed, the horses driven away.

In mid-afternoon everyone was cheered by the arrival of some mounted men who rode madly down the dusty trail and reached the safety of the stockade. The dust kicked up by the horses and the speed at which they rode made them poor targets for the Indians lying in ambush beside the trail. With their coming, hope sprang up but, along with everybody else, you held an additional fear in your heart because other men, coming to aid in your defense, were without horses and were surrounded in the cornfield where they could not tell friend from foe; where each man had to use his gun as a club and then run for his life!

During the fearful night (August 16th, 1782) you heard brave Aaron Reynolds shouting defiance at the renegade, Simon Girty, who demanded that the fort surrender. Reynolds told Girty that help was coming and that the people within the stockade at Bryan Station would never surrender to the British and Indians.

At last it was the morning of August 17th. Everyone within the little fort was battered, weary and still afraid. It was marvelous that not one had been killed although a number had been wounded. All was quiet without but with constant watchfulness the men stood with ready guns. By mid-morning, help had come! Mounted men approached and hailed the garrison. Daniel Boone with 12 men from Boone Station, 5 miles to the eastward; a small group from the small fort at Lexington, 5 miles to the south, were the first to reach Bryan Station. During the day others came from Boonesborough. All viewed with sorrow and anger the desolation surrounding the settlement.

Scouting parties went out and learned that the enemy had stolen away in the hours before dawn, leaving their campfires

burning and meat roasting in the embers. The bodies of Robert Adkinson and David Mitchell were found and brought into the stockade. The Indians had killed and scalped them in the cornfield. You witnessed the burial of these brave men just outside the stockade walls, their lives given in defense of the settlers of Bryan Station.

So passed the 17th day of August, 1782. With the coming of the 18th, most of the men at Bryan Station, with all those who had come to its defense, were ready to set forth upon the trail of the enemy and drive them entirely out of the country—back to the Indian towns north of the Ohio River and to Detroit where the hated British officer known as “hair-buying Hamilton” had his British headquarters.

It was with fearful heart that you saw the men depart. All of the 180 were well mounted and well armed. They said it would be easy to follow the plain trail left by what Daniel Boone and others estimated to be 500 Indians and some 75 British and Canadians.

Two days later by twos, threes and singly, the survivors of a bitter defeat at the Battle of Blue Licks made their way back to Bryan Station with details of the horrible slaughter of the pioneers. All hearts were heavy in this darkest hour of the settlement of Kentucky. However, the following November 3rd, Great Britain acknowledged the Independence of the United States and on September 3rd, 1783 a Treaty of Peace was signed and the Revolutionary War was ended.

*(The site of the Siege of Bryan Station is a beautiful Fayette County farm and a Memorial Wall surrounds the spring. The State of Kentucky has made a State Park at the site of the Battle of Blue Licks—we hope to see a greater and finer memorial at the site of Bryan Station. The Siege of Bryan Station and the Battle of Blue Licks were a part of the Revolutionary War and Kentucky men, women and children shared in defending their homes and their nation against an overwhelming enemy.)*

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