AGENT CARON DE BEAUMARCHAIS
He helped persuade a king.

"IT COULD BUT WOUND YOUR VERY SOUL"

The Story of Mary Draper Ingles

(A paper presented by John A. Carnahan to the Kit-Kat Club of Columbus, Ohio on December 16, 1975)

I am going to tell you the story of Mary Draper Ingles. It begins and ends in 1755 in Montgomery County in the New River Valley in Southwest Virginia. I first heard the tale from my aunt when I was six and on my first of many summer stays on her farm in adjacent Pulaski County. It became, and remains, a legend of the region and I heard it many times during my blossoming love affair with the area during the 30's and 40's. I am happy that I have been able to use this occasion to research the story and to verify the basic accuracy of what, in later years, I began to suspect were fictional embellishments.

The story is quite sufficient standing alone. There are several written accounts of Mary's travail, one of which, in a 1968 issue of American Heritage, is excellent. However, my purpose is twofold: to tell the story, and to acquaint you with the New River Valley. There is for me about that area some mystique and romance, and I believe that I can add some depth and breadth to Mary's story by telling you something of the geography, history and development from whence it springs.

Immediately upon the establishment of Jamestown in 1607 there began a steady push to the west toward the mountains. Settlement proceeded apace throughout the Piedmont area east of the Blue Ridge during the 1600's and into the 18th century. The planter-plantation society was healthily rooted in the

Tidewater area by 1755 when this story takes place. But during the early 1600's, there was constant pressure to find a route to the west - a passage through the mountains. It was thought that once such a passage was found, the road to Asia would be open; thus was the state of geography in those early times. Under commission from Governor William Berkeley, Colonel Abraham Wood set out, in 1654, from Fort Henry (now Petersburg) to try to open up trade with the Indians in and beyond the mountains to the west and to find a path or gap through which the westward push could have its outlet. The accounts were uncertain and somewhat inconsistent, but it appears from his rough descriptions that he and his party discovered what is now known as New River, at a point in what is now Pulaski County near where Appalachian Electric Co's Claytor Dam is located. In any event, it is clear that this river, at first called Wood's River, was specifically identified, mapped to some extent, and known to the Colonial government no later than 1671 - the year that Captain Thomas Batts and Robert Fallam, on another expedition for the Crown, reached an area which they described in their journal as follows:

> "Many rivers running west-north-west-and several Runs from the southerly mountains which we saw as we march'd, which run northerly into the great River. After we had traveled about seven miles we came to a very steep descent where we found a great Run, which emptied itself into the great River northerly..."

Now, the significant point about Abraham Wood's discovery in 1654 and Batts' and Fallam's confirmation of that discovery in 1671 is that the New River was a west-flowing river - just what the settlers from earliest times had been anxious to find - a way to the rich world beyond the mountains. At this point I

shall tell you something of what we now know about the New River and a little of the geography and geology of the beautiful and rugged country through which it flows.

The New River is formed by the joinder of the North and South Forks, rising in Ashe County, in the northwest region of North Carolina. It flows generally north across southwest Virginia and into the southeastern corner of West Virginia. After a course of 320 miles, it joins the Gauley River to form the Kanawha which, of course, flows westerly past present-day Charleston, emptying into the Ohio at Point Pleasant. Thus, the New River is a "Mississippi Water" as the Indians and earliest settlers would say. It is said to be the second oldest river on earth, although how the authorities can arrive at such judgments escapes me. It flows, of course, through the Alleghenies, generally described by geologists as "among the oldest mountains on earth - born of powerful upheavals." The whole range - from Maine to Alabama - was formed somewhere between 570,000,000 to 1,100,000,000 years ago, during the Precambrian period. During the Permian period and near the end of the Paleozoc Era, about 250,000,000 years ago, those mountains through which the New River flows were formed, in the course of the so-called "Appalachian Revolution." It was then that there was a "great folding of mountains, a vast interior crumpling."

> "As parts of the earth buckled into folds, cracked and faulted, other parts were uplifted - sometimes in the parallel ridges distinctive to the Appalachian - and thrust faults served to move one rockmass atop another - Ancient crystallines were lifted in places above more recent sedimentary rock deposits."

Many of the rivers in the area pre-date the Appalachian Revolution; they are older than the mountains and once flowed on a steady westward course to the ancient sea that then covered all of mid-America. Thus, northeast of the New River, the major Appalachian streams flow east into the Atlantic Ocean, often through dramatic passages called water gaps, while southwest of the New River, and in the case of that river itself, the rivers, with some exceptions, flow west to the Ohio, and eventually discharge into the Mississippi. When the mountains were thrust up during the Appalachian Revolution, the westward course of many of these rivers was blocked, whereupon they then proceeded to cut out their own routes to the west, creating great gorges and gaps, narrows and canyons, including the great gorge on the New River which is often called the only eastern rival of the Grand Canyon. Even today, the scenery along the New River is at places spectacular and breathtaking. Those who delight in the sport of white-water rafting find challenges, even in 1975, in the New River Gorge, described by one contemporary author as.....

> "wide and powerful with heavy rapids and huge waves. The highest of these rapids are rated Class V - a run for experts unless one is in a guided raft party."

So much for the geography lesson. Now for some history.

By 1755, when the Mary Draper Ingles story begins and ends, Virginia had been a colony for 148 years. George II was on the throne, but Britain's affairs were being run by Robert Walpole and his fellow ministers. The Declaration of Independence was 21 years in the future. Daniel Boone's most famous exploits in the Cumberland Gap lay 12 years ahead. Governing the King's Virginia affairs from his palace in Williamsburg was Robert Dinwiddie,

who had, the year before, in 1754, dispatched his 22-year old captain, George Washington, to Fort Necessity to protect the frontier, only to learn, a short time later, of Washington's rout and utter defeat. The French and Indian War (to the British, the Seven Years War) had been in progress for over a year. Only two weeks before Mary's ordeal began, Braddock had met his ignominious demise at Fort Duquesne (now Pittsburgh) at the hands of the French and their Canadian and Indian allies. The "frontier" - then the western slopes of the Blue Ridge - was thus rendered defenseless against Indian ravages, of which more later.

From the earliest beginnings, particularly after the New River had been discovered, various "companies" were formed or chartered by the Crown to open up the valleys west of the Blue Ridge to settlement. It was not until the late 1730's, however, that emigrants began to find their way as far south as the New River Valley, and only the barest trickle had settled in by the mid-1750's. They were mainly Scotch-Irish, pushed out of Counties Donegal and Ulster, and not satisfied with the available lands in Pennsylvania. There were also appreciable numbers of hardy Germans, and some English. They formed tiny settlements, mainly with distinct religious orientations. (There were, for example, the "Ephrata Brethren," who had been ousted from the Sabbatarian Cloister at Ephrata in Lancaster, Pennsylvania and had founded the settlement known as Mahanaim on the New River. Although in many respects they lived unusually enlightened lives - they encouraged printing and the spread of learning (one had supervised Benjamin Franklin in writing a German hymnbook) - they were a puzzling people, different, to say the least. They lived without women, grew

amazingly long beards, went bareheaded, did not sleep in beds, held their Sabbath on Saturday, spent much time in contemplation, and walked everywhere single-file.) But, despite the inroads by hardy and courageous people such as these, settlement in the New River valley was sparse. Cabins (there were no "houses") were few and far between. This was not the storybook Virginia of popular histories. The "companies" did not find it easy to encourage and persuade families to open up the lands south of the Shenandoah Valley. Those leaders who worked most diligently to that end earned their commissions. One, James Patton, with his son-in-law, John Buchanan, figured prominently in civilizing the territory. He paid a dear price for his efforts - he lost his life, as you will hear, on the same day and at the same place where Mary Draper Ingles' story begins. Life on the frontier - in the valleys of the Appalachians west of the Blue Ridge - was, after all, not the life of the planter on the James or Potomac.

> "On the tidewater rivers a race of planters called 'Tuckahoes,' living on large estates, dressing richly, riding in coaches and attending the Church of England; past the mountains hardy settlers called 'Cohees,' clearing the land, building houses and churches, and making a new Virginia in the wilderness; and still further toward the Alleghanies hardy frontiersmen who have set their feet on the very outposts of civilization. Between these Virginians of the Tidewater and the Tramontane there is only a general resemblance; and in the manner of living of the two extremes, none whatever. While the planter of the seaboard is asleep in his curtained bed, the frontiersman is already half-way up the mountain, looking keenly for the deer or bear that is to supply his family with food. As the one enters his fine coach to go and bow low at some fine entertainment, the other falls asleep in his cabin, his arm around his wife and child; more than content if the night passes without the savage warhoop ....

And then, of course, there were the Indians. If the loneliness, the physical rigors, the hunger, the poverty, the sheer physical threat of the mountains could not dissuade the prospective settler from venturing into the Valley, perhaps the Indians would. There were the Cherokees to the southwest, the Catawbas to the southeast, and the various Souian clans to the east. And the Shawnees, who would lay violent claim to Mary, were everywhere. Their original settlement had been in the Ohio River Valley, to the west, but in the 17th century they were driven from their home by the Iroquois and they scattered into widely separated areas. Some settled in what is now Illinois, and others in the Cumberland Valley, while one group moved to the southeast. After 1725, the tribe loosely united again in the region of Ohio, where they formed the principal barrier to the advance of white settlers. Nevertheless, after Virginia's treaty with the Iroquois Confederacy at Lancaster in 1744, the Indians, including the generally belligerent Shawnee, left the settlers pretty much alone. That is, until Braddock was defeated at Fort Duquesne in early July, 1755. And that bringsus at last to Mary Draper Ingles.

Mary Draper was born in Philadelphia in 1732. Her father George, from County Donegal, apparently first came into the New River Valley in about 1746 and purchased from James Patton 500 acres on the east side of New River in Montgomery County. Around him grew up a tiny settlement which became known as Draper's Meadows. It is the site of the present-day Blacksburg, the home of Virginia Polytechnic Institute. In 1749 George Draper went hunting and never returned. Accounts vary somewhat on where his wife, Eleanor, and his two children, Mary and John, were during these years. But it seems that Mary

traveled with her mother and brother from Pennsylvania, by wagon, up the Shenandoah Valley and into Southwest Virginia at Draper's Meadows in 1748. Her husband-to-be, William Ingles, had been born in London in 1729, the son of Thomas Ingles, a Dublin merchant who had owned his own ships and traded to foreign countries, especially the East Indies. Thomas became involved in political troubles in Dublin and wound up on the losing side. His property was confiscated and he was sent along with his sons to Wales as convicts. From Wales they came to America and settled near Chambersburg, Pennsylvania. In 1744 Thomas Ingles, at the urging of James Patton, made a trip up the valley of Virginia and became one of the earliest New River settlers, ultimately choosing to live near Draper's Meadows. It was there, or perhaps earlier during a joint trip down the Valley, that Mary Draper met William Ingles.

Mary was somewhat of a legend even before her great adventure. She was the first English bride in that part of the country, marrying Will Ingles in 1750.

> "Since she had no sisters and little company as a child, she had been something of a tomboy following her brother John everywhere in the surrounding woods. Every stream John could jump, Mary could jump. Every physical feat he could perform she would attempt. In her old age she would tell her grandchildren how she could stand still and jump straight up as high as her head; could stand beside her horse and leap into the saddle unaided; could stand on the floor and jump over a chair. When William Ingles came calling, it is suspected these tomboy antics were not trotted out for viewing, Mary thinking their usefulness long past. For how could she have known what the future would demand of her?"

In 1755 Mary became 23. She and Will had two children - Tom, age 5, and George, age 2 months. Included in the remote and tiny settlement at Draper's Meadows were Mary's mother, Eleanor, her brother John, and John's young wife, Betty, and their infant son. Others of the Ingles family lived in the vicinity also, along with a few others, some whose names have been lost to history. Perhaps in all there were 25 or 30 people living at Draper's Meadows on July 20, 1755; and on that day, it so happened, James Patton, the developer, was visiting in a cabin near Mary and Will's. He was familiar to, and despised by, the Shawnees. They knew him as the author of a negative report about Shawnee character after the Iroquois Council at Onondaga. A party of about sixteen Shawnees - young warriors all - had apparently been watching his comings and goings for a number of days and they had resolved to kill him.

> "Colonel Patton, that morning, after having dressed himself in his uniform and getting his nephew, William Preston, to sew up in the fob of his small clothes thirty English guineas, told him to go to Sinking Creek, to get Lybrook to help take off the harvest, which was ready to cut. Preston went very early. After breakfast, Colonel Patton had sat down to his table to write. The Indian warhoop was raised, and some six or seven of them surrounded the cabin and set it on fire. The Colonel always kept his sword on the table. He rushed to the door with it in his hand and encountered two of them. Patton was almost gigantic in size. He cut two of them down. In the meantime another warrior had leveled his gun, fired and killed the brave old pioneer. Patton fell; the Indians ran off into the thicket and made their escape before any pursuers could be brought together."

In fact, the Shawnees murdered Grandmother Eleanor Draper, Mary's mother. Mary's sister-in-law, Betty Draper, attempted to flee with her infant son. But the Indians shot her through the arm, and she dropped the baby, whereupon the Shawnees seized it and, swinging it by its heels, dashed its brains out against a log wall.

Mary's husband, Will, seeing smoke rising from the settlement - he was off at the harvest - returned unarmed to the scene, but he was set upon by two stout Indians. He fled; they pursued. In attempting to leap over a fallen log, he tripped and fell, thinking that he was done for. But his pursuers lost sight of him in the underbrush and passed him by. Meanwhile, the Shawnees remaining in the settlement threw Mary and her two sons, and Betty Draper, on horseback and forced them to ride west.

The Indians left behind them scenes of devastation and sadness. All through the valley, the massacre had been repeated. Families and settlements were wiped out, crops destroyed, children butchered. In one case, the Shawnees took four small children and hanged them in the presence of their mother and father before doing the parents in themselves. In another, they captured a 12-year old boy, forced him to build a large fire around a stake, tied him to the stake by a length of thong, and then, by beating him with sticks, compelled him to run around the stake upon an ever-shortening tether, until he finally died in the flames. The rampage continued all through the New River and Holston River Valleys. John Madison, Clerk of Augusta County, wrote to his cousin, Colonel James Madison, reporting that...

"Four families on their flight from a branch of New River this minute passed my house, who say that five men were murdered at the house of Ephraim Vause of Roanoke, since the death of Col. Patton. 'Tis shocking to think of the calamity of the poor wretches who live on the Holston and New Rivers, who for upwards of a hundred miles have left their habitations, lost their crops and vast numbers of their stock. Could you but see, dear friend, the women who escaped crying after their murdered husbands, with their helpless children hanging on to them, it could but wound your very soul."

Well, one's soul would surely have been wounded upon viewing the plight that Mary and Betty Draper dound themselves in. The braves prided themselves on their hard-riding abilities and managed to sleep while riding. They expected no less from their captives. Mary, riding beside the wounded Betty, supported her as best she could. Five-year old Tom and his infant brother George at first seemed to think the whole adventure a lark. One account says that "their exuberance looked like bravery to the Shawnees, who from then on treated the boys with primitive respect and kindness."

The Indians paused only briefly for rations of venison and water, and also stopped long enough at the cabin of Phil Barger, an old hermit, to hack off his bearded head, later dropping that grisly trophy at the doorstep of one Mrs. Lybrook.

The whole force continued along the east bank of the New River for about forty miles, then crossed to the opposite bank at the point where the Bluestone River joins the New. Following a trail known only to them, the Indians left the New at its most dangerous point, went up and over Flat Top

Mountain, then back down the opposite side to the Kanawha, not far from where Charleston is today. They camped for a few days at the mouth of Campbell's Creek to take advantage of the game gathered at a salt lick there. This gave Mary a chance to look after her boys and to nurse Betty back to some semblance of health, although Betty remained stupefied by the memory of her infant son's brutal death.

Striking camp, the party followed the southern bank of the Kanawha to its junction with the Ohio, where Point Pleasant is today, then tracked along the southern bank of the Ohio to a point opposite where the Scioto discharges. It was here that Shawnee Town, the main Shawnee village, was located - present-day Portsmouth. They were carried across the river and received with great celebration and festivities. Mary was taken to a hut where she was stripped by squaws who "pinched and prodded her. Then, dressed in buckskin, she was led out for a humiliatingly intimate inspection by the men. Betty was sent to Chillicothe - "she went, wan and submissive, having cared about nothing since her baby's murder." There was then a division of the prisoners. Mary's two boys were taken from her. She never saw little George again; he died in captivity. Tom she would see - but only thirteen years later and after he had become thoroughly Indianized.

For a long while she merely existed. Fortunately, however, she stirred herself to work, and thus missed being destroyed as excess baggage. She was an able seamstress and nurse, handy with herbs - more valuable

alive than dead. Early on, she realized that her husband Will could not conceivably track her down, and she resolved that when the opportunity presented itself she would escape.

She was not the only white person in the village. French traders regularly came through the village to bargain muskets and other goods for furs. There was also another white woman in town. She has been variously known as "The Dutchwoman," "The Mad Dutchwoman," and "Mrs. Bingamin." One recent history of Montgomery County, Virginia identifies her as "probably" the wife of one Henry Bingamin, a settler on the New River who, several years before, had been attacked at his lonely homestead, his wife carried off. All the descriptions of the poor woman are unflattering, one being that she was "fat, phlegmatic, and bestialized from long captivity." This judgment is open to question, although her madness later becomes certifiable enough.

Along about the middle of September, Mary and the Dutchwoman were compelled to accompany a Shawnee party from Shawnee Town to a place on the Kentucky side of the Ohio called Big Bone Lick, located in present Boone County, Kentucky. By all accounts, it was a miserable place, surrounded by swamp and wilderness, a gathering place for animals - in those days even herds of elk and buffalo still roamed in the midwest.

Mary and the Dutchwoman were put to work at the borders of the camp searching for berries, nuts and grapes. During these forays, Mary tried to persuade the Dutchwoman to attempt escape with her, but the older

woman at first would not hear of it. Gradually, however, Mary wore down her reluctance, and she at last agreed to make the try. Here, let me read from a narrative prepared by Mary's son, John Ingles, Sr.:

> ".....my mother being so distressed in being separated from her children and her situation such a disagreeable one that she came to the determined resolution that she wood leave them & try to get Home or dy in the woods & prevailed on an old duch woman that was there and a prisoner too to engage with her in the seemingly Hopeless & daring attempt and as my mother was determined to make the attempt they arranged their plan which was to get leave of the Indians to go a peace from the Lick with a view to Hunt & geather some grapes & provided themselves with a blankett and tomehock a peace & perhaps a knife and for fear of being Suspected took no other kind of clothing onley what was on them & those a good deal worn & started & as the Bigg Bone lick was 90 or 100 miles farther off than the camp and some distance from the Ohio River they started in the after part of the day & steered their cource to strike the Old River which was all the guide they had to direct them. I have frequantly Heard my mother say when she left the lick that she exchanged her tomehock with one of three frenchmen who was all sitting on One of the large Bones that was there and cracking walnuts at night the two women not returning the Indians became very uneasy thinking they had got a little from the camp & were lost & used every exertions to find them not mistrusting their act and when they could not find them concluded they had perished in the woods or ...killed by some wild beast...."

In fact, the women doubled back several times to throw the Indian search party off their trail and at sundown they hid. The Indians soon gave up the search, and the women set out for the Ohio. What they were undertaking, unwittingly to some extent, is well described in the American Heritage version:

> "It does not strain credulity to surmise that the two women were overseen by a guardian angel. Most of their route would be through country that had never felt the tread of a white foot, through forests that had been standing for untold centuries, through the haunts of beasts that had seldom seen an interloper. In that land and in those days, animate danger did not lurk; it leapt unafraid. And even though explorers and land promoters later admitted that this countryside teemed with wildcats, bears, cougars, and wild boars, traditional accounts maintain that Mary Draper Ingles and Mrs. Bingamin never encountered anything even as fearsome as a polecat. But they would find that not all the dangers in these forests were four-footed.
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> "For Mary this was no unthinking plunge into the unknown. She knew well enough what a stupendous chunk of country lay between her and home. Had there been a string-straight path from Big Bone Lick to Draper's Meadows, with not a single hill along the way, it would have measured two hundred and eighty miles. No one will ever know the exact length of the tortuous, up-and-down path the women had to travel - but it was close to eight hundred miles...."

They arrived at the Ohio about forty miles east of where Cincinnati is today, and then struck out eastward along the southern bank. By comparison to what was to come, this part of their journey was almost idyllic. It was late September, probably warm and pleasant. They lived off the land - "pohickory" nut, chinquapins, papaws. At night they burrowed into the riverbank and huddled together under their stolen blankets. When they came to a point near Shawnee Town, they detoured inland to avoid detection. This brought them one of their few lucky strokes. They came upon a deserted cabin in the midst of a meagre corn patch. In the corn patch was an old sway-backed horse

wearing a bell. They slept in the cabin, breakfasted on raw corn, took the horse, and moved on, taking turns riding. He has been described as a "woebegone wretch," an "old skate that should have been riding, not ridden," but he was a source of transportation and encouragement. When they arrived at the Big Sandy, they were stymied; neither could swim, and the river was uncrossable where it empties into the Ohio. They finally turned to the south, along the west bank of the Big Sandy, and continued until they found a "ford" made of driftwood. They crossed over the crude bridge, attempting to take the old horse with them. But he plunged through into the icy waters and became stranded. The women pushed and pulled, but finally had to abandon him.

It was now October, and the weather - particularly at night - was cold. Their clothes were tattered and their moccasins worn out. Fruits and berries were no longer plentiful, and, to make matters worse, the Dutchwoman began to inveigh against Mary for persuading her to escape from the relative comfort of the Indian camp. Here is John Ingles' account:

> "In all this extrematy the old duch woman getting disheartened & discouraged got very ill natured to my mother & made some attempts to kill her blaming my mother for perswaiding her away & that they would dye in the woods and as she was a good deal stouter and stronger than my mother she used every means to try to please the old woman & keep her in a good Humer..."

Along the way they began to speculate about which of them would eat the other. This was only half in jest, since the Dutchwoman was more and more living up to the adjective "mad." She constantly accused Mary of spiriting her away against her wishes. They even drew lots to determine which of them would feast on the other. Mary lost, and in order to keep the Dutchwoman from taking the drawing seriously she began to regale her with tales (false) of Will Ingles' great wealth and how he would reward her for helping his wife to get safely home. Meanwhile, time and again, they had to backtrack, detour inland, in order to get over and around various obstacles. Upon arriving at an unfordable river, as in the case of the Big Sandy, they would trek long miles inland along one bank, cross at the nearest fordable point to the opposite bank, then trek back to the southern bank of the Ohio, having traveled many miles without going one mile nearer to their objective. Mary knew that the great Indian east-west path or "trace" ran along the southern bank of the Kanawha, and although they must have come to and crossed a bewildering variety of streams that resembled that river, they managed nevertheless to find the Kanawha. They then struck out east and south toward home. They must at that point have felt some measure of comfort because they could clearly discern their progress and could see ahead of them terrain more familiar to them than the Ohio bottoms. In truth, however, "there was as much cause for despair as for rejoicing."

Ahead lay the mountains; real winter was setting in with a vengeance, and they were faced with icy winds and icier streams. Their clothes had become mere strips which they used to wrap around their feet, their moccasins having long since disintegrated, using the old blankets as protection against the cold. Food had become nonexistent. They seized upon anything that even appeared to be edible, including green leaves that gave them violent cramps and racked them with spasms of diarrhea. Their only filling meal on this stretch was a dead raccoon, or deer's head, that they found lodged in some driftwood. Out of consideration for your digestion, I shall not describe that feast for you. All the while, the Old Dutchwoman found energy and time to revile Mary with increasing virulence and temper.

As they moved slowly along the southern side of the Kanawha, the old process of laborious inland detours set in again. Each day they saw many animals - the woods abounded with them - but thye had no way of killing or trapping one, their tomahawks long since lost or traded away. They were, quite literally, starving. The Dutchwoman was now becoming rabid, "her rage against her companion increasing with her pangs of hunger." At last they came again to the mouth of Campbell's Creek, where the plundering Indian band had first stopped on its way west. From here on the trip was an unadorned nightmare. Since the two women continued to follow the river, and not the Indian shortcut over the mountains, there were no familiar landmarks for Mary to get her bearings by. They were now in

the vicious New River Gorge - thirty miles of rampaging river between sheer cliffs or palisades. Experienced mountaineers would find it tough going today. These two emaciated, starving, weak and freezing pioneers, at odds not only with the elements but with each other, entered the canyon in mid-November, facing an icy winter gale. Some of the landmarks, then nameless, may sound familiar to those of you who travel the West Virginia Turnpike - Penitentiary Rock, Pope's Nose, Lovers' Leap, Hawk's Nest, War Ridge, Stretcher's Neck - mean, rough country, unfriendly today, unforgiving in 1755. They had to crawl and scramble, scratch and claw their way along. There was no smooth terrain, no paths, no traces. Even the Indians stayed out. Brush, vines, boulders choked the canyon bottom, fallen trees, mudslides, and of course the New River itself. At many places it simply eddies in and eliminates any shoreline. The only choice was to turn back or plunge in - waist-deep. But make it through the Gorge they did, and at last arrived at a more hospitable point - where Hinton now is, but here they were faced with the Bluestone. So, once again, upstream they went, to cross over, then back downstream to the New River. They were on its friendly side - the south and west. But Mary was now forced by circumstance to cross over to the unfriendly side. Here I will let American Heritage tell the tale:

> "They were about opposite the mouth of the East River, not more than forty-five miles in a straight line from home. It was twilight.

> Suddenly, according to the Ingles family account, the hunger-maddened Mrs. Bingamin leapt on the tired and unsuspecting Mary. So near collapse were both women that even this feeble tussle could have resulted in the death of one or both of them.
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> "Horrified, Mary fought back. The woman's hands were around her as they grappled on the frozen ground. Mary finally wrenched free, and then fled - running, falling, running again - into a wilderness that was now less cruel than her erstwhile companion.
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> "When she could run no more, Mary lay gasping in the shelter of a birch copse, praying that the gathering darkness would conceal her. 'The Dutch woman' lurched past, fearfully close to Mary's hiding place. But eventually the sounds of her pursuit faded away down the river..."

The following day, Mary continued her travels, still on the same side of the river as the Old Dutchwoman. But here she had her second stroke of luck. She found, under the riverbank, half-hidden and waterlogged, an abandoned Indian birch canoe. She had never handled a canoe, and there was no paddle. Nevertheless, using a piece of driftwood as an oar, she launched herself. The water was low, and she made it over to the east bank, where she shortly had her third stroke of luck. She came upon a tumble-down log cabin, probably a trapper's. She slept indoors on the earth floor and on the following day she even managed to dig up two gnarled turnips from the garden patch. While she was still there, she heard a call from the opposite bank. Sure enough, there was her traveling companion,

old Mrs. Bingamin, pleading for forgiveness and begging Mary to come across for her. Mary would have none of it, and the two continued their parallel paths on opposite sides of the river, with the old woman constantly importuning Mary to rescue her. Finally she had to detour inland around a swamp, and Mary lost sight - and sound - of her. She was close to home, but perhaps the worst part of the journey was yet to come. She had to go up and over Wolf's Mountain and there encountered something with which I am somewhat personally familiar - rhododendron thickets sometimes known locally as "laurel hells." In the mountains today you will find these huge, dark, green, silent tangles. The rhododendron grow so high that you can walk in and under great groves of them and become almost lost to the world, surrounded on all sides by leafy silent eeriness. It is quite easy to lose your bearings and sense of direction, even at midday. Nevertheless, Mary made it through the thickets over Wolf Mountain and Angel's Rest, a misnomer if ever there was one. The last great barrier now faced her - Anvil Rock - a 280-foot limestone cliff. It would be a discouragement to any climber. Imagine what it was to Mary at twilight on a cold November day, starved and weak as she was. In the dusk she could see no way over. It is sheer, and devoid of any ledges or handholds. Furthermore, it leans outward from the vertical. The river at its base is impassable - deep and swirling with treacherous whirlpools. Mary almost gave up hope. She fell to the ground and slept -

or passed out - until dawn. Then, in the cold sun of early morning she thought she could see a way up. And so, frozen to the marrow, exhausted and starved, she crawled and scratched her way over Anvil Rock. It took her the day to do it. When she told the story, she said that this was the worst part of her ordeal, that she was tempted more than once simply to let go, to drop to the jagged rocks below and thus to find quick relief. But not only did she make it to the top, but began her descent on the eastward slope in the twilight. Here the country was gentler and had a familiar look. At the base of Anvil Rock she found a corn patch and yelled in the hope of raising its owner. She fell asleep thinking that no one had heard her, but awoke shortly to find an old neighbor, Adam Harmon, and his two sons standing over her. From there on, it was easy going. After being nursed back to relative strength, she returned to Draper's Meadows, only to find that all of the inhabitants had moved to a fort located nearby at Dunkards' Bottom, where Will Ingles had established a ferry service. There she was greeted by friends with what has been described as a "certain disbelief." Her husband Will and her brother John had gone into eastern Tennessee to bargain with the Cherokees to intercede with the Shawnees for her release. They had returned to the area, however, and, unbeknownst to their neighbors, were camped only seven miles away when Mary returned. They were reunited the next morning, amidst "considerable rejoicing."

Mary begged the villagers to form a search party to look for Mrs. Bingamin, but the Harmons had been so horrified at Mary's tale of the old woman's cannibalism that at first they refused to take any steps to find her. Finally, however, a party was formed and sent out. They found the old woman in relative safety and comfort in another abandoned cabin on the west bank of the New River. According to some accounts, she was rejoined with her husband and, although she and Mary did meet and forgive one another, she and her husband returned to their native Pennsylvania, unable to bear the stories and the reproachful looks.

Despite some continued raids by the Indians and the other dangers of frontier life, most of the settlers remained in the New River Valley after the 1755 massacre. Betty Draper was located and ransomed back to her husband six years after her capture. Mary's infant son George, of course, died in captivity. Tom remained with the Shawnees another thirteen years, until he was eighteen. Having grown to manhood among the savages, it was difficult for him to return to the white man's way, and his father had a time persuading him. He lived a violent life along the Mississippi, finally settling in Natchez, lost to his Virginia family.

As for Mary, she lived in constant fear of Indian attack and persuaded Will to move back east across the Blue Ridge to the relative safety of Bedford County. Shortly afterwards, Fort Vause, where they had been

living on the New River, was attacked by a party of French and Indians and all of the inhabitants killed or captured. The Ingles remained in Bedford County for several years but finally returned to the New River Valley where they raised five children. Will died in 1782, but Mary lived until 1815, when she was 83. She saw the birth of the nation and watched the frontier push ever westward. She was able, I am sure. to tell the emigrants a thing or two about what it was like out there.

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