

# The Wilderness Road; A Description of the Routes of Travel by Which the Pioneers and Early Settlers First Came to Kentucky Volume 2

Thomas Speed

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This historic book may have numerous typos and missing text. Purchasers can usually download a free scanned copy of the original book (without typos) from the publisher. Not indexed. Not illustrated. 1886 edition. Excerpt: ... The Ohio River Route. It would naturally seem that the way to Kentucky by the Ohio River would have been preferred to the Wilderness Road by the early immigrants. A broad, deep stream, with a gentle current, and no obstruction from Pittsburgh to Louisville, would strike the mind as a provision of nature, by which population might be carried westward after passing the mountains. But the experiences of those who made the voyage were so severe, and the accounts which went back of delays, hardships, and dangers were so terrifying, it excites no wonder that the toilsome journey by way of Cumberland Gap was selected, even by those who came from the Northern States. Though Pittsburgh had been a military post since 1754, it could afford but little aid to families bound for Kentucky in the earlier stages of the emigration. In 1775 it really had no more inhabitants than Boone and Henderson had gathered that same year at Boonesboro. It was ten years afterward, when its population had reached a thousand, that it began to be, as McMaster says, "the centering point of emigrants to the West," from whence "travelers were carried in keelboats and Kentucky flat-boats and Indian pirogues down the waters of the Ohio." The difficulty of procuring such transportation must be taken into account. It was a tedious process to prepare the lumber and construct boats at that starting point in the wilderness, for Pittsburgh itself was in the depths of the wilderness. It required courage of the highest order to put out from that post for a river voyage of weeks, and no friendly shelter or harbor at which to stop on the way. It was known that the banks were infested with Indians, and to be attacked on the water was more dreadful than upon land. The boats were rude...

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