



Photo by Jan Faul.

CUMBERLAND GAP

Paul Guraedy

Since their formation, mountain chains have acted as barriers to migration just as the passes through them have been funnels for movement and travel. A famous passageway is the Cumberland Gap through the Appalachian Mountains of eastern North America. In the dim past it was the cloven hoof of the bison that beat a path through these mountains and paved the way for the whispered tread of the moccasin-clad Indian.

The Indian first entered this region about twelve thousand years ago and quickly expanded the buffalo paths into an extensive network of trails, that rival our modern highways. One of these trails, known as the Warriors Path, passed through Cumberland Gap and connected the Great Lakes with the Gulf of Mexico. Most of the tribes along its length claimed Kentucky as their hunting grounds. Their travel back and forth across the Cumberland Gap soon formed a distinctive trail that anyone could follow.

Dr. Thomas Walker was one of those who followed this "Indian Road" when he "discovered" the way through the mountains in 1750. Walker and his companions spent the night in a cave near the crest of the pass which they aptly called "Cave Gap." This title was soon changed to Cumberland Gap after a river to the north which Walker had named in honor

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of the Duke of Cumberland. Dr. Walker's journal mentioned an easily travelled break in the mountain wall which would allow passage to the fabled lands of Kentucky.

For the next twenty years, however, few settlers braved the trail described by Walker, and its location seems to have been virtually unknown. Daniel Boone was forced to make two trips in search of Cumberland Gap before he made it across the mountains in 1769. Once the way was found, he made several trips along this route into Kentucky, including an abortive attempt at settlement which was halted when his son was killed by Indians.

The Indians had welcomed early colonists and had even helped them survive the rigorous winters of the eastern seaboard. They believed there was enough room for all and that the two races could live together in peace. However, many of these friendly tribes were no longer in existence by the late 1700's. The tribes farther west watched as the tide of settlers crept ever closer and they came to the realization that Indian and the colonist had opposing concepts of land ownership and use. An area that could support only a few nomadic Indians would support a large number of settlers provided it was cleared, planted, and the ownership parcelled out to individuals. The Indians were continually pushed back until finally they were forced into conflict with the newcomers in a fight for their survival. Nothing could stem the continuous flow of European people toward the mountain barrier. Although passageways through the mountains became dangerous, the lure of cheap land was too great for the colonists to resist. The opportunity for extensive profits encouraged the formation of land companies which in turn encouraged westward movement.

In 1775 a group of these land speculators formed the Transylvania Company and purchased the Shawnee Indians' claim to a large section of land in southern Kentucky, including a right-of-way through the Cumberland Gap. Daniel Boone was then hired to mark a trail to this Transylvania land. He and thirty axmen blazed a trail that would become known as the Wilderness Road, and at its end they built the village of Boonesborough.

The pathway into Kentucky was now marked, and the westward movement of settlers began in earnest. Travel along the Wilderness Road was so dangerous that immigrants were forced to band together in large groups for mutual protection. Cumberland Gap was the point of greatest danger, and at one time it was necessary to assemble troops there to assist and protect travellers. Traffic slowed to a minimum during the Revolutionary War when the British armed the western Indian tribes and encouraged attacks on the settlements in Kentucky. With the end

of the War the major Indian threat was over, the Indian's power was broken. Immigration into Kentucky swelled to its greatest proportions in the years following the War, and in 1796 the Wilderness Road was improved to accommodate wagon traffic. It has been estimated that 75% of the people going west prior to 1800 went along this route.

Many famous names have been connected with Cumberland Gap but more important were the nameless, faceless thousands who became the settlers of the west. When they walked through Cumberland Gap into the wilderness of Kentucky, these pioneers left behind their old ways and carved out a new life. They came not simply to trap furs and then move on, but rather to build, plant crops, and raise families, and they became totally self-sufficient. The mountain people of Kentucky remember Daniel Boone with his long rifle and buckskins, which have long since disappeared, but their real kinship lies with the settlers whose plow and axe are still used today.

LINCOLN'S BIRTHPLACE — HODGENVILLE, KENTUCKY

Andrew M. Loveless

Tiny Hodgenville (pop. 2600), County Seat of Larue County in Central Kentucky is celebrated as the birthplace of Abraham Lincoln, the nation's 16th President, and that area's most famous citizen.

President Lincoln was born on the 300-acre Sinking Spring Farm, three miles south of Hodgen's Mill, in the early morning hours of February 12, 1809. Today a 116-acre National Historic Site preserves the home-site and birthplace cabin of the Great Emancipator. Administered by the National Park Service, the Birthplace park is visited by over one half million people each year.

While many of the States of the nation observe February 12 as a legal holiday, citizens of Larue County join together each year on the nearest Saturday to the 12th of February to stage a day-long pageant. Highlights include a parade, costume and beard contests, an art competition, craft displays and demonstrations, historical exhibits, and a Lincoln Day dinner.

The celebration evokes memories of an earlier era when outdoor pageants and speech-making, often of a patriotic nature, were a major form of public enlightenment and entertainment. For millions of Americans in the 19th and early 20th centuries, com-



The Lincoln log cabin. Photo: National Park Service.

memorative activities represented a social and educational phenomenon now largely supplanted by modern communications media. In the days before radio and television, such celebrations were often the only means for keeping abreast of State and national issues, for seeing and hearing famous personalities, and in general receiving all the benefits of social interchange.

The celebration originated during the years 1909 to 1911. During that time Hodgenville was host for a series of ceremonies that culminated in the preservation of the birthplace farm and saw the completion of a classic granite and marble memorial building to protect the original Lincoln cabin. More than 100,000 people, including many school children, contributed over \$300,000 towards the memorial.

Robert Collier, publisher of the popular Collier's Weekly magazine, purchased the Lincoln Farm in 1905 and later turned it over to the Lincoln Farm Association, organized to preserve the birthplace and create the Nation's first major memorial to the President. To publicize and support the aims of the association, Collier sent staff photographers to Hodgenville to make dozens of pictures in and around the community.

On the 100th anniversary of Lincoln's birth, February 12, 1909, 8000 people watched President Theodore Roosevelt lay the cornerstone for the Memorial Building. In May 1909, Kentuckians turned out to dedicate Adolph A. Weinman's seated bronze of the mature Lincoln. "A noble likeness of my father," said Robert Todd Lincoln, who attended the unveiling in Hodgenville's town square. In November 1911, thousands witnessed President William Howard Taft dedicate the completed memorial.

Many of the Collier's photographs taken during this period have been preserved by the National Park Service as part of the historic resources of the site. The spirit of these memorable celebrations has also been preserved at Hodgenville's important annual event.

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