Migration Routes into Kentucky

Don Rightmyer
Former Editor, Kentucky Ancestors, 2008-13
Email: donrightmyer@yahoo.com

Significance of Emigration into Kentucky in the Eighteenth Century

First non-contiguous settlement of an area away from the established eastern colonies.
Today’s state of Kentucky was still a part of the westernmost territory of colonial Virginia in the 1770s (became a separate state in 1792).
Between 1774 and 1800, there were over 200,000 people who had migrated to Kentucky.

Major Geographic Barriers to Settlement in Kentucky
Distance
Permanent separation from family, friends, and communities back east.
Allegheny Mountains Chain
Limitations on the amount of goods/supplies that could be transported from the starting points.

**Initial Settlement Period was Complicated by the Beginning of the Revolutionary War**
Settlers not only had to deal with the realities of the travel from the colonies into unsettled Kentucky, but also hostile attacks during the war years.

**Major Routes for Movement of People into Kentucky**

**The Wilderness Trail and Associated Paths of Travel Into and Through Kentucky**
--Extensive land trip from Pennsylvania, Virginia or other starting points into Kentucky
--Early stages, no protective stations en route. Moved in large groups. Many people lost their lives during the trip.
--Early settlements were crucial for movement, resupply, and protection: Ft. Harrod, Ft. Logan, Boonesborough, etc.
--The Wilderness Trail was not improved to handle wagons and carts as the Wilderness Road until 1796.

**The Ohio River**
--Started from Redstone, Pennsylvania, to destinations in Kentucky—Limestone, (Maysville, Kentucky)
--Unpredictable river transport, water levels and conditions, hostile attacks from the riverbanks.
--No sites for assistance or replenishment of supplies en route to Kentucky.

**Migration Routes into Kentucky**

**Bibliography**

**Articles**
Check both the *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* and the *Filson Club History Quarterly* for articles on the people, forts and stations of the early settlement period in Kentucky.
Books
Pusey, William A. *The Wilderness Road to Kentucky.* New York: George H. Doran, 1921.


**Presenter:** Don Rightmyer works at the Mercer County Public Library in Harrodsburg, Kentucky. He served as reference librarian and Kentucky Room supervisor at the Boyle County Public Library (Danville, Ky./2000-07), reference librarian at the Kentucky Historical Society (2007-08), and edited twenty-five issues of the Kentucky Historical Society’s genealogical quarterly, *Kentucky Ancestors* (2008-2013). He has written numerous genealogical articles and *Torn: The Civil War in Kentucky* (April 2014). Contact Don at donrightmyer@yahoo.com.