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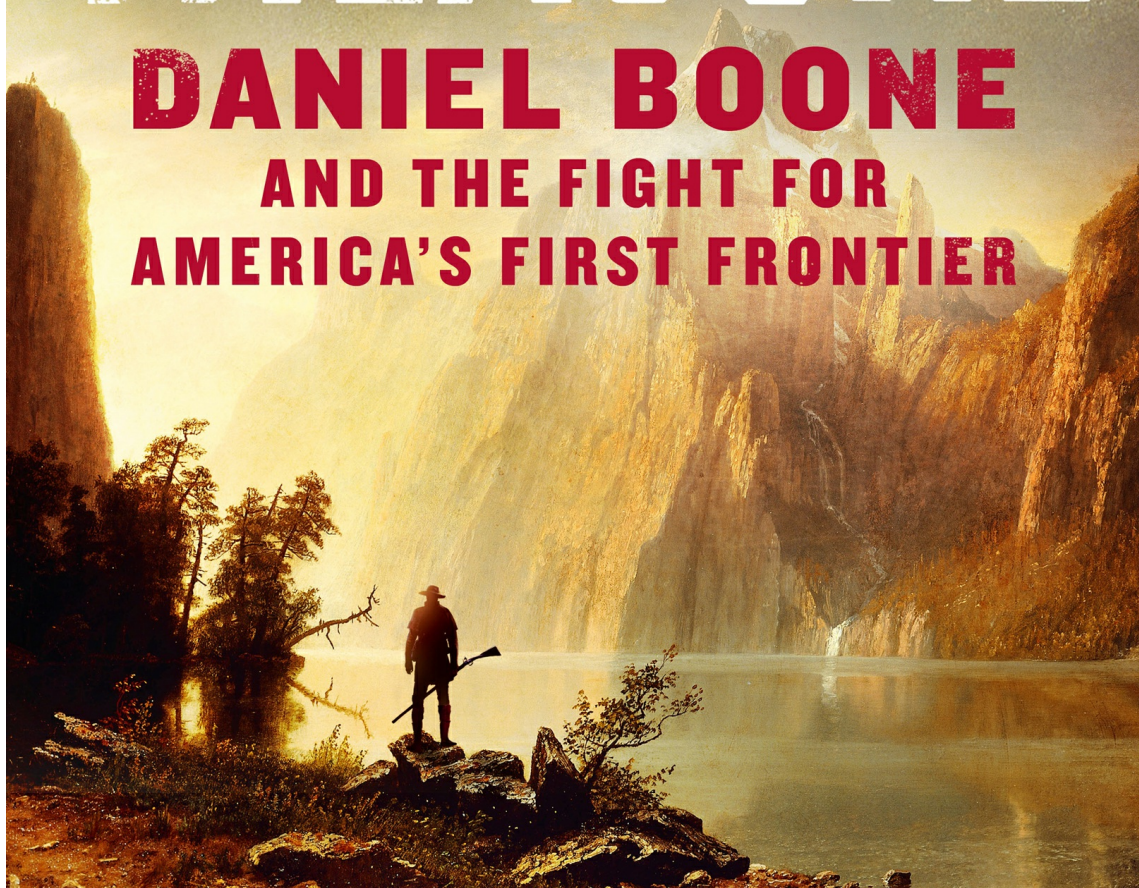
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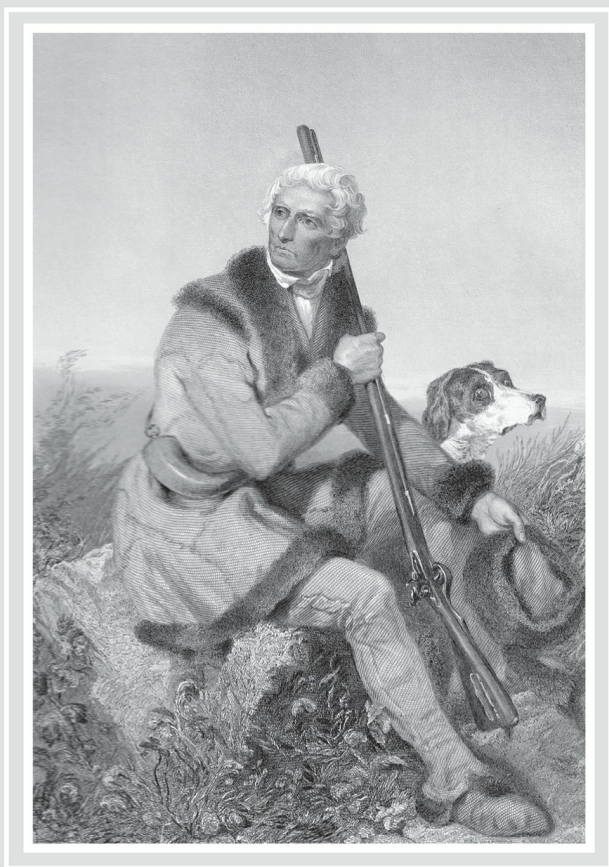
TREASURE

DANIEL BOONE

**AND THE FIGHT FOR
AMERICA'S FIRST FRONTIER**









BLOOD AND TREASURE

*Daniel Boone and the Fight for
America's First Frontier*



BOB DRURY AND TOM CLAVIN



ST. MARTIN'S PRESS
NEW YORK

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To David Joseph Drury, a tougher man than I ...

To Bob Schaeffer, for whom there were no boundaries to friendship

A NOTE TO READERS

The spelling and pronunciation of eighteenth-century Native American names and places was, in the era, notoriously diffuse. To take just one example of many, the Indian nation referred to herein as the Shawnee was variously described by European Americans as the Shawnoe, the Shone, the Chaouenon, the Shawun, and dozens of other appellations. Within the tribe itself, members usually refer to themselves as Shawano, sometimes given as Shawanoe or Shawanese. For narrative's sake, throughout the following text we have endeavored to present readers with the most standardized tribal designations recognized and accepted today.

Further, regarding the term Indian: as two white authors chronicling a historical epoch so crucial to the fate of America's indigenous peoples, we relied on historical context. Indian was not only in common usage during the era we write about, but it is nearly as common today. For a previous book, *The Heart of Everything That Is*, we went to pains to check with our indigenous sources regarding the word. No less a personage than the late Maka Luta Win—who also went by the Anglicized name Mary Ann Red Cloud and was the great-great-granddaughter of the legendary Lakota warrior-chief known to whites as Red Cloud—personally suggested to us that Native American, American Indian, and Indian were all accepted descriptive terms.

Finally, throughout the following text we have presented the quixotic spellings, capitalizations, and punctuation in letters, journals, and military reports from the era precisely as the writers themselves put their words to paper.

Stand at the Cumberland Gap and watch the procession of civilization, marching single file—the buffalo following the trail to the salt springs, the Indian, the fur-trader and hunter, the cattle-raiser, the pioneer farmer—and the frontier has passed by.

—FREDERICK JACKSON TURNER,
The Frontier in American History

PROLOGUE

Daniel Boone was too far away to hear his oldest boy's screams as the tall Indian tore out the sixteen-year-old's fingernails one by one.

James Boone was already bleeding out from a gunshot wound. Now, prostrate on the frozen scree beneath the Cumberland Mountain's shadow line, he begged the Shawnee with the high cheekbones and misshapen chin to just kill him. His persecutor was not moved. Young Boone knew the sullen warrior understood English. His family had often welcomed the Indian, known as Big Jim, into their hearth.

The raiders had sprung the ambush just before daybreak. While James Boone and his seven companions slept beneath rough woolen blankets and buffalo robes, a mixed band of painted Delaware, Cherokee, and Shawnee crept into their camp. It was not much of a fight. The two Mendenall brothers were killed instantly, their scalps lifted with trilling shrieks. Only the evening before, the others had laughed when the young farm boys had been frightened by the howls of a wolf pack.

At the first rifle report the woodsman Crabtree, a veteran Indian fighter, sprang from his bedding and plunged into the thick spinneys of chestnut, oak, and ash on either side of the mountain trail. His rapid reaction saved his life. And one of the two slaves escaped by burrowing unnoticed into a nearby pile of fallen timber. The other, an older black man, was not as spry; his life would end with a tomahawk cleaving his skull.

The youngster named Drake, whom James Boone had only just met, took a ball to his chest yet still found the strength to lurch into the woods; his remains would be discovered months later wedged between two ledges of

rock face less than a mile from the scene.

Both James Boone and the seventeen-year-old Henry Russell had been gutshot, the lead balls lodging in their hips. Incapacitated, fair game.

Several of Russell's fingers were sliced away fending off the scalping knife. His throat was finally slit and his head stove in with a war club. James Boone cried out for the same. He was eventually accommodated, but not before his toenails were also ripped away.

★ ★ ★

It was October 10, 1773, and several miles up the road Daniel Boone was growing impatient. His son James's party should have returned by now. The stolid frontiersman was preparing to pilot the first company of settlers through the Cumberland Gap and into the trackless territory of Kentucky. He was eager to be off.

Boone's company of a half dozen families had made camp the previous morning a mere one hundred miles east of the renowned notch in the Cumberland range. There they had been joined by a troop of several dozen mounted men from Boone's North Carolina community, who had traversed the Blue Ridge by a different route. The plan was for the lone riders to travel with Boone's packhorse caravan into Kentucky, establish farmsteads and plant spring crops, and return to retrieve their wives and children the following summer. A number of Virginia men who had attached themselves to the rough trekkers expected to do the same.

All that remained to set the expedition in motion was his son's return with the additional stores supplied by the enterprise's nominal boss, the Virginia military leader, Captain William Russell. It was to Capt. Russell whom Boone had dispatched James and the teenage John and Richard Mendinall the previous day. James was to inform Russell that he should bring along extra horses and livestock.

It was late afternoon when James Boone had found Russell not far from his homestead on the Clinch River. The captain informed him that he would see what he could do about rounding up more cattle and horses before he and his small troop set out at sunrise the next day. In the meanwhile, Capt. Russell and his son Henry laded an array of packhorses with scythes and

hoses, sacks of flour and seed corn, and bags of salt. At the last moment the elder Russell wrapped a parcel of books in oilskin and jammed them into a crook of his son's saddlebag. Among the tomes was his family Bible. He then instructed Henry, the youth named Drake, and the two black slaves to accompany the Mendinalls and James Boone back to his father's campsite. The local long hunter Isaac Crabtree volunteered to help them manage the small drove of cattle trailing behind.

★ ★ ★

From nearly the first moment European emigrants set foot on the New World's fatal shores, white men and red men had engaged in constant, bloody, and usually one-sided combat. This was not by accident. In 1607 the London directors of the Virginia Company that established the Jamestown Company had for good reason named the soldier of fortune John Smith as one of the expedition's leaders. Similarly, when English pilgrims dropped anchor near Plymouth Rock thirteen years later, they looked to an experienced military officer named Miles Standish for direction.

The wars of conquest that followed had combined with starvation, disease, and societal collapse to result in the extinction of almost 90 percent of North America's pre-Columbian population—an estimated nine million indigenous peoples perished. By the time Daniel Boone and his migrating pioneers were preparing for their journey into Kentucky, Native American tribes from the Canadian border to the Piney Woods of Georgia were being swept from their ancestral lands by the onrushing tide of intruders from across the sea.

In effect, it was a slow-motion genocide for the Hurons and Iroquois in the North; for the Delaware, Shawnee, Wyandot, and Mingoes of the mid-Atlantic; for the Cherokee, Chickasaw, Creek, and Choctaw in the South. In the Floridas the Seminoles were being hunted to extermination by the Spanish, whose conquistadors had taken to unleashing bloodhounds to track them, and vicious Irish wolfhounds to tear them apart. And even the more northwesterly peoples, such as the Ottawas, Chippewa, Miami, Kickapoo, and Sauk and Fox were experiencing the ripple effects of the white infestation in the forms of germ-ridden European goods traveling ancient

trade routes. The violent treatment of North America's Eastern Woodlands tribes forecast the blood trails that would crisscross the prairies of the American West a century later.

For the first European Americans spilling over the Appalachians, the very notion of the ever-shifting and expansive frontier was a "galvanizing vision," as one borderlands observer noted, "a space for reinvention unburdened by society, history, and one's own past." The "tawny serpents" who stood in their way were viewed, as the noted American historian Frederick Jackson Turner had it, as no more than a brutish people temporarily impeding "the procession of civilization."

Conversely, to the continent's indigenous tribes, Turner's "meeting point between savagery and civilization" represented less an intersection of cultures than a deliberate and violent collision. A succession of Cherokee wars had failed to stem the tide, and Pontiac's subsequent rebellion had similarly ended in Native American ignominy.

Yet for a portion of tribal warriors now facing an overwhelming second wave of agents of empire traversing the eastern mountains in the guise of traders, mapmakers, and surveyors with their ubiquitous "rod and chain," it was again time to make a stand. Particularly aggressive nations, such as the Shawnee, stoked the resentful embers among the disparate indigenous peoples up and down North America's eastern timberland.

On that brisk autumn morning of October 1773, the slaying of Daniel Boone's teenage son James and his company so close to the Cumberland Gap was merely the latest casualty in that existential clash.

★ ★ ★

It was on toward noon when Capt. Russell came upon the mutilated bodies splayed across the trail. The horses, cattle, flour, and salt were gone. The Russell family Bible was still packed tight in his son Henry's saddlebags. Henry's corpse, nearly unrecognizable beneath great splotches of brown dried blood, had been poked by a cluster of birchwood arrows, as had James Boone's mangled remains. Their fletchings riffled in the morning breeze.

Russell and his men unpacked shovels and handpicks. They were still breaking the near-frozen ground when Daniel Boone's younger brother

Squire Boone arrived with a party of riflemen. Up the road a camp straggler had already sounded the alarm about Indians prowling the trail, and Daniel had instructed Squire to carry with him several woolen burial sheaths sewn by James's mother, Rebecca. Shrouds for a journey farther than Kentucky. The bodies were wrapped in the coverings before being lowered into the ground.

The assailants had positioned painted hatchets and death mauls in a circle around the slain. It was a well-known show of bravado—and a declaration of war. Squire Boone told Capt. Russell that his brother Daniel was already hewing saplings and shrubs to throw up a defensive barricade. No one could tell precisely how many Indians had taken part in the massacre, nor if they would now set their sights on the larger company of whites up the trail. Their sign indicated they were headed north. But it was not unusual for war parties to feign retreat and circle back. There was nothing to do but prime flintlocks and wait.

PART I

THE FRONTIER

Europeans ... did not conquer wilderness; they conquered Indians. They did not discover America; they invaded it.

—Francis Jennings, *The Founders of America*

A PATIENT PATHFINDER

It was the miniature war club that foretold the boy's future. Young Daniel Boone had crafted it himself Indian-style, grubbing up a maple sapling by the roots and shaving and sanding the rough nubbins while leaving the rounded burl at the killing end. He was almost ten years old when he began carrying the weapon into the deep wilderness to snag birds and small game. Crawling through the clover and peavine that carpeted Pennsylvania's forest floor, he could take down a wild turkey from thirty feet and stun a darting squirrel from more than half that distance. His prey would grow in size and ferocity after his father presented him with a short-barreled fowling piece three years later. Still, it was his hunts with his war club that presaged his role as North America's premier pathfinder.

It was sometime in the mid-1740s when Daniel, not yet a teenager, began to accompany his mother, Sarah; his infant sister, Hannah; and his one-year-old brother, Squire, Jr., to a cleared glade some five miles north of the Boone homestead in the Upper Schuylkill River Valley. There he would work the grazing season from spring to late fall, tending the family's small drove of milk cows fattening on the tall timothy grasses that thrived in the twenty-five-acre meadow.* His mother, meanwhile, spent the days churning butter or at work on her looms in the ramshackle cabin on the edge of the pasturage. The surrounding woods—thick stands of sycamore, oak, and box elder that blanketed what was then America's western borderlands—constituted the poet's "forest dark," filled with untamed beasts moving silently through a

permanent twilight beneath the treetops' proscenium canopy.

Yet in a place where most men's fears were set loose, young Boone was at home. It was within this checkerboard chiaroscuro that he became expert at imitating all manner of birdsong while toting his club along Indian trails and game tracks trod for millennia by deer, bear, elk, and panther.

It was apparent early on that Daniel had inherited his mother's dark coloring. A sketch from his youth depicts a lad with thick, wavy tufts of coal-black hair pushed back off his broad forehead and parted in the middle. His thin Roman nose lent him the corvine appearance of a raven or a crow, and his hollow cheeks, yet to fill in, emphasized a long and tawny neck that seemed to support an outsize head whose blue eyes were the shade of the North Atlantic in winter.

At the summer pasturage Daniel was charged with tending the wandering livestock and bringing them in at dusk for milking in the cow pens. Yet so great was his curiosity about the backcountry's contours and creatures that he would disappear into its depths for prolonged stretches. When his mother chided him for leaving the cattle lying out at night with their udders near to bursting, the boy would apologize and promise that it would never happen again. But his propensity for woodland wanderlust only increased when he was presented with his fowling piece.

The key to the boy's skill as a hunter was his patience, a virtue he would display for the rest of his life. He would spend hours on end studying the habits peculiar to the thousands of white-tailed deer roaming the forest, noting how they were drawn to creeks and rivers at dawn and twilight not only to drink, but to gorge on the tender fountain moss that grew streamside. Trial and error taught him that in the fall months it was easier to steal upon a herd near daybreak, when the dew-moistened fallen leaves would muffle his footsteps. And when he spotted a black bear in late summer or early autumn, instead of shooting it on sight for its meat, oil, and hide, he would instead track it to its masting grounds. There, a sleuth of the creatures would be gathered among flocks of wild turkeys to fatten on acorns, walnuts, blueberries, blackberries, serviceberries, cherries, and crabapples before denning up for the winter. In this way his targets would not only be many, but he marked well the spot to return to the next season.

Thanks to the young Boone, the rafters of the little grazing shack on the edge of the woods—and later, during lean winter seasons, the Boone homestead on the Schuylkill—never wanted for fresh game, jerked meat, and pelts to trade for powder, lead, and flints. It was obvious to all who knew him that Daniel Boone was not cut out for a farmer’s life. You could not plow a furrow with a war club.



A half century earlier, bent over his loom in the Devonshire town of Bradninch in southwest England, it is unlikely that George Boone or his wife, the former Mary Maugridge, imagined that their grandson would one day grow into a mythical figure across the Atlantic. Nor is it probable that George and Mary Boone—who had renounced the Church of England, pledged themselves to the Society of Friends, and hatched a plan to flee across the sea to William Penn’s religiously tolerant colony—would have alighted on the New World’s shores knowing that it virtually teemed with Boones.

As early as 1670 a small band of adventurers that included several Boones set sail from England to plant the first seed of a colony in South Carolina, while in 1704 a Massachusetts census recorded a pamphleteer named Nicholas Boone as the proprietor of a Boston bookshop. There were also the Catholic Boones of French stock—probably originally calling themselves De Bones—who had sailed from the Isle of Wight early in the seventeenth century to settle the American colony dedicated to Saint Mary. Their progeny had since spread from Maryland into New Jersey and Pennsylvania. They were soon joined by a Swedish community of Bondes, who Anglicized their names to Boone upon reaching America and founded a farming settlement along the Delaware River near Philadelphia.

In 1712, Daniel Boone’s grandfather George dispatched his three oldest children—his namesake George III; younger brother, Squire; and their seventeen-year-old sister, Sarah—to explore the possibility of emigrating to Penn’s colony. Upon George’s return to Devonshire a year later—Squire and Sarah remained in America—such were his tales of the opportunities and freedoms of Pennsylvania that his parents soon sold their property and weaving business and sailed from the port of Bristol with their remaining