the ensuing session for an act to separate the district from the parent government forever, on terms honorable to both and injurious to neither.[33]

At the next meeting of the Assembly, Virginia passed an act setting certain conditions for statehood, the most important being that Congress should first assent to Kentucky's admission into the Confederation.[34]

The slowness of communication from the mother state, together with delays in Congress, caused impatience in Kentucky, where tempers rose high over rumors that in order to protect Eastern trade the Senate would approve a treaty with Spain closing the Mississippi River to commerce for twenty years. The Kentuckians, eager to protect their own commerce, were in a furor over these negotiations. There were strong-minded people in the district who argued that secession was the only answer. Others felt that if Kentucky were a state and had her own representatives in Congress Western commercial rights would be assured a fair hearing. But there were strong reasons for counseling patience—as Jim Harrod and his neighbors well knew. The people in Tennessee, cut loose prematurely by North Carolina, had set up what they hoped would be a new state, only to find themselves embroiled in a conflict of authority, a repeal of the act of cession, and consequent turmoil and loss of population in the region. So, patiently, year after year, the Kentuckians, in spite of blunders and misunderstandings, of intrigue and glowing promises, adhered to legal processes—a fact that indicates a degree of self-discipline on the part of frontiersmen not often credited to them.[35]

[33] Butler, *Commonwealth of Kentucky*, 148-49.

[34] Francis N. Thorpe (comp.), *The Federal and State Constitutions . . .*, 7 vols. (Washington, 1909), III, 1264.

[35] N. S. Shaler, *Kentucky, A Pioneer Commonwealth* (Boston, 1885), 97-98; Frederick Jackson Turner, "Western State-Making in the Revolutionary Era," in *American Historical Review*, I (1895-1896), 70-87.

Chapter XX

TRAGEDY AND MYSTERY
(1786-1792)

'Tis hard to say where we have the greatest number of enemies."[1]

ORDERLY processes of statemaking continued, but they were interrupted time and again by recurrent Indian warfare. Although these attacks were never on a large scale, nor as widespread as they had been in early years, they brought death and destruction and a depressed morale in Kentucky. The settlers asked whether, after all their years of hard labor and bloodshed, they were not at last entitled to a little peace and security. The people were bitter over the new national government's failure to oust the British from their fortified posts within America's borders, and they could not understand why this same national government's treaties with the Indians never succeeded in winning peace.[2]

The weakness of federal military power was evident to British and Indians alike, and naturally the tribesmen broke their agreements freely. Sometimes wandering bands of white men used Indians as fair game for their restless triggers; then the red men retaliated—and the first to suffer were the settlements below the Ohio. Just as the white men blamed the Shawnee for most of their trouble—regardless of the fact that nearly all of the marauders came from country farther north and only passed through the Shawnee territory—so the In-

[1] Col. Levi Todd to Gov. Patrick Henry, July 12, 1786, Palmer and others (arrs.), *Virginia State Papers*, IV, 155.

[2] Shaler, *A Pioneer Commonwealth*, 97-98.

dians, seeing the white men crossing the Ohio from Kentucky and taking up land on the northern bank, thought that they had all migrated from the old hunting ground.[3] They did not know or care that these settlers were for the most part Easterners who merely traveled along the southern bank for safety and then crossed over near the Falls to take up land in what is now lower Ohio and Indiana.

The central Kentucky leaders, as well as those farther north, knew that drastic measures would have to be taken. Kentucky's chief militia officer wrote Governor Henry in July of 1786 that within the three weeks past small raiding parties had struck the whole of the north and west frontier of the district. "Much Kentucky Blood I fear will be spilt," he cautioned, "tho' I hope that Vigorous Operations the ensuing Fall will make much in our favour. The Wabash Indians have repeatedly said that the Kentucky people dare not march to the Wabash. . . ."[4]

In the spring the Lincoln militiamen had been reluctant to go on an expedition for the protection of their neighbors along the Ohio, but their leaders now believed such an expedition was necessary for the common good. Their chief concern was how to organize it, for Congress had forbidden any punitive measures, and Virginia, while agreeing that the Kentuckians were justified in doing anything essential to their protection, would not go so far as to say that militiamen could be drafted and sent out of the district against their will.

Early in August the field officers, determined to take matters into their own hands, met at Jim's fort with Colonel Benjamin Logan presiding. They decided to call out one half of the militia to assemble at Clarksville, where George Rogers Clark would take command.[5] Since the local leaders were still opposed to a draft, only 1,200 men—about half the number needed—showed up at the place of rendezvous.

[3] *Ibid.*
[4] Palmer and others (arrs.), *Virginia State Papers*, IV, 155.
[5] Marshall, *History of Kentucky*, I, 246, 247.

Clark held a council with Logan and the other officers. They decided that the commander should take the men to Vincennes while Logan returned to Lincoln to marshal more men to attack the Shawnee towns as a diversionary tactic. In the meantime Clark was to move against the Wabash confederation.[6]

Logan and Harrod, who came to Clark's assistance, managed to recruit a large number of men, since the Kentuckians were more willing to go out against their special enemies, the Shawnee. As in previous campaigns, however, difficulties of supply plagued their undertaking. For example, the officers had trouble finding sufficient salt and flour. Those who had these precious commodities were reluctant to part with them for an expedition which appeared to be illegal and which would in all likelihood have no financial backing. However, there was more than one way to obtain necessities. On one proprietor's refusal to give up his supply of salt an officer ordered the guards to open the door and seize it as public property. When the owner drew a pistol to stop them he was arrested and accused of insult.

With Logan at the head and Harrod and McGary next in command, the army of about eight hundred men marched to the Ohio, crossing at the Three Islands not far from the mouth of the Licking, moving into the Indian country "with great expedition," and heading directly for the Shawnee towns.

Harrod commanded one party for an attack on the upper village while McGary took another party to a lower town.

The Indians—only those left behind after the others had marched to meet Clark's expedition—were taken by complete surprise. The encounter was brief, with Jim taking prisoner about ten men and a few dozen women and their children.

[6] Sources for this account are chiefly: Palmer and others (arrs.), *Virginia State Papers*, IV, 204, 212; Draper Collection, 17CC197, 27CC33-35, 17S118-19, 12C15, 32J78; Leonard C. Helderman, "The Northwest Expedition of George Rogers Clark, 1786-1787," in *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, XXV (1943-1944), 317-34.

McGary, brandishing a long knife, slashing right and left, caused a wild scampering fright, killed two men, and took thirty squaws and a host of papooses as prisoners. Then, at the head of this weird procession of volunteer militia and Indian captives, McGary led the way to the upper town to congratulate Harrod on his success.

When it was all over, Harrod's, McGary's, and Logan's men together had burned two hundred houses and destroyed the winter supply of corn, amounting to 15,000 bushels. They had killed ten Indians and taken thirty-four prisoners, including two chiefs.[7]

Harrod captured the aged Shawnee chieftain Moluntha (the victor at Blue Licks), who had his horse packed ready for flight. When Moluntha surrendered, he was shielding himself with an American flag and holding up the recent treaty between his tribe and the Federal government. Wearing a cocked hat at a jaunty angle and professing his friendship for the whites, the old Indian chief made a pathetic figure.

As McGary's men, returning from their own foray, rode into the Indian town, a crowd of men pressed close to see the famous chief. McGary dismounted and started over toward Moluntha. Logan, having just ordered the men to place the prisoners in the houses under heavy guard, reined his horse as he caught sight of McGary. "You must not molest these prisoners," he warned.

"I will see to that," replied McGary, waving the crowd aside and forcing his way to the center. "Were you at the defeat of the Blue Licks?" he asked the smiling old chieftain.[8]

The Indian, unaware of the hostile feeling behind this question, answered, "Yes."[9]

Instantly McGary seized an ax from the hands of a squaw and raised it high above his head. The men who were standing beside him threw up their arms to ward off the blow.

[7] James, *Clark*, 357.
[8] Draper Collection, 4B83-84, 12CC34-36, 2M7.
[9] *Ibid.*, 27CC34-35.

The ax handle struck one of them in the left wrist as it descended. The blade sank deep into Moluntha's head, and he fell lifeless at McGary's feet.

Harrod and the other witnesses to this barbaric attack were speechless with indignation. Then a torrent of angry words poured forth from the crowd. McGary had committed a dastardly, cruel trick that would undoubtedly lead to more Indian trouble, they charged. Moluntha had surrendered willingly; he was a prisoner of war, and as such, entitled to protection. A number of the men demanded that Logan and Harrod hold a court-martial right then and there.[10]

Realizing that the feeling against McGary for his rash act was too intense to permit a hearing at the moment, the leaders wisely put off the proceeding, with a promise to hold it promptly on their return to Kentucky.

Courts-martial were common in those days, with many of the most prominent, well-meaning, and able men in the country as instigators. This time, interest was particularly high. The court charged McGary with disobedience to orders (which had called for sparing all prisoners), with behaving in a disorderly manner, with insulting and abusing other officers, with declaring he would chop down any man who attemped to hinder him from killing Indian prisoners at any time, and with conduct generally "unbecoming the character of a gentleman and an officer."[11]

When the court-martial met, James Harrod was not present, no doubt out of choice, for he had had his share of "runins" with McGary. After hearing dozens of witnesses, the court-martial decided that Colonel McGary was guilty of murdering Moluntha, "the Indian King," and that his conduct in general was unbecoming the character of an officer and a gentleman, and suspended him from active service for one year.[12]

[10] *Ibid.*
[11] Palmer and others (arrs.), *Virginia State Papers*, IV, 258-60.
[12] *Ibid.*

In counterattack, McGary brought charges against other Fayette-county officers, accusing them of impressing and drinking a barrel of rum, of having twenty beeves shot down without orders, and of delaying the army. The result was a series of courts-martial calling forth a string of witnesses, all of whom naturally tried to clear their own records. The bitterness which arose caused lasting enmities.

The expedition under Clark met with failure. The soldiers, uneasy about the lack of proper authorization for the campaign, had not been eager to join in the first place, and they seized the opportunity afforded by the absence of Logan, their commander, to desert or delay the advance. They circulated a report that the supplies would be exhausted before the troops reached the Wabash villages. Clark was unable to proceed under these conditions and reluctantly led his troops back to Vincennes, where he established a garrison and started negotiations for a treaty.

James Ray and most of the other Harrodsburg men who later tried to explain the failure of the campaign attributed no blame to Clark, who according to reports was in tears over the outcome of his plans.[13] Others claimed that the commander had been drunk most of the time—a charge which appears to present-day historians to be unwarranted at that particular period, although, like other frontiersmen, Clark was fond of alcohol and later in life became a heavy drinker.

In the years that followed, charges of excessive drinking were leveled against Jim Harrod too.[14] One pioneer recalled that Harrod used to get drunk while gambling and lose as much as five thousand dollars at one sitting. In 1786, drinking was the accepted practice. "Every man was obliged to keep a kind of grog shop in his home, for his neighbours, acquaintances, and hangers on," a settler recalled, "or be esteemed a niggard."[15] At corn-huskings or house-raisings, the green-glass whiskey bottle was handed to every man or

[13] Draper Collection, 12C15, 32J78. [14] *Ibid.*, 17CC192.
[15] Daniel Drake, *Pioneer Life in Kentucky* (Cincinnati, 1870), 163-84.

boy as he arrived. Pioneers looked on liquor as an incentive to labor, and its use was never considered a crime until later years—when religious organizations had a firmer hold.

This 1786 campaign held up proceedings in Danville, where plans toward statehood were still the center of attention. By now, nearly everyone in the country was eager for separation from Virginia.[16] While a growing segment of the populace proposed a radical separation—perhaps even without statehood, which a reluctant Congress would still not assure—representatives of the old-timers at Danville believed in following the written law with great care.[17] They plodded along, calling convention after convention, confident that orderly action would ensure their interests and the welfare of Kentucky to better advantage. Virginia, they knew, was eager to grant their freedom—as soon as Congress would agree to take over the territory and assure statehood.

While others sweated and swore, schemed and quarreled, Jim was most likely to slip out on a hunting or trapping excursion. Central Kentucky was full of people now. Game was as scarce as silver. The old hunters had to go long distances to get away from settlements, to places where only the sound of wind and leaves and the occasional call of a bird or forest animal disturbed the deep silence that they loved and longed for.

Jim had grown to manhood in the quiet wilderness. Although he was less than fifty, he was too old for the confinement of towns and civilized ways. When court hearings were over for the season, he liked to strike out for the woods, either alone or with an old friend or two and his horse and hound. On these trips he wore a broad-brimmed beaver hat, jeans, and a hunting shirt made of linen and trimmed with fine, initialed silver buttons. He would frequently be gone for months. Perhaps before his return he might cross the

[16] See Abernethy, *Western Lands*, 304-24, for a discussion of these moves toward statehood.
[17] Turner, "Western State-Making," *loc. cit.*, 70-87.

divide to visit a brother or sister, or call on the Indians in the Illinois country where he had spent so much time as a boy. He was happy there.[18]

It may have been this love of wilderness adventure which overruled his caution when Jim went on his final hunting and trapping journey in the winter of 1792.[19]

All of the pioneers had heard of Swift's Silver Mine, reported to have been worked by the Indians for many years and rediscovered by a white hunter named Swift. Although its exact location was and still is a mystery, and there is considerable doubt among geologists about its actual existence, the tradition persists to this day.

A man named Bridges, who had a hankering for easy money, determined to locate this mine and tried to coax Harrod into going there with him. Ann and many of Harrod's close friends expressed concern over Bridges' proposal, calling attention to the fact that since Bridges and Harrod were involved in a land suit over which the two had said harsh words, the proposal might prove to be a trap. At first Jim hesitated.

Meanwhile, Bridges went out alone for a few weeks. On his return he rode over to Harrod's plantation to talk with him. "Colonel," he said, "I have found Swift's mine, and though we have been at outs, I have confidence in you and prefer you as a partner to any man in Kentucky, and you have the means to work the mine."[20]

Jim promised to think over the proposal. He never held a grudge for long, and as far as he was concerned he was willing to let bygones by bygones.[21] Besides there was good trapping up the three forks of the Kentucky River, where Bridges said he had located the mine.

When Ann heard about the proposed trip, she begged Jim not to go, insisting that it was merely a plan to murder him.[22]

[18] Draper Collection, 12C22, 97J35-37.

[19] Principal sources for this narrative are Draper Collection, 12C22, 12C23, 12CC48, 9J35-37, 9J228-29; and Collins, *Kentucky*, II, 414-15, 614-15.

[20] Collins, *Kentucky*, II, 614-15.

[21] Draper Collection, 12C23, 12CC48.

[22] *Ibid.*, 12CC48.

But this reaction only seemed to make her husband more determined. Ann had struck a pioneer's most sensitive spot. Jim answered that he was "not afraid of any man living."[23] Finally, however, Ann persuaded him to take a third man along, and Jim asked his old hunting companion Michael Stoner to accompany them. Then, apparently fearing that Ann's judgment might be correct, he made his will.

The party went up the Kentucky River, trapping beaver and hunting. Bridges seemed unable to find the mine. At one point the three men separated, each taking a fork of the river. Jim went up the south fork of Little Sandy, where he found much more abundant signs of beaver than the others had reported. He therefore proposed that they move the camp to his location.

After a few weeks the men had so many skins that they expressed a desire to go home, but Jim asked them to wait three or four days while he took a few traps further upstream.

To this the others agreed.

The men had made a rule to take turns in getting meals. One morning, while Harrod and Bridges were inspecting their traps, Stoner was preparing breakfast. Bridges rushed into camp declaring that he had heard a shot in the distance in the direction which Harrod had taken that morning. Apparently the colonel had killed a deer. After the men had waited for some time, expecting Jim to come in for breakfast, Bridges offered to go out to investigate. When he returned he appeared startled. Instead of the colonel, he had found fresh Indian signs and was positive that Harrod had been killed.

Stoner proposed that they look for their companion, but Bridges said this would be dangerous because the signs indicated that there were a great many Indians. He believed they should go back to the settlement and bring a larger party. After some delay and misgiving, Stoner agreed.

The searchers who returned later could find no trace of

[23] Collins, *Kentucky*, II, 614.

Harrod. Whether Bridges had told the truth no one ever knew. At several court hearings it was charged that Bridges had murdered Jim, but the accusation was never proved.

Some folk claimed that Harrod had not died at all but had gone to Greenbriar to live with his sister.[24] There is one deposition in the Draper Collection that claims his sister acknowledged this as a fact when she came to Kentucky on a visit a few years later.

There is also a tradition to the effect that Jim Harrod had actually been married in Pennsylvania before he founded the first settlement in Kentucky, and that he merely returned to his first wife and children.[25]

But these stories have no evidence, either circumstantial or direct, to support them. There is no good reason to believe that Jim ever had more than one wife. He was but forty-eight years of age at the time of his disappearance and too well known along the Virginia-Kentucky frontier to remain anonymous in any community. Travel between Harrodsburg and the old settlements was frequent, and had Jim been in any of these some of the Kentuckians would certainly have heard of it.

The accepted theory concerning his mysterious disappearance is that he was murdered by Bridges. Two statements of contemporaries, in addition to Ann's own deposition, support this belief.[26]

It appears that Bridges took some furs and skins to Lexington not long after this fatal journey. With the peltry he sold a pair of silver sleeve buttons with the letter H engraved on them.

The case had created wide interest, naturally; and when these buttons appeared on the counter, the purchaser took them to Ann. She at once declared that they had belonged to her husband and were from the hunting shirt he had worn on the expedition.[27]

[24] Draper Collection, 9J35-37.
[25] Collection of H. L. Leckey.
[26] Draper Collection, 12C22, 9J35-37.
[27] *Ibid.*, 12C22.

This incident started another search for the lost leader by a party of men who went immediately to the three forks. In an abandoned limestone cave, they found a skeleton, picked bare by wild animals, but still tightly wrapped in the sedge grass which had apparently been used as a sling to carry the heavy body to its hiding place. Whether this was Harrod's remains no one knew. It could have been the skeleton of an Indian or of one of the numerous trappers who had gone out alone never to return.

There is one other tradition suggesting that Jim went to live among the Indians. Two pioneers who were in captivity at an Indian camp opposite Detroit claimed that among a party of surveyors who arrived there one day was a tall, black-haired, dark-skinned person, erect and manly, whom his companions addressed as "Colonel Harrod." The captives, who were from Kentucky, asserted that they had recognized their old acquaintance. Harrod had seemed glad to meet them, they said, and had made some inquiry about his family; he had said that he intended to return but had not said when.

Upon hearing of this story, Mrs. Harrod offered the men a thousand dollars if they would conduct her to Colonel Harrod, but they deemed this too dangerous and hazardous an undertaking at that time.

About ten years after Jim's disappearance, Ann married again.[28] A short time later, however, this marriage was dissolved by the state legislature at Ann's request, on her declaration that her marriage to the second man was illegal since she had reason to think that Harrod was still living.[29]

There is nothing in her own recollections taken by General McAfee or those of her son-in-law to indicate that she believed this for long. It is more likely that she used this plea as a convenient method for getting out of an incompatible arrangement.

It is extremely improbable that a man of Harrod's tem-

[28] *Ibid.*, 12C22, 9J35-37; Mercer County Marriage Register, I, 96.
[29] Littell, *Law of Kentucky*, III, 196; Draper Collection, 12C22.

perament would have remained away from family and friends for many years. Of all the widow's sons, he had always been the most devoted to his family. Furthermore, Jim would not have been happy in hiding. To a person of his forthright temper self-concealment would have been positively distasteful. He had nothing to gain through anonymity. Why should a man give up all his life's gain at the age of forty-eight for a mere whim? One account had it that Jim was "miffed" by Ann's interest in other men, yet the teller of this story, like others before him, recalled that Jim never appeared jealous nor seemed to object to attentions his handsome wife received from other men.

Whatever the pioneers said about Jim, they always closed their statements with some high tribute. "Col. Harrod, besides possessing remarkable executive talent and other qualities of a great leader," wrote one of them, "was a man of the tenderest sympathy and a stranger to fear."[30] Another wrote, "Colo. Harrod was beloved—honorable—no seeker after fame; he served his country & race. He was a good soldier. . . ."[31] Jim could have asked no better epitaph than these words, typical judgments of his copioneers.[32]

[30] Collins, *Kentucky*, II, 615. See also Chap. XIX of this study.

[31] Draper Collection, 12C24.

[32] See also *ibid.*, 17CC192, 12CC45, 12CC112, 9J35 ff., 12C22-23, 4CC85, 4CC69, 48J10-11; James T. Morehead, *Address in Commemoration of the First Settlement of Kentucky* (Frankfort, 1840).

EPILOGUE

JIM HARROD had gone on so many long hunting and trapping expeditions that for months after his disappearance most of his friends and relatives half expected him to come strolling into town safe and happy with a fresh load of furs, branded and ready for trade at the Falls. Ann and her seven-year-old daughter Margaret waited a year before they gave up hope.[1]

During this period, one of mingled anxiety and hope for Harrod's family, significant changes came to Kentucky. Old Virginia cut her apron strings at last, and on June 1, 1792, the new commonwealth was admitted to the Union as the fifteenth state.[2] Preparatory to admission, the tenth and final one of the historic Danville conventions met to draw up a constitution.[3] The nature of the constitution had been thoroughly discussed in newspapers like the *Kentucky Gazette* and by organizations like the Political Club of Danville.[4] One group, favoring slavery and property rights, pitted itself strongly against the "radicals" from Pennsylvania and North Carolina who advocated a one-house legislature and voting by ballot and opposed a bill of rights which would protect private property and slavery. The result was a compromise—an odd combination of "progressive democracy and staid conservatism,"[5] with a strong kinship to the new Con-

[1] He made his will on November 28, 1791; it was probated in December, 1793. See Mercer County Will Book 1, p. 15.

[2] Thorpe (comp.), *Federal and State Constitutions*, III, 1264-77.

[3] April, 1792; Butler, *Commonwealth of Kentucky*, 206, speaks of it as the eighth.

[4] See Thomas Speed, *The Political Club of Danville*, Filson Club Publication, No. 2 (Louisville, 1894).

[5] E. Merton Coulter, "Early Frontier Democracy in the First Kentucky Constitution," in *Political Science Quarterly* (New York), XXXIX (1924), 665-77.