

The Old Fort Harrod State Park's annual Settlement and Raid is the re-enactment of Shawnee attacks on the Fort which occurred in March 1777. As many as 100 re-enactors participate in the event. In order to appreciate it more, please let me set the stage.

James Harrod and his men had just finished putting the final touches on the original construction of Fort Harrod in the Spring of 1777 when the Shawnee and other tribes decided they must go!

In March 1777, 198 men, women, children and slaves lived inside Fort Harrod. Of those, there were approximately 80 healthy riflemen. The Fort was nothing more than a big wooden box 264 feet x 264 feet square with three corner blockhouses and about 10 cabins, and a fresh water spring. Life inside the Fort was not good. Food and black powder were scarce, sanitation was a serious health problem, and worst of all, the Natives were restless. About 400 Natives were encamped in various spots around the Fort. Mostly Shawnee but other Northern Tribes as well. They would attack randomly in groups of 20 to 80.

The famous story of James Ray occurred during this time when Ray was out with others on a sugar making run and were attacked and chased by Shawnee sneaking up the Shawnee Run Creek to the Fort. Ray ran and alerted the Fort inhabitants which gave them some time to prepare for the attack. This attack eventually led to what is known as "Lord Dunmore's War".

The sad story of Barney Stagner also occurred in 1777. Barney was the guardian of the spring inside the Fort. Since the settlers had to keep their horses inside the Fort in 1777, the grass was eaten down to dirt. Barney had a horse he loved very much and wanting him to have some good, tall grass, he led his horse outside the Fort to graze for just a few minutes. The Shawnee almost immediately killed and scalped Barney and stole his horse.

The "Seige of Fort Harrod" went on for a year with almost daily attacks. The Shawnee killed or stole all of the animals, burned all of the crops and menaced the Fort inhabitants incessantly. The Fort was never overrun but many died. Before long, Harrod and his men were out of black powder and things were looking pretty bad for Harrods Town and Kentucky.

When, out of the bushes steps a 19 year old and hungry George Rogers Clark! James Ray fed him some duck that had been roasted over an open fire. The sudden and mysterious appearance of Clark that day would dramatically change the history of Fort Harrod and Kentucky!

The first thing Clark did was to figure out a way to get some black powder and this famous event became known as "Clark's Powder Run". After much effort, 500 pounds of powder were brought back to the Fort from Fort Pitt and the Fort and its inhabitants were rescued.

Many of the exciting adventures of famed "Frontiersman" Simon Kenton also occurred at Fort Harrod during 1777. The only food inside Fort Harrod was meat but eventually, the settlers could not go outside to hunt because they were killed and scalped on sight by the Shawnee. Then a miracle happened. Simon Kenton showed up at the Fort in 1777 and for the entire year, he fed the inhabitants. He would go out hunting alone in the dark, often traveling on foot up to 12 miles from the Fort to prevent the sound of his shot from drawing the attention of the Shawnee to the Fort itself. Had it not been for the bravery and compassion of Simon Kenton, likely the inhabitants of the Fort in 1777 would have starved to death!

Fort Harrod held for about 40 years, from 1776 until its last blockhouse was disassembled in 1815. It never fell to the Indian attacks and went on to become the City of Harrodsburg and the first permanent settlement in Kentucky. Had that Fort not held in 1777, it is likely that today there would be no Harrodsburg and no State of Kentucky!

Salute to those brave souls!