

- Her sister Ann Marchio Hill's note: In researching the history of Fort Butler, which is now under Lake Norris, I realized there was real historic fact associated with this Lover's Leap:

In a "Short History of CLAIBORNE County," Robert P. CARR (Tazewell, TN. 1894) wrote:

In order to extend this little book a few pages further, I will give a sketch of the earliest settlements in the territory now known as CLAIBORNE County was **Fort BUTLER on BALL Creek and a station was also made on Station Creek**, for which the creek has ever taken its name. Also another station of whites at **YOAKUM Station**, in Powell's Valley.

The above mentioned settlements were the first in this country. It will be remembered that people had to live in close settlements and build forts for protection against the Indians. They were often shot down if caught outside their forts. One instance I will relate. In the Station Creek settlement there lived a family by the name of ROBINSON. One morning soon their horses had strayed away from the fort. One young man of the family (**James ROBINSON**) went in search of the horses. He was going through a large cane brake, near where the **city of ARTHUR** now stands. At a large spring he was shot by the Indians. He ran nearly a half mile and fell and expired in a few minutes. He was buried at the place he died and his grave is, to this day, marked, it being more than one hundred and twenty years ago. The spring has ever since been called **BUTCHER Spring**.

The settlement at Fort BUTLER was once attacked by a large squad of Indians. The whites succeeded in getting them surrounded on a high bluff near the mouth of SYCAMORE and pressed them until they jumped over the cliff and were either killed or drowned. They killed nearly all the enemy. This was a great victory for Fort BUTLER. They were not molested any more for a long time.

(Editor's note: Nell Quesenbery has written historical articles for the Claiborne Progress for some time. This is her first part-historical, part-fiction story, which will run in several parts.)

July 9, 1981

LOVER'S LEAP

By Nell Quesenbery

Claiborne County Progress

Part One

The child Mary Royal lay on the grass. Rays of sun from the east filtered through the long green blades, topped by delicate pods of seed. Mixed within the tall grass were large-leafed plantain, which also bore a tall green stem with a tight rod-shaped cluster of tiny round, brightly green seed.

Closing her brilliant, clematis blue eyes against the sun, which haloed her golden curls, Mary reached for a long green stem, idly shelling the seed with her pink, short-trimmed forenail.

Now resting most of the weight of her thin, pettily framed body on her elbows, she dreamingly raised her head, looking into the sharply spined Comby ridge that bordered her tiny village. The village, Lone Mountain, lay near the Clinch River in the ruggedly beautiful, mountained section of East Tennessee.

Her beautiful little face was quite still. Once again, her mind drifted into that particularly elusive mystery, the unceasing passing of the generations. She wondered about her family, the first Royals, who came here (back in time) to settle in Lone Mountain.

It was early spring, 1797. Over a decade before, Daniel Boone and thirty mighty axmen had widened the old trace, called Warrior's Path, from Kingsport, Tennessee, to Boonesboro, Kentucky.

Now, this ancient road served the new white settlers pouring daily across the mountains to buy land from the great land speculators. These new land seekers fulfilled a prophecy by the Frenchman, Iberville: "The spaces between these mountains and the sea are occupied by settlers whose children will be obliged to cross these mountains to find room for themselves."

Just now, Sam Royal, his family, a few relatives and friends were traveling through the mountains, by wagon train, from Johnston County, North Carolina, to Stokely, Donelson's five thousand-acre grant from North Carolina. Sam's boundary of land lay near the junction of Big Sycamore Creek and Ball Creek with the Clinch River in what is now Claiborne County, Tennessee.

The yoked, lumbering oxen slowly but sure-footedly trod upward over the newly cut wagon road that led further and further into the darkly blue timbered mountains. It was very early spring. The leaves had not yet budded. However, the cedar bough and pine needles, often immersed in thick wisps of fog, dripped chill rainwater on the Royals' covered ox-drawn wagon and their several pack animals.

Seasonally, it was past the snowing time, but almost daily, there had been precipitation. Yet, these strangely beautiful mountains, whose very wildness created within the different members of the trekking Royal family intense aches of excitement, challenge, anticipation and the ever-present strain of regret.

Rain still drizzling, Lucinda now lay at rest within the wagon, the boy Joe lying on her arm. It was dark, and she could not see her many possessions crowded into the wagon with her. Her mind was not at peace. Tears were overflowing beneath her tightly closed lids. Memories were tearing and cutting through her heart. Her mind screamed for the scent, sight and feel of her pretty, smiling, gentle mother and kindly, caring old father that she was leaving behind.

“Oh,” she moaned, thinking of the babies she was leaving, all so young and little, lying asleep in the old Royal Cemetery. David, her fine little lad, whom they’d buried only last fall, when he’d fallen in the newly made, deep muddy hole and drowned. The boy Joe pulled against her arm, sighing in his sleep. She loosened her tight hold on the child, all the while feeling the cold tears sliding quickly down her face and pooling into her hair.

Sam and his two older boys lay under the wagon, the fine, cold rain running steadily down its sides. The boys, their thick blond hair tousled, were already asleep.

“Worn out,” guessed Sam. “Well, I’m tuckered, too, but tonight I can’t seem to get thoughts off my mind. Mamie and Pap, they never let on, but I guess none of us ever expect to see each other again. We Royals have had to move, leaving hearth and home before. Why, back in 1737, Grandpap John, being a younger son, had to leave Front Royal, Virginia, seeking land. He bought the home place, down on the Dan River from Colonel Byrd. Yes, we Royals have moved a lot. Take that land grant North Carolina gave me for fighting the British. The boundary was covered with good, big timber. I guess the boys and me had cleared about a quarter of the land before I knew for certain I’d never get good title.

“This land on the Clinch seems a good, big variety of timber, rich heavy bottoms, cheap enough, three pounds an acre (about \$10.25) and a man can get good title.”

Sometime during the night, the rain quit. At daybreak, the sun shone beautifully. Sam and Lucinda moved briskly about camp this morning among their children and their two black servants, Jim and Lizzie. Neither the man’s nor the woman’s face showed a trace of their poignancy from the night that just passed.

Pouring himself a cup of strong tea from the scalding-hot pot, Sam squatted in front of the campfire, blowing to cool the hot drink. Sam watched Lucinda cut thick slices of streaked meat into the iron cookpot. Before he finished his tea, he could smell the rich odor of the frying salted meat. Sam, holding his empty cup, looked at the woman, seeing her dried, worn body, blonde curls that were now turning gray. Still, Sam felt eased, and he found her beautiful. While Lucinda, looking into Sam’s clematis blue eyes, set into a face dried and lined, seeing his worn hips and wide shoulders bent from hard labor, too, found a relief from sadness and regret in her love for Sam.

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LOVER'S LEAP

By Nell Quesenberg

Claiborne County Progress

Part Two

Before the white settlers began moving over the mountains into East Tennessee, most of the upper valley was owned by the great Cherokee Nation. This Cherokee Nation was divided into three regions. The heart of the nation was the "middle settlement" in present-day western North Carolina. "Lower towns" lay in northwestern South Carolina and in that bordering portion of Georgia. The most remote and independent part of the Nation, called the "overhill towns," lay over the mountains in the upper East Tennessee valleys.

Tennessee was named after the overhill town of Tannasee or Tanasi. Each treaty, between the white people and the Cherokees, including the Treaty of Sycamore Shoals, the Treaty of the Holston, the Tellico treaties and others, had cost the overhill Indians more and more land, leading finally to their Oct. 1, 1838 "Trail of Tears" to the West.

New American presidents responded differently to the Indian's causes. President John Adams used federal troops to help the overhill Cherokees maintain their land boundaries. President Thomas Jefferson's administration, responding to the overwhelming "wants" of the white people, used bribery to negotiate land cession. Thomas Jefferson also advised his Indian agents to allow the Cherokees to go deeply into their debt for goods. In order to free themselves of debt, the Indians would yield land, was the basis of this scheme.

Riding along the white man's wilderness wagon road, the Indian Santo turned his horse along the Big Sycamore road. He decided to reach the Clinch River by this road that passed by the ancient burial mound of his clan, "The Deer."

Summer had ripened to its most lush colors. The searing orange of tiger lilies, their petals gaily rolled back, long gold-tipped stamen boldly protruding, danced on a par with tall, wild meadow grass along the creek road.

The Indian Santo, with his brilliant black eyes, heavy long hair and burnished skin so clear and finely textured, rode a midnight black horse with a single touch of white on its forelock.

Santo's body astride his horse was lithe and strong. But, his face set in highly intelligent and classically beautiful lines, created the most interest. Passion was suggested by the flair of his thin

nostrils and great flashing black eyes. However, this trait was balanced by the calmness, perseverance and compassion to be found upon his noble brown face and in the firm curve of his lips. Altogether, he was a vivid figure, not in any way diminished by nature's splendid color display.

Enjoying the bright sun, holding "the black" to a steady gait, Santo soon spotted the ancient burial mound (near the present-day Evans and Day cemeteries). He knew that soon the Big Sycamore Creek would mingle with the Ball Creek waters and bend south, their final lap before reaching the Clinch River.

Just before these two creeks reached the river, they passed a tall, starkly bare limestone bluff. The creek road ran just below the bluff. About fifty feet up from the road was an eight-inch opening in the limestone rock. Deep in the earth behind the opening in the cliff, icy cold water collected. Every few hours, upon reaching a certain pressure, the collecting waters spewed outwards ten feet in an icy geyser. Constantly, a small trickle of water ran down the cliff pooling at its base. For almost always, living creatures had come here to drink.

At this place, Santo planned to fill his deerskin waterbags and partake of food from his meat and bread bags. He would tether "the black" from sight and rest briefly in the shade from the hot midday sun before fording the Clinch just below Bullard's Ferry.

Meanwhile, Sally Royal and the black servant, Lizzie, were approaching the cliff the white settlers called both Indian Bluff and Lover's Leap. Both women, their figures haloed by the sun, were carrying empty red cedar buckets.

It was obvious by Lizzie's new girth and heavy step that she and her black man, Jim, were soon expecting a new child. This would be Lizzie's third child since the Royals had left Johnston County, North Carolina, to settle land between the old garrison (Fort Butler) and the Clinch River. Black, hidden eyes watched the two women approach Indian Bluff. The creek road was bordered by tall meadows and swaying tiger lilies. Startled flames flicked into the man's eyes as he began to define the blonde girl's great beauty and perfection of form. Pain clinched his heart as he heard her soft voice. Instantly, he became enchanted, as if by a sorceress. Hungrily, all other areas of his consciousness were entranced as he studied her beauty, as her soft words fell upon his ears.

Blue, blue clematis blue eyes, fringed in long curly brown lashes set in an absolutely perfect, pinkly white oval face, surrounded by heavy blonde curls. The nose, straight and pert, set above dimpled cheeks and a finely made little chin. Every feature in her face was quite wonderful. However, next to her richly colored eyes, her shapely, deeply pink mouth was perhaps the most beautiful.

Lizzie, the water streaming down her wooden pail, implored, "Sally, Honey, my buckets are full. Don't stay here by this bluff and pick blackberries by yourself. Wait until one of the boys can come back with you. I don't like this place. It feels haunted. They say some Indian woman jumped from the top and killed herself."

“Yes, Lizzie, you goose, that’s why it’s called Lover’s Leap. The Indian maiden killed herself over her slain lover. But I know what you mean, Lizzie. I always feel tense and excited here, like something was about to happen, as though a veil would part, and I could see my destiny. I wonder if the Indian maiden was beautiful. I fancy their dark eyes so.”

“Law! Law! Honey!” exclaimed Lizzie. “You being so bright and fair, just like the sunshine.”

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LOVER’S LEAP

By Nell Quesenbery

Claiborne County Progress

Part Three

Lizzie, still fussing, turned back toward the Royal farm, leaving Sally looking at the large berries, ripely black, hanging in clusters from their sturdy green-leafed briars, which stretched up and around the steep limestone cliff. However, there was a good path ascending to the top.

Now, along with the bemused black eyes, another pair of unblinking eyes were watching Sally as she drew closer. The bail of her cedar pail hung across the crook of her arm as she busily picked the large, juicy berries.

The new unblinking eyes watching were from an age eons older than both Santo’s and Sally’s. These slanted eyes, brightly yellow, were placed deeply within pits that centered a flat triangular head. Unmoving, these eyes watched the girl approach their place of concealed repose.

Sally first felt alarmed upon smelling the sinister scent of cucumbers. Then she saw the cold deadly eyes belonging to the large copperhead. Baring large white fangs, the snake struck while she was bent toward the briar.

Screaming, Sally pulled at the muscular snake that still hung to that part of her body between her shoulder and bosom, pumping his fateful poison into her dainty body.

She felt someone grab her. An Indian sounding an ear-splitting outcry jerked the loathsome snake from her body. Bashing its head against a nearby boulder, he let the lifeless body roll away.

Now, gently laying Sally along the path, Santo spoke softly to the girl, telling her what he must do. Stunned, she nodded her understanding.

Tearing her linen bodice, Santo exposed the deep oozing punctures to his sharply gleaming knife. Quickly he cut deeply into each hole. Then placing his mouth over the cuts, he began to suck until all taste of the poison mixed with blood was gone from his mouth.

Santo unleashed “the black.” Taking Sally’s light body into his arms, he quickly carried her to the top of Indian Bluff (Lover’s Leap). Careful to remove all traces of their trail, he continued toward the back drum of the ridge, where he knew of a cave with several rooms. But, most importantly, there he could find certain roots he would need. He had some dried Seneca and fern root in his pouch. Sally’s labored breathing and the blueness around her lips made Santo feel he would need more roots.

Sally could remember bits of the trip back across the ridge to the cave. She felt the smooth hardness of Santo’s body and dreamily listened to his soft, reassuring words. At times, she stared up into the strength of his powerful black gaze and the chiseled perfection of his face. Something had instantly struck her heart, leaving it quite as groggy as the serpent’s pulsing poison had left her body.

Quickly, he gathered cedar boughs and placed his furs over them for a pallet. Gently, he laid the semi-conscious girl on the soft bed. Building a small fire, he made a soft poultice of his dried roots. He sat aside some of the warm liquid for the girl to drink.

All through the night, he raised her head, pouring the liquid through her chill lips. At dawn, he noticed her lovely mouth was again taking in its deeply pink color. Her brow had remained cool.

Their eyes were bashful as they looked at each other in the dawning light. Yet, when their glances caught, their eyes were full of longings and meanings unknown to them both.

“Are you too weak for me to return you to your people?” asked Santo.

“No. Everyone’s worried. They will be searching for me.”

“Yes, they will find your bucket, the blood and the snake, but they will not know what has happened to you. I covered our trail because I didn’t want anyone to stop my care of you. The bite was dangerously close to your throat. My people have cures the white man does not know.” “My people will be angry because you have me. They may harm you.”

“I will be careful,” said Santo.

It was not far to the bluff from the cave. The full red sun had just lightened the spot where Sally had been bitten. Her father and brothers were there. This is where they had lost all traces of Sally the night before.

Looking to the top edge of the cliff, Sam saw the Indian, drenched by the red brilliance of the sun, astride “the black.” Sally lay lifeless in the savage’s arms. Raising his long gun, he loosened a shot at the Indian, but the shot fell short.

However, John, creeping farther up the path, had a clearer shot at his sister's abductor. Firing his long gun a second after his father's shot, John's ball hit Santo in the fleshy part of his shoulder. He watched the Indian slump and fall off his mount. Oddly, it seemed that the Indian, still holding Sally, was trying to ease her fall. Both the Indian and the white girl were laying dangerously close to the ledge of the giant bluff.

The group below fired a volley of shots. Then, reloading, with powder and ball, they began to advance on the prone Indian, lying on the cliff's edge.

Sally weakly raised her body and, with great effort, both crawling and dragging herself, reached where Santo lay. She covered his body by placing her own full upon his. Santo looked at her, all the love in his soul shining through his strong eyes.

"They are almost here. Get behind cover," he pleaded. "You may be shot."

"What is the bite of a poison snake? What is death compared to my fear of losing you?" she cried. "I must save you!"

"Pap! Pap!" she screamed. "Henry! John! Joe! Don't shoot! Please, don't shoot! If you kill Santo, I'll jump off this bluff, just like the Indian maiden. Honestly, I will."

"Sally! Sally!" Sam hollered. "You're alive. Boys, now your ma and your sisters can quit crying. Sally's alive, thank God!"

"And I guess we'll just have us an 'Injun' to take home and doctor. Come on, Boys, let's carry him down. Easy now."

"The black" nickered softly.

He who is wise at heart sorrows not for the living, nor the dead. The end of birth is death. The end of death is birth.
(From the Bhagavad-Gita)

This story was written for my father, Dennis Marchio, who, during "CCC days" saw Indian Bluff (Lover's Leap) before it was covered by Norris Lake. He was a member of the Civilian Conservation Corps, formed under President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's administration during the 1930s.

Also, Betty Russell Price of Powell Valley, Tennessee, asked me to write about Indians.

While I was writing this story, Mrs. Irene Rose passed away. She was among the first to send me word she enjoyed reading my stories. Her message pleased me.