Gabriel Arthur

Families

Posted by: Webmaster

Posted on : 2005/8/26 23:10:00

The story of Gabriel Arthur told by Gene Elmore.

Gabriel Arthur's name when first found described him as a young Englishman, 19 years of age, with little or no education, however highly intelligent. In Virginia he met and became the partner of James Needham and both were intent on entering the fur trade business. They soon met with Abraham Wood and became involved in his plans for opening up the west to exploration and settlement and to cash in on the trade for beaver furs from the Cherokee Indians in the Tennessee area. Wood was also interested in finding a water route across the continent. In 1671 he commissioned Thomas Batts and Robert Fallam, professional explorers, to search the western lands for such a passage. One discovery that they made was the New River which led to their claim to the whole Ohio valley. Batts and Fallam marked four trees as they crossed the mountains to identify their claim. One for the King of England, one for the governor of Virginia, one for Abraham Wood and one for themselves. In 1673 Abraham Wood promoted an expedition by James Needham and Gabriel Arthur to establish direct trade relations between the Colony of Virginia and the Cherokees. This meant breaking the control of the Occaneechi Indians who had been serving as middlemen between the English colony and the Cherokees. Its second purpose was to discover a possible passageway by water to the southwest.

In their first attempt the group was turned back by the Occaneechi. In their second attempt, they made it across the Blue Ridge Mountains and the headwaters of the New River. They then entered the valley of the Tennessee River.

After securing a treaty with the Cherokee, Needham returned to Fort Henry to report and prepare for the third expedition. Arthur was left with the Cherokee to learn their language and customs. Upon Needham's return to the village he was murdered by his guide, an Occaneechi Indian.

Young Arthur was left with the Cherokee, some believing that he was being kept as a prisoner. Apparently he was not treated as a prisoner as he was soon dressing as the Indians and even joined with them on some of their war parties. In Northern Kentucky they met a war party of Shawnee Indians and Arthur was wounded and taken prisoner in their village in Ohio on the Scioto River. He soon became a favorite of the chief who wanted to adopt him into their tribe. Upon learning that he had married a Cherokee Indian maiden in the Cherokee in Tennessee, he was released and allowed to return to his family there.

Later Arthur joined with a number of Cherokee on an exploration trip to the southern part of America. They skirted the western ends of the Blue Ridge and Appalachian Mountains, finally arriving in what is now western Florida on the Gulf of Mexico. On their return trip they traveled westward to the Mississippi River and then followed it to the Ohio and up the Ohio to the mouth of Big Sandy River in Kentucky. They then entered into the present West Virginia and finally found a river that flowed to the East. the stream is now known as Coal River with its mouth at St. Albans. Here the party found a

tribe of friendly Indians known as the Montons. After resting there for a time, they traveled down the Kanawha to the Ohio and later visited the Shawnee on the Scioto. After this visit, they returned to there home in Tennessee.

Due to Gabriel Arthur's trip into present West Virginia, he has been accepted as the first white man to set foot in Kanawha County.

Submitted by Gene Elmore
Source: The Roane County Journel; Vol. 7, Summer, June 2000

Gabriel Arthur
Line of Descent

Gabriel Arthur, young Englishman, first named in American history as 19, married a young Cherokee maiden of the Cherokee Tribe in Tennessee, born ca 1734.

Rebecca Arthur, daughter of Gabriel and Cherokee wife, born 1755, married Alexander "Abner" Lester who was born August 8, 1754 in Lundenburg County, Virginia and died July 1833 in Williamson County, Tennessee.

Sarah " Sally" Lester, who was born ca 1779 in Fincastle, Montgomery County, Virginia, was married 1819 to William King of Pike County, Kentucky.

James Dell King, son of William and Sarah was born February 4, 1813 and killed about 1834 for fathering a female child by a young Cherokee by the name of Sarah Hamilton. The child was named Nancy and adopted by William King who brought the child to "Three Forks of Sandy," Newton, West Virginia.

Nancy Hamilton King was reared by grandparents as their own child. She came to West Virginia in 1834. In 1849, Nancy married James Keen at Newton, West Virginia.

Nathan Smith Keen, son of James and Nancy, married Blanche Upton and lived on the old William King farm on Hollywood Run near Newton, West Virginia.

Leona Hester Keen, daughter of Nathan and Blanche, married George H. Hunt.

Virginia Hunt, daughter of Hester and George, married Gene F. Elmore, May 17, 1935 at Spencer, West Virginia.

Prepared by Gene Elmore in 1995