



by Wallace E. Knight

On July 8, 1755, fury struck the handful of settlers at Draper's Meadows, Virginia. From the surrounding woods painted Shawnee swooped down, firing rifles and waving torches. They killed four persons, looted the cabins, and rounded up the horses. Then

Adapted from an article in the Ashland Oil Log, a publication of Ashland Oil, Inc.

© 1976, 1968, Science Research Associates, Inc. All rights reserved.

## Mary Inglis' Long Walk Home

they set off with four terrified prisoners—Mary Inglis, her two small sons, and her sister-in-law, Bettie Draper.

After many days of travel they reached their destination—an Indian village at the mouth of the Big Scioto River, in what is now Ohio. This place was the Shawnee capital, to which raiding parties returned from all along the frontier.

Mary, Bettie, and the two boys were herded together with other captives. In a few days, however, the group was divided. Bettie and the two boys were left at the Scioto camp. Mary and another group of prisoners, including a tall, stolid Dutchwoman whose name is lost in time, were forced to accompany a party of Indians to a place called Big Bone Lick.

Of all the strange and awesome sights Mary Inglis saw in the wilderness, Big Bone Lick doubtless was the most impressive. It was a place of bubbling salt springs, where animals came to lick at the crystals encrusted around the pools. But it was more than just a salt lick; it was a giant pickling vat that had preserved animals' skeletons through the eons. Jutting out of its salty depths were the bones of ancient mastodons, arctic elephants, peccaries, and giant elk.

Mary, the Dutchwoman, and the other prisoners were put to work boiling water to collect salt. As they worked, Mary began to dream of escape, and she soon found that the Dutchwoman had the same hope.

When the nuts and wild grapes of autumn began to ripen, Mary and the Dutchwoman got permission to go into the woods to pick them. For several days they did just this, but

each time they went a little farther and stayed a little longer. Each somehow obtained a blanket, a knife, and a tomahawk. And finally one day they fled eastward. Although they had no provisions, their hopes were high.

The ordeal the two women faced in the next weeks is impossible to imagine. The Shawnee did not bother to pursue them, believing that they could never survive in the wilderness.

They ate berries, grapes, raw mussels, papaws—whatever they were lucky enough to find. Once they came upon a deer's head tossed away by an Indian hunter, and made a welcome meal of it. Their moccasins wore through and their clothing became rags, but they pressed eastward, following the Ohio River.

A special problem faced them every time they came to a stream entering the river. Since they could not swim, they had to walk upstream until they found a shallow crossing, then walk back down to the Ohio.

Hunger was bearable, but as winter approached Mary realized that both starvation and freezing would become real threats. To make matters worse, the Dutchwoman was becoming so angry and irrational that Mary was actually afraid of her. Once the woman even threatened to kill her. But Mary decided to try to endure, for at last they had entered New River Gorge. Civilization was near.

The emaciated, weary women had traveled together for almost forty days. They had walked at least fifteen miles a day, often much more. And now, just a few miles from safety, the Dutchwoman's mind snapped completely. One evening she attacked Mary and

tried to choke her. Finally Mary managed to tear away, outrun the old woman, and hide beneath the riverbank.

Soon, by moonlight, she was able to walk on. And then, amazingly, she found an old, dirt-filled Indian canoe beside the water. She dug it out and, using a splintered limb for a paddle, managed to cross the river. There she came upon an unused hunter's cabin, where she spent the night.

In the morning the Dutchwoman spotted her and began screeching, begging Mary to return and promising to behave. But Mary, fearing for her life, decided to keep the river between them.

And finally came the last ordeal. She reached a part of the river bordered by cliffs as high as 280 feet. She knew there were settlements nearby and that she must leave the gorge to find one. And so she began to climb. She clawed her way up foot by foot until she finally reached a clearing at the top. There she called out—and was heard. And, miracle of miracles, the man who answered was Adam Harman, a former neighbor from Draper's Meadows!

The Harmans fed and cared for Mary,

and as soon as she could travel again they took her to a nearby fort. There followed another miracle: on the morning after her arrival her husband and his brother turned up. They had been visiting the Cherokee, trying to persuade them to intercede with the Shawnee for the ransom of the prisoners. The reunion after five bitter months was both joyous and tearful, for the parents' thoughts were with their still-captive children.

Their older son, Thomas, spent thirteen years with the Indians. He finally returned reluctantly, having forgotten white men's ways. George, two years younger, had died a few weeks after Mary was taken from the Scioto camp. Mary's sister-in-law, Bettie Draper, was ransomed from the Shawnee in 1761. (The old Dutchwoman, incidentally, was located later and taken to the fort—after which history mentions her no more.)

Mary and her husband William made a new home in Virginia. They had three daughters and another son in the years that followed. William died in 1782, aged fifty-three. And intrepid, unconquerable Mary lived in good health among her large family until her death in 1815 at the age of eighty-three.

## CHECK YOUR READING

- In their raid on Draper's Meadows, the Shawnee captured**
  - four persons
  - five persons
  - six persons
- Big Bone Lick got its name from the fact that**
  - it contained ancient skeletons
  - animals came to lick at its pools
  - Both A and B
- At Big Bone Lick the prisoners were put to work**
  - pickling meat
  - making salt
  - carving tools
- Mary and the Dutchwoman made several trips into the woods to**
  - pick nuts and fruit
  - collect moss and branches
  - hunt birds and rabbits
- The women had to travel many extra miles because they**
  - had to avoid Indian villages
  - had no map
  - could not swim
- After the Dutchwoman's mind snapped, she tried to**
  - drown Mary
  - starve Mary
  - choke Mary
- Mary escaped across the river by using**
  - an Indian canoe
  - a homemade raft
  - Neither A nor B
- The first man Mary met after leaving the gorge was a**
  - distant relative
  - friendly Indian
  - former neighbor
- Mary was eventually reunited with**
  - both of her sons
  - one of her sons
  - neither of her sons
- Bettie Draper was eventually**
  - put to death by the Indians
  - ransomed from the Indians
  - persuaded to become an Indian

© 1976, 1968, Science Research Associates, Inc. All rights reserved.