DANIEL AND SQUIRE BOONE—A STUDY IN HISTORICAL SYMBOLISM

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"When grandfather died he left eight children, fifty-two grandchildren, ten great-grandchildren—in all seventy, being as many as the house of Jacob which came into Egypt." This significant entry in the Boone family Bible records the death of George Boone III, the head of the family which came to America, and the grandfather of the American Moses. Here is a poetic coincidence in truth that assumes the aspect of destiny because Grandson Daniel led his people into a promised land—into that rarely trodden Canaan of Kentucke.

It was on November 2, 1734, that Daniel Boone was born among the patterned hills of Oley in German Pennsylvania. His father was Squire, third child of grandfather George, and he had come to America with his older brother and sister during the early months of 1713. On November 27, 1720, he held Sarah Morgan's hand and in a solemn manner declared to the Gwynned Meeting that he took her to wife. In the chapter of "begats" that followed, these Quaker pioneers named their first son Israel. The parallel of coincidences was continued.

When Lord Byron pays tribute to Daniel Boone in Don Juan he does so because he sees in that Kentucky “general” a much sought-after person: Jean Rousseau’s natural man. Yet the poetry of fact was never so attractive to Byron as the poetry of fiction and the pleasing conception of Daniel nourished by the poet is just about as near the truth as Parson Weems’s biography is to the actual George Washington. His difficulty in retaining a balanced historical judgment lay in the fact that Boone became a symbol of what he conceived the common purpose animating American life to be. If Daniel was “even in age the child of

2 Ibid., p. 38.
3 Ibid., p. 27ff.
4 Ibid., p. 38.
nature," he was so not because of any desire on his part to return
to the primordial past. No! The start of his westward trek
derived not from philosophy but from religion. It came, not
out of the harsh demands of economic necessity, but from the
colorful discipline of a Quaker Meeting.

Oddly enough this is typically Pennsylvanian because this state
began with a tinge of idealism and of poetry. Penn’s Holy
Experiment was just that! He willingly冒险ured in this new
land with slim probability of financial return because he had
dreamed a noble dream. His lands to the west of the Delaware
were welcoming lands. Those hills which Benjamin West so
lovingly painted held out their arms to the diligent seekers of
truth. In this new world Penn’s new state gave birth to a new
state of mind. It became what he wished it to be: a veritable
vale of peace. His thought was of a land sanctified by serene
living, of a kind of garden for the Friends of God. And some-
how this dream—unlike Plato’s and More’s—became an actuality.
Somehow it was given to William Penn alone to build on earth
his new heaven.

And Oley, which the casual-minded biographers of Boone call
a “grim, sparsely-settled frontier region,” was just such a garden.
Here, near feminine hills and child-like streams, Welsh Quakers,
German Pietists, Scotch Covenanters, Swedish Lutherans, English
Puritans, and French Huguenots raised upon the foundations of
this noble dream their earthly heaven. A mere catalogue of their
sectarian names enlivens a century dulled by an overdose of
deism: Mennonites, Dunkards, Moravians, Reformed, Lutheran,
Amish, Quakers, Schwenkfeldians, Catholics, Universalists, and
a very curious local sect, the Newborns. Here in this small valley,
the better elements of the Old World united to produce a live-
and-let-live Christianity—a life broad in scope and deep in religious
experience. Names full of color and romance stand out across
these years of national history: George DeBenneville, Ellis
Hughes, Andrew Eschenbach, Mordecai Lincoln, Jean Bertholet,
Anthony Lee, Yost Yoder, John Hanks, Martin Schenkel, and
Matthias Bauman. In this valley, only ten miles across, Penn’s
noble dream became the Holy Experiment. In this valley Daniel
Boone was born.

At first glance the place and circumstance of Daniel’s birth
does not seem of any positive, formative influence but like many other casual events of history this one must be viewed in its proper light. The danger with these correlations lies in the fact that when once suspected the historian is apt to give them undue weight. The influences of Oley—if they did effect Daniel's character—were positive and during the first half of the eighteenth century the dominating one was religious.

Here religion was vital. It was the be-all and the end-all of life. Nothing supplanted it. Pietism dominated, but a Pietism distrustful of legalism, discontented with rationality, and disgusted with dogmatic theology. Rooted as they were in a positive mysticism there were only two possible ways for these people of Oley to go—there was asceticism as later manifested by a small movement to Ephrata, and then there was hedonism which never was followed at all. The Oley way of life was simple: it was based on the Greek notion of moderation and upon the Teutonic instinct of frugality. The age-old antagonism between legalism and libertinism was here dissolved and in the white-hot crucible of a new land the elements of these differing sects were fused into a mass already alloyed with continental mysticism. Instead of a Hebraistic strictness of conscience, instead of Hellenistic spontaneity of consciousness, these people possessed the conception of conscience and of consciousness wholly dependent upon God. It was here that Daniel Boone was born on November 2, 1734, according to the new style of reckoning.

That George Boone IV left the rich slopes and emerald pastures of Devonshire to come to America to marry his beloved Deborah cannot be said. It is, at the very least, a pleasing speculation suggested in part by the facts. As the colorful history of the Boones in Pennsylvania is gleaned from the musty tomes of the past, one family trait appears predominant. It is their proneness to marry at will. Quakers that they were, they may have heeded the sane advice given by William Penn: "Never marry but for love; but see that thou loveth what is lovely." 5

The real motive for George's emigration is most likely embedded in the fact that on July 27, 1713, only a few months after his

arrival in Philadelphia, he married Deborah Howell of Haverford whom he had known and loved back home in Devonshire. After his marriage he settled down on a farm near Abington, his brother Squire and his sister Sarah living with him—these three being the original Boone immigrants to Pennsylvania.

The records of deeds and titles for this period fail to show any transfer of lands to George Boone IV, and it must be assumed that he settled down on land not his own, probably as a tenant farmer—a situation more nearly suited to his age and condition. There are traditional rumors that he taught the Abington Meeting School, but these need verification. On October 26, 1713, he produced a certificate of his good and orderly conversation while a member of the Monthly Meeting at Bradwitch, Devonshire. This was well received by the Friends at Abington.

The year 1714 must have been eventful for his sister Sarah. Jacob Stover (variously spelled Stauber and Stober) purchased 500 acres of land along the Manatawney Creek in Oley. His motive is embedded in the fact that on March 15, 1714, he married Sarah in the city of Philadelphia. Stover was plain—a Mennonite.

The letters which these children sent back home fired the imagination of their persecuted Quaker father. Across the seas there was a new land, free from tyranny, where acreage was cheap and plentiful. Grandfather George decided to bring the remainder of the family to the New World, and these Boones are said to have arrived in Philadelphia on September 29, 1717. They lived for a few weeks with George Boone IV at Abington. On October 31, 1717, grandfather produced a certificate in Gwynedd Meeting of his good life and orderly conversation while a member of the Monthly Meeting at Callumpton in Great Britain. This was well received by the Friends of Gwynedd.

George Boone IV occupied the early months of 1718 by making a transcript of the Abington Meeting Records. In October he bought 400 acres along the Manatawney, near Jacob Stover's tract, at £14 per hundred acres and fourteen shillings quit rent—lands

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6 Boone Genealogy, pp. 27, 590.
7 Ibid., p. 590.
8 Ibid., p. 23.
9 Ibid., pp. 19, 20.
10 Ibid., pp. 21, 591.
11 Ibid., pp. 28, 590.
that today would bring a stunning figure. In February of this year (and it must be remembered that February was the last month) his father also purchased 400 acres of land near his son's lands at the same price.

The dominant family trait appeared in June, 1720, when grandfather George acknowledged to the Gwynedd Meeting "his forwardness in giving consent to John Webb to keep company with his daughter (Mary) in order to marry, contrary to the established order among Friends." John Webb solved the difficulty by joining the Meeting.

The first documentary allusion to the Boones in Oley occurs in a petition to the Provincial Court in Philadelphia requesting the formation of Oley Township out of what was then Philadelphia. George Boone (III or IV?) and Jacob Stover were among the signers. The date of this document was September 5, 1720.

Seven years afterwards the inhabitants of the western part of the region petitioned for a road from Conrad Weiser's fast-growing settlement in Tulpehocken to Oley:

September 1727.

To the Honorable Bench:

We, whose names are herewith inscribed, ye inhabitants of ye northwest part of ye township of Oley & Tulpehocken & parts adjacent; having no road as yet established amongst us by means whereof we suffer diver inconveniences & a great part of ye land at present not settled, through which ye hereby petitioned road is naturally designated to go by of; whereof there will be no opposition in ye laying it out.

Wherefore, we, your petitioners, humbly request that you will be pleased to order a highroad to be laid out, beginning at ye Lutheran Meeting House at Tulpehocken and to end at ye high road at Ye Quaker Meeting House near George Boone's mill in Oley.

And your petitioners shall ever pray!

Among the signers of this petition was Benjamin Boone, the seventh child of Grandfather George.

"Ibid., p. 28.
"Ibid., p. 21.
"Ibid., p. 21.
"Ibid., p. 21ff.
On December 3, 1728, Squire Boone became the owner of a tract of land in New Britain township, Bucks county, when 147 acres were deeded him by Thomas Shute of Philadelphia. Less than two years afterwards, on October 20, 1730, he purchased 158 3/4 acres from Ralph Ashton situated a mile and a half from the Oley Meeting House. Tradition holds that he moved into Oley during the spring of 1731.

With the coming of the third decade of the century the Boones increased both in numbers and in prosperity. One of their number was already in the west, for in 1730 Jacob Stover secured a conditional grant of 10,000 acres in what is now Massanutten County, Virginia. He was probably the purchasing agent for a group of Pennsylvanians who migrated there. In 1733 Grandfather George erected a large stone house to supercede the log cabin. It is said that he never lived in it, preferring the simple life. In this same year George Boone IV purchased 1,500 acres from Stover's tract, the titles of which were confirmed in December, 1735.

Daniel Boone was born on October 22, 1734, "old stile, hence new stile November 2, 1734." He was the sixth of eleven children: Sarah, Israel, Samuel, Jonathan, Elizabeth, Daniel, Mary, George, Edward, Squire Jr., and Hannah. The first four of these were born in Bucks county. In this same year George Boone IV received 277 acres of land in Oley by patent from Thomas Penn. One acre of this he deeded to Anthony Lee, John Webb (his brother-in-law), and Squire Boone for a consideration of twenty shillings. These in turn conveyed it to Ellis Hughes, Thomas Ellis, and James Boone in trust for a house of worship for the people called Quakers in Oley, on which they could erect a house of worship and lay out a burial plot. It is not clear whether George Boone IV purchased the land surrounding the old meet-

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17 Boone Genealogy, p. 33.
18 Ibid., p. 33.
20 Boone Genealogy, pp. 21, 22.
21 J. W. Wayland, History of Shenandoah County, Virginia, quoting from Orange County Deed Book, III, 159.
22 Boone Genealogy, pp. 34ff.
23 Ibid., p. 589.
ing house, or whether a new one was erected. There was a meeting house standing at the time the transfer was made. In 1734 George Boone III, George Boone IV, and Squire Boone are listed as freeholders in Oley. Stover's name is not on the list. The records of the Meeting now begin.

On December 27, 1739, Richard Lunday complained against Joseph Gibson of some difference between them and the Meeting appointed several overseers, among whom was Squire Boone, to investigate. Next month the difference was reported settled.

Second Month (April), 1741, discovered a complaint against John James for scandalous action. George Boone and James Boone were appointed to investigate. Someone was accused of palming a red fox for a gray one.

In July, 1742, the dominant trait of the Boones again appears:

Whereas Sarah, the daughter of Squire Boone, hath contrary to the good order used amongst Friends joined herself in marriage to one that is not joined to our Society; & it being by sundry persons supposed, that her father & mother have countenanced their proceedings; it is ordered that Richard Lunday, John Scarlet & Thomas Ellis make proper inquiry into the said affair and report to the next Meeting.

These men did as they were bidden, reporting that they had spoken to Squire Boone

touching his daughter ... & that the said Squire declareth that he was in no ways countenancing or consenting to the said marriage; but confesseth himself at fault in keeping them in his house after he knew of their keeping company, (but he was in a great streight not knowing what to do, seeing he was somewhat sensible that they had been too conversant before) & hopeth to be more careful in the future.

Sarah's husband was named John Wilcox.

Ibid.
Ibid. Exeter Meeting Records, Book A. (Since these entries are made under proper date, pagination is omitted.)
Ibid.
Ibid.
Ibid.
The meeting for Tenth Month (December), 1747, ordered Thomas Ellis, John Hughes, and James Boone to draw up a "Testimony" against Israel Boone "for marrying a wife not in unity with Friends," and to bring it to the next meeting. Not content with investigating Israel, they also appointed James Boone and Daniel Coles to speak with Squire Boone for countenancing his son's disorderly conduct.  

At the next Monthly Meeting the clerk read this "Testimony" against Israel:

Whereas Israel Boone, son of Squire Boone of Exeter, having been educated and brought up amongst Friends, & as a member of this Meeting, hath of late married a wife not in unity with Friends; tho' he has been precautioned of the dangerous consequences which mixt marriages are subject to by Friends who at the request of his parents spoke with him; notwithstanding which he rejected the advice given him by those who desired his present & future welfare, to the fulfilling & accomplishing of his own will; Therefore this Meeting thinks themselves engaged for the clearing of the Blessed Truth & the Professors thereof to give public testimony against him as not being a member amongst us till such a time as we may be sensible of his coming to a Godly sorrow in himself; which, if it is given way to will work true repentence & amendment of life, and that it may do so is the earnest wish of us his Friends.

Signed on behalf and by order of the Meeting held at Maidencreek this 28th day of Eleventh Month, 1747. (January 1748)

by James Boone

But the Friends who were requested to speak to Squire Boone were not so well-received. They report that they had done so and "that he did not see that he had transgressed and therefore was not willing to condemn it until he saw it to be a transgression." After these discussions the overseers reported to the Meeting that "love and unity subsist in a pretty good degree amongst us."  

The Monthly Meeting for First Month (March), 1748, brought the climax. The overseers reported that Squire Boone was not
willing to give any satisfaction to them and the Meeting ordered a "Testimony" drawn up against him. This was brought to the May Meeting:

Whereas Squire Boone of Exeter in the County of Philadelphia hath been a Professor amongst us for a number of years, & as a member of this Meeting, who for want of giving heed to that gift of God within himself which united him as a member amongst us, hath of late fallen from that good order and discipline of Friends, which he hath so long made Profession of in many particulars: vizt; in & by countenancing his son's marriage with one who is not in unity with Friends, & giving room to a reflecting spirit even against the order and discipline of Friends in general, as may more at large be seen in his letter to our Monthly Meeting; & for as much as we have from time to time used many endeavors to bring him to a sense of his outgoing... therefore this Meeting thinks themselves engaged... to give publck testimony against him as not being a member amongst us, until such time as we may be sensible of his coming to a Godly sorrow in himself... Signed on behalf of the Meeting held at Maidencreek this 28th day of Third Month (May) 1748.

Three months later it was reported that Ellis Hughes had given Squire Boone a copy of this "Testimony" and that Morris Ellis had read it on a First Day according to appointment.

Squire Boone lived for a year and a half longer in Oley. After he had decided to move to the west he found that when he had bought his land in 1730 a certain legal confirmation of sale had inadvertently been omitted. This was rectified April 10, 1730. On the next day he sold to William Maugridge "a certain messuage or Tenement and tract of land containing 158½ acres." A few weeks later he moved into the Carolinas, stopping for a few months with his widowed sister Sarah in Virginia.

28 Ibid.
29 Ibid., author's italics. The name of the signer does not appear on the record.
30 Ibid.
31 Boone Genealogy, p. 34.
32 Whether this William Maugridge bears any relationship to Squire Boone's family it is difficult to say. Squire's mother, it will be remembered, was a Maugridge, and this William may be a cousin of Squire's.
33 Jacob Stover, pioneer, died in 1742.
This whole affair ends in the record-book—just as we of the twentieth century feel it should—with a tinge of poetry that again takes on the aspect of destiny. Sarah Boone, the mother of Daniel, requested from the women's Meeting at Exeter her certificate as traveling minister. She was granted it, inscribed to "Friends in Virginia, Carolina and elsewhere."  

These Quakers had shared the many-sided life of Europe and America, gathering into their lives the various tendencies of the times. They were not freaks of nature; they were not unaccountable mutations nor disconcerting phenomena. Even if they broke the long line of country squires, London "wits," provincial merchants, and pious land-agents they were not out of place. They were an honest, hard-working lot—men who helped to build, not only a new nation, but a new type of nation in a new land.

New England with its intellectual Puritanism conceived the first American culture; Virginia with its decorous scholarship gave birth to the American government; Pennsylvania with its practical idealism became the mother of Commonwealths. To say that Squire Boone was typically Pennsylvanian in no way narrows the proposition, for Henry Adams, New Engander himself, admits that the good sense, the liberality, and the democratic spirit of Pennsylvanians aided in large measure in shaping the American Union. The American, if he can be isolated, has followed the example of William Penn in endeavoring to escape the rigidity of local institutions and the bonds of narrowing prejudice. But now historians look behind William Penn and George Fox when seeking their masters; they look to Menno Simons, to Jacob Boehme, to the spiritual reformers. It is here that the common man began his own Renaissance, his own rebirth of mind and spirit.

The seat of American democracy rests on the intellectual republicanism of Thomas Jefferson, John Locke, and the French philosophers. Yet this is not all. There is a trail of Americanism leading across the pleasant hills of Pennsylvania to the Pietists of Germany, and typical of this trail I cite the Boones of Oley.

The national appeal of Daniel's western exploits seems to derive

*Exeter Meeting Women's Record, under date of 26th of Second Month, 1750 (April).
from our knowledge that a cleavage-line running North and South would have been as fatal to the nation as a cleavage-line running East and West. But the opening of these western lands was in no sense predetermined. Settlement resulted not from a definite, fixed purpose. It came out of an impulse to wander—an impulse impelling Saxon and Swabian alike to push down the Shenandoah and across the Alleghenies seeking richer and finer lands. It was an impulse overcoming all difficulties, surmounting all obstacles, and meeting and driving back the savages lurking in the forests with knives in their hands and revenge in their hearts. It is an impulse which leads men to dream dreams and then move heaven and earth till they are realized.

Sometimes when we reflect on present-day problems we are led to believe that historians are really engaged in construing the past in terms of an impending, inevitable future. Much that masks as history seems to be nothing more than an imperfect idealization of a given, and very often brutal, state of affairs. Edmund Burke believed that in every study of human actions—and history is just that—a certain incalculable element always entered. Motives interpreted in terms of nature, environment, and ideals were never quite all-embracing. To study psychology he went, not to calf-bound volumes, but to the market-place, and he concluded that life should be adjusted, not to a static human reason, but to a progressing human nature.

These American Quakers, and their German brothers as well, believed that they had discovered a spiritual principle destined to revolutionize human nature. They claimed the re-discovery of the divine light within, radiating from God, and leading surely and directly to the apprehension of truth. The issue of their living was obedience or disobedience to this inward revelation; their supreme passion was for the cultivation of this inward inexperience along with an outward life conforming to this vision of their souls.

Squire Boone, trudging dreamingly down the Shenandoah, knew that he had obeyed this inner light. The impulse leading him to take all that was near and dear into larger horizons grew out of that incalculable element within himself. Israel, he conceded, may have been wrong according to the narrowing Quaker standards of the times but even he had followed the light of
Christ within his own soul. And had not William Penn said that as one come to obey this blessed light in its holy conviction it would lead men out of this world's dark and dismal places? Wasn't this the pearl of great price? It was! And Squire Boone, moving into a new west, sought a freer, a higher expression of this inward opening.

If there was ever in history poetry of soul, here it is!

The dramatic arrival in 1835 of Strauss's \textit{Leben Jesu} precipitated a deluge of historic iconoclasm. Scientific theories peopled the past with mythical characters—men who never even lived at all. Highly imaginative conceptions of what history should have been supplanted the matter-of-fact representation of historical ideas. Interpretative schools have arisen until today the reader is stunned by their mere multitude.

The popular conception of Daniel Boone is closely allied to Rousseau's conception of the natural man. According to him the prime mark of genius is blanket refusal to imitate. The man who breaks all rules, who forsakes the comforts of the world, who wanders out beyond the furthest limits of civilization to live with beasts—that man, Rousseau said, is triumphantly emerging on a higher life. Rouseau and his followers exalted primitivism. They sought a positive return to nature; and if they were honest with themselves they projected into a mythical past the felt need of their own lives: the need to let themselves go.

This conception of Boone has a grain of truth. But historians of the newer mode are realizing more and more that the dominant trait of history is its individuality. Mankind refuses to be forced into preconceived categories. There are no \textit{a priori} concepts big enough to hold all men. In fact, when you come right down to it, no two men are alike in even the remotest fashion.

The more I read of Daniel the more of an enigma he becomes. To fit him into any artificial category of the mind seems impossible. This enigmatic quality is heightened by the conflicting elements in his make-up. That poetry of soul so evident in his father becomes in his son a dubious quality. The proneness of the Boones to marry at will was equalled only by their insatiable thirst for land. Squire Boone did not share this trait. Of all his tribe he was the least tempted by lands. That he enjoyed
life by living appears a warranted conclusion; he possessed a durable idealism. Significantly enough, it was just this trait which gave the American social revolution its uniqueness: its leaders never gave way either to Toryism or to radicalism. Washington himself ignored the British offers for a compromised peace and refused the sobriquet "citizen." The same was true on a smaller scale with Squire Boone.

But Daniel? I cannot say. Descriptions by his contemporaries paint him as one of nature's noblemen: honest, kind-hearted, liberal. The shadow of his land-dealings must be faced—a shadow that can only be obliterated by further discoveries of fact. Yet above these considerations there rises the problem of historical symbolism: What does Daniel Boone stand for? Rousseau's state of nature was to all practical purposes a dream-land; his simple, naive man more of a myth than Strauss's Jesus. But of one thing about Daniel Boone we are sure. He was not a myth! Fortunately there is a letter, more revealing than a world of facts:

October 17th, 1816.

Dear sister [in-law]
With pleasure I red a later from your sun Samuel Boone who informs me that you are yett living and in good health considering your age. I wright to you to latt you know that I have not forgot you and to inform you of my own situation sence the Death of your sister Rabaccah. I live with Flanders Calaway But am at present at my sun Nathan and in tolerable health you can gass at my feeling by your own as we are so near of one age I need not write you of our satuation as Samuel Bradley or James Grimes can inform you of every surcomstance relating to our family and how we live in this world and what chance we shall have in the next we know not for my part I am as ignerent as a child all the relegon I have to love and fear God believe in Jesus Christ dou all the good to my neighbors and myself that I can and as little harm as I can help and trust in God's mercy for the rest and I believe God never made a man of my prinsipal to be lost, and I flatter myself dear sister that you are well on your way in Christianity give my love to all your children and all my friends. farewell dear sister
Daniel Boon

39 Quoted in Reuben Thwaites Life of Daniel Boone (New York, 1902).
In the final analysis he appears as every man should appear: a positive personality. To isolate characteristics of his later life and trace them to his boyhood in Oley is to sell out at a forced price to the behaviorists. This I refuse to do! Oley certainly gave him birth. Oley certainly nurtured him. But Oley did not make him what he was. His total being, like any man's, sprang from deep, complex, unknowable sources within himself. He was not the product of any environment; he was the product of himself. He built up the being that he was.

Meanwhile there he stands! Debunkers may cast their searchlights upon him. Historians may quibble over facts. Yet Daniel Boone lives today, 200 years after he was born, in the benevolent hearts of men.