

Founding of Transylvania to be commemorated in state Oct. 12 [1935]. By Dr. Archibald Henderson. [n. p. 1935].

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(Editor's Note:—The following sketch of Judge Richard Henderson and his followers in the founding of Transylvania was written by Archibald Henderson, Litt. D., D. C. L., L.L.D., of the University of North Carolina in connection with the bicentennial of Henderson's birth April 20, 1735. and the coming celebration at Boonesborough. Ky., next. October 12. Pictures of Judge Henderson and the first Transylvania Legislature appear in the rotogravure section of this issue.)

By DR. ARCHIBALD HENDERSON.

On October 12 of the present year at Boonesborough, Ky., will be held a memorial celebration in honor of four important events in American history: First, the cutting of the Transylvania Trail, sometimes called the Wilderness Trail, commissioned by the Transylvania Company and executed by Daniel Boone. Richard Callaway and other pioneers, thirty strong; second, the building of the great palisaded fort from plans drawn by the president of the Transylvania Company on Otter Creek, the site of present Boonesborough; third, the convening of the Legislature of Transylvania on May 23, 1775, the first legislative assembly of free-born American citizens to convene on the continent west of the Alleghenies, and fourth, the founding of the State of Transylvania, which had a short life of but eighteen months, but exercised a profound influence on the course of American history.

Richard Henderson, the first and only head of Transylvania, was born in Hanover County, Virginia, April 20, 1735. The celebration is held in this, the bicentennial year of Henderson's birth. Dr. Samuel Eliot Morison of Harvard University, in his "The Growth of the American Republic," describes Henderson as "one of the greatest of American land speculators and commonwealth builders." Benson J. Lossing, the versatile historian of an earlier day, dubs Henderson the "political father of Kentucky." Dr. John F. D. Smyth, author of the two-volume work, "Travels In the United States of America" (1784), who visited Henderson in 1774, describes him as "the most brilliant and eccentric genius in America—if not in the world."

Associated with him were James Hogg, descendant of "the Ettrick Shepherd" of the same name and married to a second cousin of Sir Walter Scott: Thomas Hart, the father-in-law of Henry Clay and the maternal grandfather of Thomas Hart Benton, and his two brothers, Nathaniel and David Hart;

and other distinguished citizens of North Carolina: John Williams, John Luttrell, William Johnston and Leonard Henley Bullock.

During a period of more than a decade, Daniel Boone, in his arranging explorations of Tennessee and Kentucky, was acting as the confidential agent of this land company. Thomas Walker for the Loyal Land Company, Christopher Gist for the Ohio Company, and Daniel Boone for the Transylvania Company, all made explorations of the trans-Allegheny region on behalf of entrenched capital and speculative enterprise.

Tablets to Be Unveiled.

Memorial tablets will be unveiled at Boonesborough on October 12 in honor of the proprietors of the Transylvania Company, the thirty axemen headed by Boone who cleared the Transylvania Trail, and the members of the Legislature of Transylvania. Contributions from patriotic citizens and descendants of those memorialized are invited. Public announcements regarding details of the celebration will be made.

Pertinent to this celebration are the words of Judge Robert Worth Bingham. United States Ambassador at the Court of St. James:

"It is simple justice to clear the stream of history, to fix firmly and forever the indisputable facts; to erect a lasting memorial; to lay a tribute of gratitude and remembrance at the feet of this noble group, who not only created Kentucky, but contributed so mightily to the establishment of our Union of States as an intercontinental power.

"It was they who made possible the heroic achievement of George Rogers Clark. But for him, the War of the Revolution would have left the Union composed of but a fringe of States hugging the Atlantic seaboard; and yet but for them there could have been no Kaskaskia and no Vincennes! Thus their influence upon the history of our country is of incalculable force and value."

The purchase of Transylvania was perhaps the largest, and certainly, as judged by results, the greatest real estate transaction ever negotiated by private individuals in American history. The co-partners of the Transylvania Company, who lived within the Earl of Granville's great North Carolina proprietary, were influenced by his example, as well as by those of Penn and the Calverts, to found a great American proprietary colony or free state beyond the Alleghenies.

Object Two-Fold.

The object of the company was two-fold: to promote a great speculative enterprise rich with golden promises of fortune “beyond the dreams of avarice” and to establish and secure the recognition of Transylvania as the fourteenth American State.

The type of man engaged in the great Transylvania enterprise, of the story of which so little has found its way into American history, inevitably challenges our interest and admiration. The captain of industry and the speculative promoter on the grand scale have held the center of the stage in many stirring scenes of the drama of American expansion. These men were the true “rugged individualists” so often mentioned today, the splendid pioneer type of our ancestors, hard, resolute, self-reliant, energetically making their way as best they could against all obstacles and fighting to the death for the stake in the wilderness they had won at the risk of their lives and fortunes. The motives and the principles which actuated men of this heroic stamp have remained the same throughout our history, whether the protagonist was a Washington or an Astor, a Putnam or a Morgan, a Penn or a Hart. The ample - visioned expansionist, lured on by prospects of princely fortune, develops and exploits the new lands, for individual profit and comprehensive national expansion.

The great central figure in such colossal schemes of personal aggrandizement and territorial expansion, is not the rude and simple pioneer, Boone, Harrod, Logan or Bryan, breaking a clearing for his tiny cabins and establishing a settlement around a little fort, but the constructive genius—a Cecil Rhodes in South Africa, a James J. Hill in Western America—who engineers and directs the tidal movements of population and capital to open up, at one decisive stroke, vast areas, rich mineral deposits, immense natural resources. This is the typical genius of America, the expansionist on the grand scale.

Exemplars of this type in our history are Washington, great land speculator and engineer; Jefferson of the Louisiana Purchase; Polk of the Mexican War; Roosevelt of the Panama Canal. This type figure, no less romantic and far more impressive, able and distinguished than the hunter, pioneer and squatter type, is found in fine flower in the proprietors of the Transylvania Company, who conceived their plans on a monumental scale and personally carried them into execution.