

The John Vancleave Family

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John Vancleave, son of Aaron Vancleave and Rachel Schencks, was born in Monmouth County, New Jersey, in 1739, and died in Jefferson County, Indiana, in May, 1812. John went from New Jersey to Rowan County, North Carolina, with his parents in 1751. From there he migrated to Kentucky with the colonists led by Richard Henderson in 1775, and came on to Indiana in 1811. His first marriage was to Mary Shepherd, but the time and place are unknown. At an unknown time, he married his second wife, Rachel Ryker (*nee* Demaree, widow of Gerardus Ryker), in Kentucky. Ryker was killed in the battle of Floyd's Defeat on September 15, 1781.

John Vancleave was at Fort Boonesboro during the Indian siege of that station, and he and his family were at Bryant's Station at the time it was attacked by more than five hundred Indians under Simon Girty and some British officers on August 16-19, 1782. It was during this attack that John Vancleave, Jr., who was then about fifteen years old, distinguished himself by shooting an Indian, who was standing on a high stump overlooking the Fort.

About a year previous to the attack on Bryant's Station, John Vancleave and his family were living at the station of his brother-in-law, Squire Boone, Jr., who married Jane Vancleave (widow of—Cleft) in 1765 in North Carolina. The inhabitants of the Squire Boone Station, becoming alarmed about the Indians in the country, decided to remove to Fort Boonesboro for greater safety. They started on September 14, 1781. Squire Boone was suffering from a gunshot wound inflicted by an Indian bullet, and he, with his son Isaiah and a few others, remained behind to look after some stock. The party had proceeded about ten miles, and were in the neighborhood of Long Run, when they were attacked by the Indians.

Mary Vancleave, wife of John, was carrying one of her twin daughters (Nancy), and her oldest daughter, Rachel, was carrying the other twin (Sally). When attacked by the Indians, they were in the maze of a great forest. Mary was killed and Nancy was carried away. The other girls were taken prisoners, but Rachel still clung to Sally, who

began to cry and fret. The Indians were almost ready to kill the child, when a party of horsemen from Boonesboro made a dash to the Indians and rescued the prisoners. The rest of the family, it seems, had fled for their lives pursued by the savages. Nancy, who was carried away by the Indians, was never seen again and her fate was never learned. This Indian attack has since been known as the "Battle of Boone's Defeat," although Squire Boone was not present at the time.

Two of the Vancleave boys, Aaron and Benjamin, were slender and fleet of foot, so they made their escape by following the horsemen. John Vancleave, Jr., a fleshy boy, could not run as fast as the others and was left behind. He made his escape by crawling into a hollow log and remaining there all night. The next morning he heard the scouts who were looking for the dead and came out of the log. He was rejoiced to find friends and went with them to the Fort.

When the two boys who escaped by running came to the river, the horsemen would not take them up with them, so they caught hold of the horses' tails and swam across. In that way they made their escape from the savages. After they had crossed the river, they hurried along as fast as they could, encumbered as they were by wet buckskin garments. Their pantaloons were watersoaked and heavy. Soon they began to drag under foot, and retard their progress. One of them rolled his pants up, and they were all right when they got dry, but the other boy cut his off at the bottom, as they gave down and began to drag under foot. When dry, they were too short and had to be thrown away.¹

What was left of the family got together again at Boonesboro. Mary, the wife of John Vancleave, Sr., was found and buried beneath the branches of the forest trees, but the location of her grave is not known. John Vancleave, Sr., and his three brothers, Benjamin, Ralph, and William (Billy) settled on Bullsken Creek, a small stream in Shelby County, Kentucky, but their brother Aaron settled on Salt Creek, near Bearstown, and later in Washington, now Marion County, Kentucky.

Children of John and Mary (Shepherd) Vancleave:

Rachel Vancleave—b. Oct. 25, 1762; d. April 26, 1842; m.

¹ These stories relating to the family of John Van Cleave are based on family traditions.

July 8, 1782, in Lincoln Co., Ky., to Peter Banta (b. May 17, 1760; d. May 12, 1829).

Leah Vancleave—m. Gerardus Ryker, son of Gerardus Ryker and Rachel Demaree.

John Vancleave—b. about 1767; m. Sept. 28, 1794, in Shelby Co., Ky., to his cousin, Eunice Vancleave, daughter of Benjamin. They came to Indiana, and their descendants are found in Indiana and some western states.

Aaron Vancleave—b. about 1769; d. Feb. 24, 1846; m. about 1791, to Elizabeth, daughter of Ralph Griffin. They moved to Montgomery County, Ind.

Benjamin Vancleave—b. about 1771; m. Jan. 1, 1801, in Shelby Co., Ky., to Sarah Kerns (daughter of Peter and Anna Jordan Kerns who came from Ireland); settled in 1814, in Orange County, Indiana, on land now owned and occupied by his great-grandson, Harley Vancleave.

Elizabeth Vancleave—m. March 4, 1794, in Shelby Co., Ky., to Aaron Vancleave, son of Benjamin. They were cousins, as shown in this record. Aaron and Elizabeth came to Montgomery County, Indiana, and have many descendants.

Nancy and Sally, twins—b. about 1781; further record of Sally has not been found; nothing known about Nancy after her capture by the Indians.

Children of John and Rachel (Ryker, nee Demaree) Vancleave:

Peter Vancleave—b. —, d. —, 1829, in Jefferson Co., Ind.; m. (1) Mar. 20, 1808, in Shelby Co., Ky., to Ann Kennedy; m. (2) July 25, 1816, in Jefferson Co., Ind., to Elizabeth Woodfill.

David Vancleave—m. Mar. 14, 1787; d. Nov. 18, 1825; m. Feb. 16, 1809, to Rachel Sweringen. They settled in 1822 in Decatur County, Ind. In 1836, they moved to Boone County, Ind., where they spent the remainder of their lives; buried in Hopewell cemetery, Boone County, Ind.¹

¹ For an article by the author on "The Vancleave Family of Orange County," see *Indiana Magazine of History* (Sept., 1937), XXXIII, 366-367, and *ibid.* (Dec., 1937), XXXIII, 510-511, for an article, "The Benjamin Vancleave Family."