

Early Documents

relating to

Mary Ingles

and the

Escape

from

Big Bone Lick

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Boone County Public Library

Burlington, Kentucky

2008

Documents Relating to Mary Ingles  
*from the*  
New York *Mercury*, 1756

transcribed by

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The following extracts from the New York *Mercury* are early sources for the story of Mary Ingles and her travelling companion, the German woman whose name is unknown. The first article is important as it is the first published notice of the journey, and is dated in the year in which the event occurred. Because of the time it took news to travel we can be certain that Mary reached home some time before 20 December. Note that there are discrepancies between these accounts, which we should expect, considering the nature of newspapers. The first two accounts say the journey took forty days, which is approximately correct, and can easily be reconciled with the forty-two and a half recorded in the Ingles Narrative. The third article, dated in March 1756, from Ft. Cumberland, Virginia, says fourteen days, which can be explained as a correction made after the story became current. Forty days seemed to be incredibly long, Draper's Meadows was an easy ten day walk from Lower Shawnee Town, so it was "corrected", after any number of retellings, to two weeks, which made more sense. This account is evidence that Mary's journey was interesting news on the frontier, and months after her return it was being retold and discussed. The second account, the longest, is as near as we are ever likely to get to the event. It was recorded from information given "By a Traveller who lately came from New River in Virginia". This account, though given at second-hand, is of great interest, and it is even possible that this traveller had seen Mary Ingles. It records the struggle between the two women, remarking on the early interpretation of the affair, that the woman attacked her "in order, as it was supposed, to eat her". It also records at some length that they secured meat from a deer carcass, probably in the second half of their journey.

New York *Mercury* Mon 26 Jan 1756, p. 3 col. 1.

Philadelphia 1755 December 20 - "Two of the Women that were taken Prisoners from New River, are come back, who say, they were 40 Days in coming in, and they had lived all that Time on Grapes and Nuts."

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New York *Mercury* Mon 16 Feb 1756, p. 2, cols. 2-3.

“By a Traveller who lately came from New River in Virginia, we learn, that two Women were return’d, who had been taken Prisoners the beginning of last Summer by the Shawanese, and carried to one of their Towns, where there was a considerable Number of English Prisoners, who have been taken Captives from the Frontiers of Virginia. That when their Warriors arrive within half a Mile of their Towns, it is their custom to whip those who have been so unfortunate as to fall into their Hands, all the Remainder of the Way till they get to the Town, and that it was in this Manner our poor unhappy Neighbors from Virginia had been treated by them. They afterwards used them as well as could be expected from Persons of their Savage Disposition. Thus they suffered some of the Men to go out a Hunting, and let them have three Charges of Ammunition, but would allow them no more, for fear of their returning back to the English. That Capt. Stahllicker who was carried Captive from Holston River, and supposed to be kill’d, was still a Prisoner among them, and was in Health.

“The two Women above mentioned was carried by some Indian Hunters, about 100 Miles from their Town to attend them as Servants, to dress their Victuals, and stretch the Skins they might procure, and as the Indians left them in the Day, while they went to Hunt, and did not return ‘till the Evening, their absence gave the Women an Oppourtunity to make their Escape, which they effected with great Difficulty and Danger. They knew of no Way of returning Home, without passing by the Indian Town, and if they were discover’d they fear’d Death would be their Portion, to prevent which they lodged a Night in the Corn Fields near the Town, and arose in the Morning very early, before the Indians were up, by which means they escaped without being seen. But after they had travelled for some Time up New River, they to their Surprise, found themselves got very near an Indian before they saw him, but as he was busy in skinning a Deer, he did not see them, till they hid themselves behind a Log, towards which the Indian’s Dog kept a continual barking, which frightened the Indian as well as the Women, and having dispatch’d the skinning of his Deer, with as much speed as possible, he made off, leaving the Carcase behind him, which afterwards afforded an agreeable Repast to the starving Travellers, and after having satiated their Hunger, took as

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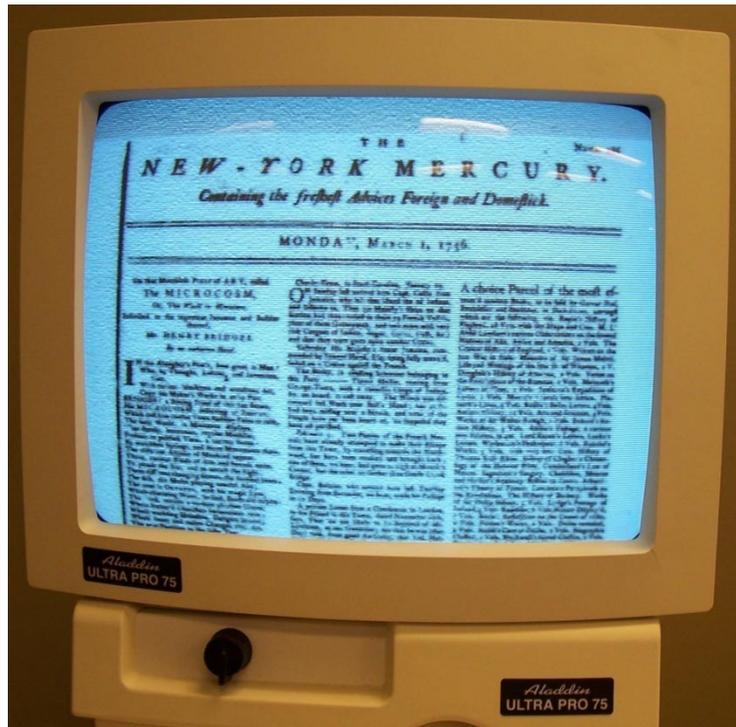
much of the Meat along as they could carry, and pursued their Journey, making the River their Guide, and feeding on Grapes and Nuts for their Support. Having travel'd 'till they were almost famished with Hunger, the Dutch woman attempted to kill her English fellow Traveller, in order, as it was supposed to Eat her; but the English Woman after a fierce struggle, released herself out of the Hands of her, more than Savage Enemy, and fled away as fast as the feeble Remains of her Strength would permit, and after travelling 40 Days from the Time of her leaving the Indians, she arrived safe among the English inhabitants, several Days before her barbarous Companion, and had the Happiness to meet her Husband in Health. The Indians when they first carried these two Women away, with other Prisoners, were Ten Days on their Journey to their Town, at which they had Plenty of Provision, with many fine Fields of Corn, and their Country consists of Immense Tracts of the best Land in the World. A considerable of Number of Families who had fled from their Habitations at New River, on account of the Indians, are now return'd to a Place called the Dunkers bottom, in that River, where they are settled in a Body, and have a large Fort well mann'd."

New York *Mercury* Mon 1 Mar 1756, p. 2, col. 3.

"In a letter from Fort Cumberland, dated the Fifteenth Instant, there is Advice, that two considerable Bodies of French Indians have been lately down there, and had picked up several of the Men belonging to the Fort; but that the Commanding Officer there had detached Parties immediately in Pursuit of them, which obliged them to retreat precipitately, and thereby prevented their getting among the Inhabitants.

"It is farther added, that one Mrs. Inglis, who was taken Prisoner by the Shawanese when Col. Paton was killed, had made a wonderful Escape from the Lower Shanoe Town, and that she was fourteen Days in the Woods on her Way home, was naked all the Time, and lived on Chestnuts, &c. The Particulars of what Discoveries she made while among them, was not then come to Hand."

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Reading the News in 1756.

I have transcribed these articles directly from the New York *Mercury*, which has been photographed and is available in microscript on “Micro-opaque” cards. I was able to enlarge the text with a visual reader and transcribe the articles which mention the journey. I have made no changes in spelling or punctuation. I have even transcribed the long s, though it occurs in these articles only in the word “Prifoners”. These extracts have been published in several places, the best version being *French and Indian War Notices Abstracted from Colonial Newspapers*. Vol. 2: 1756-1757. ed. A. F. Lucier. (Bowie, Maryland: Heritage Books, 1999). I looked at the original material to be certain of the accuracy of this publication. Besides minor misreadings, I found that the second article was much longer than the extract indicated, and that there was significant material about Mary Ingles that had not been included.

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