

The Abduction of Jemima Boone ^[1]

By Megan Morrow, SLNC Government and Heritage Library, July 2023

Jemima Ann Boone was born on October 4th, 1762, in the Yadkin Valley of Rowan County, North Carolina. She was the fourth of ten children born to ~~to~~ Daniel ^[2] and Rebecca Ann Boone. Daniel Boone was a well-known American frontiersman who was important to early colonization and settlement efforts in modern-day Kentucky.

Jemima Boone spent the first 11 years of her life in the Yadkin Valley. Daniel brought Jemima and her mother to Kentucky from North Carolina in September 1773. Daniel traveled frequently between western North Carolina, eastern Tennessee, and Kentucky to scout and survey land. He surveyed land in Kentucky across many different [expeditions](#) ^[3]. Daniel, Jemima, and Rebecca arrived at [Fort Boonesborough](#) ^[4] on September 8, 1775. The arrival of Boone's family was part of a series of settlements by white settlers that ignored the [Proclamation of 1763](#) ^[5]. The Proclamation was a boundary line along the Appalachian Mountains issued after the French and Indian War by the British government. Britain designed it to slow white colonization and maintain positive relations with American Indian tribes. Many of the first settlers of Kentucky came from western North Carolina like the Boones.

Before statehood, Kentucky was a part of a series of land disputes between the [Transylvania Company](#) ^[6], [Richard Henderson](#) ^[7], local American Indian tribes, and the colonies of North Carolina and Virginia. American Indian tribes like the [Cherokee](#) ^[8] and [Shawnee](#) ^[9] used the lands of modern-day Kentucky for hunting and trapping game. Treaties like [Sycamore Shoals](#) ^[10] and the result of [Lord Dunmore's War](#) ^[11] removed American Indian people from the area, angering the Cherokee and Shawnee. [Chief Cornstalk](#) ^[12] of the Shawnee warned white settlers that some Shawnee people would fight against colonization. [Dragging Canoe](#) ^[13], a young Cherokee warrior, pledged that he and other Cherokee people would resist the Treaty of Sycamore Shoals and white colonization. [Hanging Maw](#) ^[14] was another prominent member of the Cherokee tribe who agreed with Dragging Canoe. He and Dragging Canoe both pledged to protect the Cherokee and Kentucky.

White settlers were often attacked or captured as part of American Indian resistance. On July 14, 1776, Jemima (age 13) and her friends Elizabeth and Frances Callaway, were canoeing down the Kentucky River when a Cherokee and Shawnee raiding party ambushed and captured them. It consisted of five men, including two Shawnee braves named "Big Jimmy" and "Catfish," and was led by Hanging Maw. The party captured all three girls and forced them to march north towards the Shawnee villages. The kidnapping of white settlers by Eastern American Indian tribes was common, especially on the frontier. It was used as a means to intimidate white settlers or to replace family members who had been killed. Jemima was specifically targeted by Hanging Maw, because he recognized her as Daniel's daughter from the signing of the Treaty of Sycamore Shoals. Both the Boone family and the prominent members of the Cherokee were present for the signing, and Daniel Boone was one of the main architects of Kentucky's white colonization. Hanging Maw knew that his daughter would be a valuable political bargaining tool. The girls did everything they could to delay the war party after their capture, complaining that they were tired, or that their feet hurt, or even falling, to delay the party's progress. Jemima worked hardest to slow the party down, and in an effort to keep moving forward, her captors stole a horse and made Jemima ride it. This didn't work in their favor. Jemima intentionally kicked and pinched the horse, causing it to jump and throw her off its back. Her captors conceded and released the horse.

Boone and the Callaways also worked to ensure that their families were able to find them, using tracking and trail practices learned from their families. They broke branches, and left behind berries, leaves, and twigs to create a trail. Three days after their capture, a rescue party ambushed the Cherokee and Shawnee raiding party. The rescue party of nine consisted of family members and other men who knew the girls, and was led by Jemima's father. The rescuers wounded two of the American Indian war party and killed one during this short battle. The others scattered in retreat and left the girls behind.

Many of the rescuers were stunned to discover the girls weren't in any way harmed, though this treatment aligned with Shawnee cultural values. The Shawnee tribe valued women as an important cultural and productive element. Harming them would have greatly disrupted social customs and agricultural production of the Shawnee people. Jemima herself stated, "The Indians were kind to us, as much so as they could have been, or the circumstances permitted."

Jemima married Flanders Isham Callaway a few months after her capture. Accounts indicate they married in late 1776 or early 1777 in the state of Kentucky; at the time of their marriage Jemima was 14 and Flanders was 24. Boone and Callaway had 19 children: Sarah "Sally" Boone, George Hamilton, Sarah, Frances, Susan, John Boone, Flanders, Mary, Capt. James Richard, Francis "Fannie," Susannah Boone, Flanders Jr., Tabitha, Larkin, Elizabeth Boone, Richard, Minerva Boone, Daniel Boone, and Emaline Robert Callaway.

Jemima died on August 30th, 1834, in Warren County, Missouri. She is buried at Old Bryan Farm Cemetery in Marthasville, Warren County, Missouri. Jemima's capture illustrated life on the frontier for women and girls, as well as the American Indian resistance to white colonization. Her capture was also the inspiration for James Fenimore Cooper's book, [The Last of the Mohicans](#) ^[15]. Cooper published the book in 1826, almost fifty years after the event happened. In 1992, more than a century after he wrote *The Last of the Mohicans*, it was turned into a movie filmed in Western North Carolina—at Chimney Rock State Park and in the town of Lake Lure—and in other places in the Blue Ridge Mountains.

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Artifacts:



[26]

Jemima Boone's capture became the subject of many works of art, like Charles Ferdinand Wimar's *The Abduction of Daniel Boone's Daughter by the Indians* (1853). Image courtesy of the [Mildred Lane Kemper Art Museum](#) [27].



^[28]Another depiction of *Jemima Boone's capture*, *Callaway, Jemima Boone, 1762-1829*, was created by S. Merrick, around 1860. Image courtesy of the Library Company of Philadelphia.

26 July 2023

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