

# The Pringle Tree<sup>1</sup>

Among the soldiers who garrisoned Fort Pitt, were William Childers, John and Samuel Pringle and Joseph Linsey. In 1761 these four men deserted from the fort and ascended the Monongahela as far as to the mouth of George's creek (the site afterwards selected by Albert Gallatin for the town of Geneva). Here they remained awhile; but not liking the situation crossed over to the head of the Youghogany; and encamping in the glades, continued there about twelve months.

In one of their hunting rambles, Samuel Pringle came on a path, which he supposed would lead to the inhabited part of Virginia. On his return he mentioned the discovery and his supposition, to his comrades, and they resolved on tracing it. This they accordingly did, and it conducted them to Looney's creek, then the most remote western settlement. While among the inhabitants on Looney's creek, they were recognized and some of the party apprehended as deserters. John and Samuel Pringle succeeded in making an escape to their camp in the glades, where they remained 'till sometime in the year 1764.

During this year, and while in the employ of John Simpson (a trapper, who had come there in quest of furs), they determined on removing farther west. The Pringles kept up the Valley River (Cheat River) till they observed a large right-hand fork (now Buchannon) which they ascended some miles; and at the mouth of a small branch (afterward called Turkey run) they took up their abode in the cavity of a large Sycamore tree. The stump of this is still to be seen and is an object of no little veneration with the immediate descendants of the first settlers.

The situation of these men, during a residence here of several years, although rendered somewhat necessary by their previous conduct, could not have been very enviable. Deserters from the army, a constant fear of discovery filled their minds with inquietude. ---In the vicinity of a savage foe, the tomahawk and scalping knife were ever present to their imaginations. ---Remote from civilized man, their solitude was hourly interrupted by the frightful shrieks of the panther, or the hideous howlings of the wolf. And though the herds of Buffalo, Elk, and Deer, which gamboled sportively around, enabled them easily to supply their larder; yet the want of salt, of bread, and of every species of kitchen vegetable, must have abated their relish for the, otherwise, delicious loin of the one, and haunch of the others. The low state of their little magazine too, while it limited their hunting, to the bare procurement of articles of subsistence, caused them, from a fear of discovery, to shrink at the idea of being driven to the settlements, for a supply of ammunition. And not until they were actually reduced to two loads of powder, could they be induced to venture again into the vicinity of their fellow men. In the latter part of the year 1767, John left his brother, and intending to make for a trading post on the Shenandoah, appointed the period of his return.

Samuel Pringle, in the absence of John suffered a good deal. The stock of provisions left him, became entirely exhausted. One of his loads of powder was expended in a fruitless attempt to shoot a buck. His brother had already delayed his return several days longer than was intended and he was apprehensive that he had been recognized, taken to Fort Pitt and would probably never get back. With his remaining load of powder however, he was fortunate enough to kill a fine buffalo; and John soon after returned with the news of peace, both with the Indians and French. The two brothers agreed to leave their retirement.

Their wilderness habitation was not left without some regret. Every object around, had become more or less endeared to them. The tree, in whose hollow they had been so frequently sheltered from storm and tempest, was regarded by them with so great reverence, that they resolved, so soon as they could prevail on a few others to accompany them, again to return to this asylum of their exile.

Returning to the South Branch, they enticed some of the inhabitants to accompany them to the vicinity of Turkey run for the purpose of starting a settlement. Among these were John Jackson with his two sons, George and Edward, John Hacker Alexander and Thomas Sleeth, William Hacker, Thomas and Jesse Hughes, John and William Radcliff and John Brown. John Jackson acquiring land, which included the "Pringle Tree".

<sup>1</sup> Ref: "Chronicles of Border Warfare" by Alexander Scott Withers published ca 1815