



*The Narrative*

*of*

**Col. John Ingles**

**c. 1824**

Transcription of the portion of the MS

(Pages 1-13)

relating to

**Mary Ingles**

and the

**Escape**

from

**Big Bone Lick**

*Transcribed by*

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**Boone County Public Library**

**Burlington, Kentucky**

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## Introduction

The story of Mary Ingles is the most inspiring of all the great mass of Indian captivity stories, some of them published early, and in many editions, which have come down to us. During Mary's lifetime her story did not have a wide circulation outside of the area where she lived. The first publication for general circulation that I can find is in *The Southern Literary Messenger* (Vol. 19, 1853), the well-known Virginia-based magazine once edited by Edgar Allan Poe. The manuscript, of which this is a transcription, was written by Mary's son, Col. John Ingles, about 1824, at the encouragement of Thomas Ingles, Jr., and is based on his memories of the many accounts he had heard from his father, William, and older family members, but particularly from his mother, Mary, who delighted to tell the story as she grew older. It is primarily this manuscript that has kept her journey from entering the twilight of myth and legend (though myths and legends have become associated with the story), and escaping the realm of history.

The manuscript written by John Ingles is quite difficult to read. It is not merely the handwriting, which follows conventions of that day, but also the fact that there is almost no punctuation, and no paragraph breaks. He has, however, a nice narrative style — he must have been an interesting person to listen to. He constantly connects his phrases, as many of us do in speech, with *and*, the word that makes narrative possible. Virtually everything he says falls into “periods”, or phrases, and by following these closely, and inserting punctuation where it would fall most naturally (and expanding the abbreviations and updating the spelling) it can be read easily. Semi-colons have often been used where we would use a period, because the word *and* follows, beginning a phrase that cannot stand by itself, and the goal was to leave his actual words alone.

The punctuation (like anything added to someone else's account), is an interpretation of what Col. Ingles wrote; but it is possible to make the account flow and make sense (even if a bit stilted in places), without changing a single word of the text. There are only one or two places where the sense is ambiguous enough that I cannot be sure which of two possibilities is actually correct. The difference, in these places, is so minor that I do not think any essential wrong been done to the document. I have also created paragraphs, as I thought best, out of what is a single continuous dialogue.

The University of Virginia has given permission to publish a copy of the actual manuscript with this transcription, and so it is possible for the reader, rather than to rely on my judgment, to check any reading for himself and decide what the proper punctuation (and interpretation) should be. I would particularly like to thank Heather Moore Riser, Head of Public Services, at the Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, for making this publication possible.

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Transcription of the MS of

## The Narrative of Col. John Ingles

c. 1824

### *Prologue*

**[Page 1]** At the repeated solicitations of my relations and friends, of which letters in my possession are sufficient evidence, I have consented to write the following short history. The application has been made to me as I am the only branch of my father's family now in existence, who knows of the difficulties and sufferings my father's own family had to undergo at that early day, in attempting to settle this western world. Though the greater part of the transactions to which allusion is made happened long before I was born, yet having heard them so frequently repeated by my father and mother in my early days, they made such deep and lasting impressions on my youthful mind, that they will never be forgotten by me as long as I live; and I believe are as fresh in my memory at this day as they ever was. I will therefore endeavor to give a short, but correct, narrative of the scenes through which they had to pass in their first settling on the western waters of Virginia, so far as my recollection serves me at this time; that a record of them may be preserved for the gratification of our friends and rising generation. However fabulous or romantic the narrative may appear in some of its parts to many persons, they are stubborn facts that could have been abundantly established by many witnesses at an early day, it being required.

*John Ingles, Sr.*

## The Narrative of Col. John Ingles

[Page 2] My father William Ingles moved to the Western part of Virginia sometime about the year 1750, with my Grandfather, George Draper, his father-in-law and his family, and settled nearly on the top of the Alleghany mountains, at a place then called Drapers Meadows, now called Smithfield, and at this time owned by Col. James Preston. At that time there was but few families of any, besides their own, on the west side of the Alleghany in this section of country. However, other families shortly after immigrated to it, and made scattering settlements at some distance from each other, and continued to enjoy peace and harmony among them for three or four years.

In the mean time, there had been several parties of the northern Indians, to wit, the Shawnees, passed by where my Grandfather lived, on their way to the south, and would commit depredations on the Catawba Indians, but was still friendly to the whites at that time. However, this happy state of things did not last long. The Indians found out that they could gratify their heathen thirst for bloodshed and plunder much nearer home, and at length commenced a warfare on the frontier settlements; and, at a time it was little expected, a party of Shawnees fell in upon my fathers family, and on uncle's family, John Draper, which lived at the same, and killed several, and took the balance prisoners; to wit, my mother and her two children, Thomas and George, and Aunt Draper, and others. My grandmother Draper, being a widow at that time, and living with my father, was killed, as was Col. Patten, who was there, who had a large Claim of land on the Western Waters, was killed also, and some other persons not recorded. My mother and her two children Thomas, the older, 4 years old, George, about 2 years old,

was taken as prisoners; also my Aunt Draper, who was wounded in her arm, and broken by a ball, which was shot at her in attempting to escape, and several others.

It so happened they made the attack on their harvest day, and although there were several men at the place, the Indians took the advantage of attacking the house while the men was at their work in the harvest field, and the field being some distance from the house, knew nothing of the attack, until it was entirely out of [Page 3] their power to render any service to the family.

My father, hearing the alarm, run up very near to the house, thinking perhaps he might render some service in some way, although entirely unarmed. The Indians, discovering him, two stout, active Indians took after him with their tomahawks, expecting to out run him, and kill him with the tomahawks; and was very near affecting their purpose, and nothing but a Providential act saved him. While the Indians were pursuing him, and gaining on him very fast, one on each side, at some distance, running through the woods where it was a little thick with brush and under growth; fortunately, in jumping over a log, fell. The Indians, being so eager in pursuit, overran him. My father, on rising, immediately tacked back the other way, and by that means made his escape. As there was no chance for what white men that was there to render any relief to the prisoners, the Indians securing all the guns they had, which was in the house, & so few settlers in the country, and them so fare distant apart, that they had to abandon all idea of any further pursuit after them.

The Indians went effectively unmolested. They gathered up the prisoners and plunder and started, and steered their course down the New River. They made but slow progress in getting on, as their way was much impeded by the thickness of the forests and under growth, which covered the whole country. However, on

striking New River they pursued on down it. The Indians having several horses along packed with their plunder, which they had taken, and the prisoners, met with considerable difficulty in getting on, and the prisoners very roughly treated.

However, from some cause, my mother said that they always treated her with more respect than any of the other prisoners, and permitted her to ride on one of the horses for the greater part of the road, and to carry her children. Though my Aunt Draper, who had her arm broke, was principally put under her care; and my mother had to dress her wound, and to procure stuff to dress it, and would frequently send her off by herself into the woods to hunt the wild comphrey to put to the broken arm, and would be gone a considerable time, and said she might had frequent opportunities of leaving them, but could not think **[Page 4]** of leaving her children, still harbouring a hope that they might be pursued, or they might be all released together in some way or other.

They still worked on in this way until they got down some little distance above the mouth of the great Kanawha. They came to a little salt spring in the bank of the river. The Indians stopped there, and rested for a day or two there, and with what kettles they had with them, boiled and made some salt. They then started on from there, and pursued their journey until they got to the nation, where the Indians lived, which was at the mouth of the Big Scioto, and which took them about one month to perform, from the time they ware taken, until they arrived at the nation.

The next day after they got to the nation, the prisoners had to undergo the Indian custom of running the gauntlet, which was performed by forming a two lines of all the Indians in the nation, men, women, and children, and the prisoners to start at the head of the two rows formed, and run down between the lines, and

every Indian giving them a cut or a pelt with switch sticks, or such things as they could provide; which was a very severe operation, and especially on my Aunt Draper, whose arm had not got near well from the wound she had received when she was taken prisoner. However, my mother said she was excused from that punishment, and although she was treated with considerable [dig]nity more than the other prisoners met with, all the comfort left her was the [hop]es that she might keep her two children with her, and to render them such service as occasion might need. However, a few days baffled all her hopes.

The Indian party collected in a few days after who took the prisoners, and made a division of all the prisoners, and her children taken way from her, and consigned to different owners, and was not permitted to associate together at all. Though trying as this circumstance was to her, she was obliged to bear it, and she wore on under her affliction in the best way she could.

It so happened that there was some French traders there from [Detroit] with some goods, trading with the Indians, and as linen or check shirts was great articles among the Indians, and as my mother was a very good sewer, she undertook to make some shirts for the traders, at times when she was not employed other ways. **[Page 5]** And as shirts was a scarce article among the Indians, and one very much prized among them as a dress, her permanence pleased them, so that they would do anything for her to get a shirt made. And the Frenchmen, finding it a considerable advantage to them in selling their check and linen to the Indians, encouraged her very much; and when she made a shirt for one of the Indians they would stick it upon a stick and run all through the town to show it, and praise my mother what a fine squaw she was. Then the Frenchmen would make the Indian go to their store and pay her in goods to at least twice the value of the shirt. She continued on,

making shirts for them in this way, while she stayed in this town, which was two or three weeks, and was making money very fast.

At about that time a party of the Indians started to the Big Bone Lick, which is now in the state of Kentucky; and took my mother, and several other of the prisoners, to make salt. My mother, being so distressed in being separated from her children, and her situation such a disagreeable one, that she came to the determined resolution that she would leave them and try to get home, or die in the woods; and prevailed on an old Dutch woman that was there, and a prisoner too, to engage with her in the seemingly hopeless and daring attempt. And, as my mother was determined to make the attempt, they arranged their plan, which was to get leave of the Indians to go out a piece from the Lick, with a view to hunt and gather some grapes, and provided themselves with a blanket and tomahawk apiece, and perhaps a knife. And for fear of being suspected took no other kind of clothing, only what was on them, and those a good deal worn, and started. And as the Big Bone lick was ninety or a hundred miles farther off than the [town<sup>?</sup>], and some little distance from the Ohio River, they started in the after part of the day, and steered their course to strike the Ohio River, which was all the guide they had to direct them.

I have frequently heard my mother say when she left the lick, that she exchanged her tomahawk with one of three Frenchmen, who was all setting on one of the large bones that was there, a-cracking walnuts. At night, the two women not returning, the Indians became very uneasy, thinking they had got a little off from the camp, and were lost; and used every exertion to find them, not mistrusting them off. And when they could not find them, concluded they had perished in the woods, or been killed by some wild beast.

This last circumstance was related to my father by some of the Indians who attended the treaty at Point Pleasant, after the Battle at the Point; [Page 6] and was the first time the Indians had heard what had become of my mother and old Dutch woman.

However, on their getting to the river, pursued on up it, and in the course of four or five days, reached the Indian town, or rather on the opposite side of the Ohio river, where there was a little corn raised, and a cabin.

They lay in the cabin all night, and there was in the cabin some corn. They ate of it, and in the morning, when they were about starting, there happened to be a horse beast in the lot adjoining the cabin. They concluded to take it, and pack on it what corn they could to help them along. They did so and then started in again, with the beast and corn, and steering on up the river, and in sight of the Indian town; and what was very extraordinary, they saw several Indian hunters that day, and they so secreted themselves that they never discovered them.

There was a little river emptied into the Ohio, (to wit) Licking River, on the side they were, and was too deep for them to wade. All their chance was to travel up it until they could find a passage, and after travelling up Licking two or three days, found a place where the freshets had drifted up timber across, that afforded themselves a passage; but, how to get their beast over, was at a loss. At length, the old Dutch woman insisted she could take it over on the drift pile, and made the attempt; but after getting it on a piece the beast fell in among the logs, and there they had to leave it. They then took what corn they could carry themselves, then moved down until they struck the Ohio again, and then pursued on up the Ohio.

And thus was the course they had to pursue at every stream of water that came in their way of any size, and which there was several; and they could never

have surmounted that difficulty had it not been at a season of the year when the water courses was very low, and more so than common at the season; even in this case was obliged to travel several days journey at several of them before they could wade them, and then down again to the Ohio, which was their only guide.

They frequently in passing up and down those streams to find a passage, when they found the river made a bend and point of ridges making in, would attempt to cross those points of ridges to shorten their distance. And by being worn down by failure, and starvation, would have to pull themselves up by the *saubs* [shrubs<sup>?</sup>] and bushes, till they got to the top, and to descend, they would slide all the way down. Under these difficulties, having nothing to sustain nature, but what they picked up in the woods, such as black walnuts, grapes, pawpaws, &c., and very often so pushed with hunger, that they would dig up roots and eat that they [Page 7] knew nothing of.

And in all this extremity the Old Dutch woman, getting disheartened and discouraged, got very ill natured to my mother, and made some attempts to kill her, blaming my mother for persuading her away, and that they would die in the woods. And as she was a good deal stouter and stronger than my mother, she used every means to try to please the old woman, and keep her in a good humor; and at length got to the mouth of the great Kanawha, and then had performed but very little more than one half of their journey.

However, they persevered on up the Kanawha in the same manner as they did the Ohio, until they got within forty or fifty miles of where my mother was taken prisoner from. And the old woman became more ill natured, and made another attempt to kill my mother; and she thinks would have affected it had she

not, by accident, got loose from the old woman and, — being somewhat more active — and out run her.

This happened in the evening just before dusk. My mother, in making her escape, slipped under the river bank, and hid herself until after dark. And hearing nothing more of the old woman, she crossed out, and in looking about — the moon giving a little light — espied a canoe at the bank of the river; which was the same the Indians had taken them across on their way down; on examining the canoe, found it pretty much filled up with leaves and dirt which had blown unto it, but could not find a pole or paddle in it .

She, crawling up on the bank, luckily came across a thin slab which came off of a tree which had been blown down, and shattered by the wind. She took the slab and went to the canoe, and cleaned out the leaves and dirt; then pushed off the canoe from the bank and got in it; and, although she never had any knowledge of steering or working a canoe before, after making several trials, found she could steer her on, and finally crossed the river to the other side, it being at a place where some hunters had made a little Improvement and built a cabin the spring before, and had planted some corn. But the buffalos and wild beasts had destroyed all the corn.

However my mother got into the cabin and slept; in the morning, when she got out in the morning, was examining about the little corn patch to find some corn, or something she could eat, discovered a little turnip or two which had escaped the wild beasts. She pulled them and ate.

**[Page 8]** And at that time the old woman, who was on the opposite side of the river, saw my mother and hallowed to her, and begged very hard of my mother to come over to her again, that she would not do her any harm. However loath as

my mother was to leave her, after reflecting on how the old woman had treated her, she thought perhaps the old woman might kill her, and concluded that as she was out of her reach she had best keep so. And from the hunters, who had made the settlement where she was before she was taken, had gathered some idea of the distance she still had to perform, and that the balance of the way she would have to travel was a very rough one, and although the little clothing which she had started with, was nearly or entirely worn out, or dragged off of her by the brush, on her long journey, and her moccasins entirely worn out, that she had become utterly naked; and the weather growing cooler, that her prospect of succeeding was almost a *hepeless* one.

However, her resolution bore her up, and she pursued on. And to add to her difficulty, there fell a little snow; and all the chance she had for keeping herself from perishing at night was to hunt out in the evening a hollow log or tree, and gather leaves and put in it, and then crawl in amongst the leaves and lie. And after pursuing on in this manner for four or five days after leaving the old woman, travelling through the frost, and wading waters and round cliffs of rocks that made in close to the river, she became so frosted, and her limbs so swelled, that it would have been impossible she could have got any farther, but that kind Providence — which had sustained her through a journey, estimated not less than from seven to nine hundred miles, the route which she was necessarily obliged to travel, exposed to the inclemency of the weather, and ferocity of wild beasts, hunger, and starvation, for forty two days and a half in an unknown wilderness — still provided for her relief.

It so happened that a man of the name of Adam Harman, and two of his sons, was at a place on New River, where they had settled and raised some corn

that summer, securing their corn, and hunting. When my mother got to the improvement; not seeing any house, began to hallow.

Harman, on hearing the voice of a woman, was a [Page 9] good deal alarmed. On listening, being an old neighbour of my mother, and well acquainted with her voice, said to his sons it certainly was Mary Ingles voice; and, knowing that she was taken prisoner by the Indians, was suspicious there might be Indians with her.

Him and his sons caught up their guns and run on to where my mother was, and you may expect it was a joyful meeting, especially to my mother. However, they got her on to their cabin, entirely exhausted, and worn out, by her exposure and starvation. Harman, having plenty of fresh venison and bear meat, began to have some cooked for her; and having a pretty good knowledge of her situation, would not suffer her to eat more than a few mouthfuls at a time, and by change her victuals in different forms and soups<sup>?</sup>, giving her but a little at a time, to nourish her up.

My mother said although Harman had ever so much fresh venison and bear meat in the house, that he did, on the next morning, have a fine fat little Beef killed, to make beef soup for her. And by bathing her feet and legs, got her, in a day or two, that she could travel; having several horses there, got them fixed, and one for her to ride, brought her on up to the Dunkert Bottom, where the fort was, and the only one near; and where all the people that were in the country had collected.

Thus ended her trials and difficulties of nearly five months from the time she was taken prisoner. And forty two and a half days of that time when returning back in the wilderness. When my mother fell in with Harman, related to him the

circumstances of leaving the old woman behind, and what had transpired, and tried to prevail on him to send his sons in pursuit of her; but from understanding the treatment which she had received from the old woman, he refused to go.

However, the old woman was more lucky than my mother was. A little above where my mother left her the old woman fell in at another place, where some hunters had made a settlement and built a cabin. The hunters had but just left the place and had left a kettle nearly full of cooked venison and bear meat, that [the old <sup>?</sup>] woman feasted on it, and rested herself for a day or two. The hunters had also [Page 10] left a pair of leather small clothes which she also got and drew on, and in addition had left an old horse. Providence seemed to provide for her.

The old lady, getting some of what is called leatherwood bark, and making a kind of bridle or halter, and caught the old horse, and mounted him, and pursued on her journey. But there is one circumstance, which occurred, which may seem strange. At the time they stole the horse at the nation, to bring off their corn, the beast had on a bell, and when they were obliged to leave the beast in the drift pile, the old Dutch woman took off the bell, and brought it the whole trip through all her extremity and distresses. However, when my mother got up to the fort she prevailed on some of the men to go in pursuit of the old woman; and, after traveling fifteen or twenty miles down New River, met the old woman riding a leg aside on her old horse, with the bell on him open, and every once in a while would hallow, that she might be discovered, in case any person might be near. However, the men took her on up to the fort, where my mother was, and it was certainly a joyful meeting; where they were relieved of all their toils and difficulties.

At the time my mother got back my Father, and uncle John Draper, had been gone sometime to the Cherokee nation of Indians, with a view to get some of them

to go to the Shawnees and to try to purchase their wives and children; or to try to procure their release in some way or other, those two tribes being at peace with other. And thinking this plan might be the most favourable one they could devise, and on the very night after my mother returned to the fort at the Dunkert Bottom, my Father and uncle Draper lay within about seven miles of the fort on their return. And you may guess what was the sensation and feeling of my father and mother at his arriving at the fort the next day, at so unexpected meeting.

(My aunt Draper did not get released until about 6 years afterwards. The circumstances of her release is not recollected.)

However, my father and mother continued at the Dunkert Bottom until the next spring. And as the settlers in this country was likely to be harassed by the Indians again that s[eason] my mother became very restless and uneasy, and could not be reconciled to stay there. **[Page 11]** My Father, to gratify her, moved her about twenty miles to another fort, called Vauses Fort, on the Head of Roanoke, where their was more families collected, and a much stronger fort; and more men to guard it. But as the Indians was making depredations on the frontiers, she still could not rest reconciled the stay there.

My father then moved her down into Bedford County, below the Blue Ridge, and in the course of that Fall there was a strong party of French and Indians came on to Vauses fort, attacked it, and finally took the fort, and killed and captured all the families that was there. And, had it not been through the direction of a kind Providence that my mother had gone from this fort, she would have fallen into their savage hands again, and would have been killed or taken prisoner the second time.

There was some circumstances, which I have frequently heard my father relate, as respects two uncles of his, and their families, which was at the fort when it was taken: To wit, John and Mathew Ingles. The former, being out from the fort when it was attacked, hearing the firing of the guns, made towards the fort as fast as he could; and on coming in sight, found the fort entirely surrounded by the Indians, his family being in the fort, made an attempt to rush through the Indians to get to his family; but the Indians, discovering him aiming for the fort, got around him, he still rushing on with his gun in his hand, until they closed in so near that he shot his gun off at them. They then closed in on him, still beating them off with his gun, until he broke it all to pieces, and then with the barrel, until he got very near to the fort, before they overpowered and killed him.

The other brother, Mathew, was taken prisoner, and after the Indians had started to move off with their plunder and prisoners, after getting on some little distance, they all stopped to arrange some of their fixings. This Mathew Ingles, not being confined, some of the Indians offended him in some way. Being a stout, strong man, there happened to be a frying pan lying near where he was, he caught hold on the pan, put his [Page 12] foot in the bowl of the pan, and wrung off the handle, and fell to work on the Indians, and knocked them down where ever he could get in reach of them; until they overpowered him, and got the pan handle from him. This bold daring attempt pleased the Indians so well that they treated him with more respect than any of the other prisoners while ever he was with them. And he got released some years after, and returned to the country again

My Father and mother continued to live in Bedford County for several years. In the mean time the settlers was still moving to the Western Waters, and extending the settlements to a considerable extent west of New river. My father returned to New River with his family, and got himself settled again. Although the

Indians still was harassing the frontier every season for many years after his return, his family escaped their depredations. Although the families in the neighborhood was obliged almost every season to collect in forts, and there was one at his own house, where there was a good many collected every year.

At one time there was a party of Indians, about eight or ten, passed by New River settlements, and being no settlement until they got below the Blue Ridge, on the Head of Smith's River, they there killed and destroyed a family or two, and stole several horses to bring off their plunder that they had taken, and also a woman and two or three children prisoners; and on their way back had camped within six or seven miles of my father's fort, to rest a day, at a place where there had been a settlement and a house built. It so happened that one of the men from the fort went out the day the Indians was there on the hunt of some of their horses, and happened to discover the Indians.

He returned immediately to the fort, and gave the alarm. There being several men at the place, my father raised fifteen or eighteen men immediately, and pursued to attack them, though it being too late in the day before the company could start, to get where the Indians was, to attack them that evening, were detained until some time in the morning of the next day before **[Page 13]** my father and the men got to the place where the Indians had camped; and the Indians had started from the place. However, they took their trail and followed on.

The Indians had not gone more than a half a mile, till they stopped, and had kindled a fire, and was cooking their breakfast. They, not suspecting any danger, was entirely off their guard. My fathers party crawled up tolerable near, and fired on them before they knew any thing of them. However, they flew to their guns, and made every resistance they could, to save themselves and their property; but,

being overpowered by the white men, those that escaped being killed, run off, leaving all they had behind.

There was six or seven Indians killed, and they got several horses, which was packed, and the woman and children that was prisoners. There was one of the white men killed; this being the first and only defeat which the Indians ever met with in this section of Country, and from that time never ventured so far through the settlements again. The immigration to the West relieved the settlers about New River in a great measure of their harassed situation, and at length enjoyed peace and prosperity.

My father and mother *lived* and raised a small family of five Children: two sons and three daughters, who sustained as respectable characters as any in the whole country. My Father died in the year 1782, at the age of 53 years. My mother still continued to live on New River, and enjoyed an extraordinary portion of good health, after all her trials and difficulties, until the year 1815; and died at the advanced age of 83 or 84 years of age.