

JOHN BRUCE

1787 Madison County Virginia tax list-district of Andrew Kennedy
John Bruce 8 blacks 6 horses 16 head of cattle

In early 1780, when this area was still a part of Kentucky County, Virginia, one of the most active surveyors on the western branches of Paint Lick Creek was John Kennedy. In his position as assistant to George May, Surveyor of Kentucky County, he ran some of the earliest surveys in what is today Garrard County. In later years several of these early surveys became the subject of litigation after a more complete survey of the area was carried out in the early 1780's under the direction of James Thompson, Surveyor of Lincoln County.

The two surveys of John Bruce, a Revolutionary soldier from Virginia, fit into this pattern. He, like many others, had land surveyed here long before he actually settled on it. This often resulted in another settler occupying the land during the interval only to lose it later in court.

The Bruce surveys were based on the certificates of settlement and preemption Bruce had purchased from Thomas Pettit and were to include Pettit's Spring. Evidently Pettit had established a claim there in 1775 and moved on. In 1776 Solomon Carpenter built a cabin by this spring. He sold his rights to a claim there to James Estill who was able to obtain a preemption certificate for 1000 acres at the site. Estill was involved at this time with his station on Muddy Creek south of today's Richmond and did not occupy or survey the land. It is not clear whether Carpenter or Estill knew of the earlier claim but it is possible they did since neither remained there and the survey was delayed past the usual time.

In 1780 Bruce had the site, probably unoccupied at the time, surveyed by John Kennedy. He does not appear to be living in Kentucky at that time so I assume he returned to Virginia.

In 1781, John Boyle, an associate of Estill, settled by the spring which came to be known as Boyle's Spring rather than Pettit's Spring. He later acquired his own survey on Drake's Creek and moved to it. Following the death of James Estill in 1782, Estill's heirs had a 1000 acre survey run that included this spring.

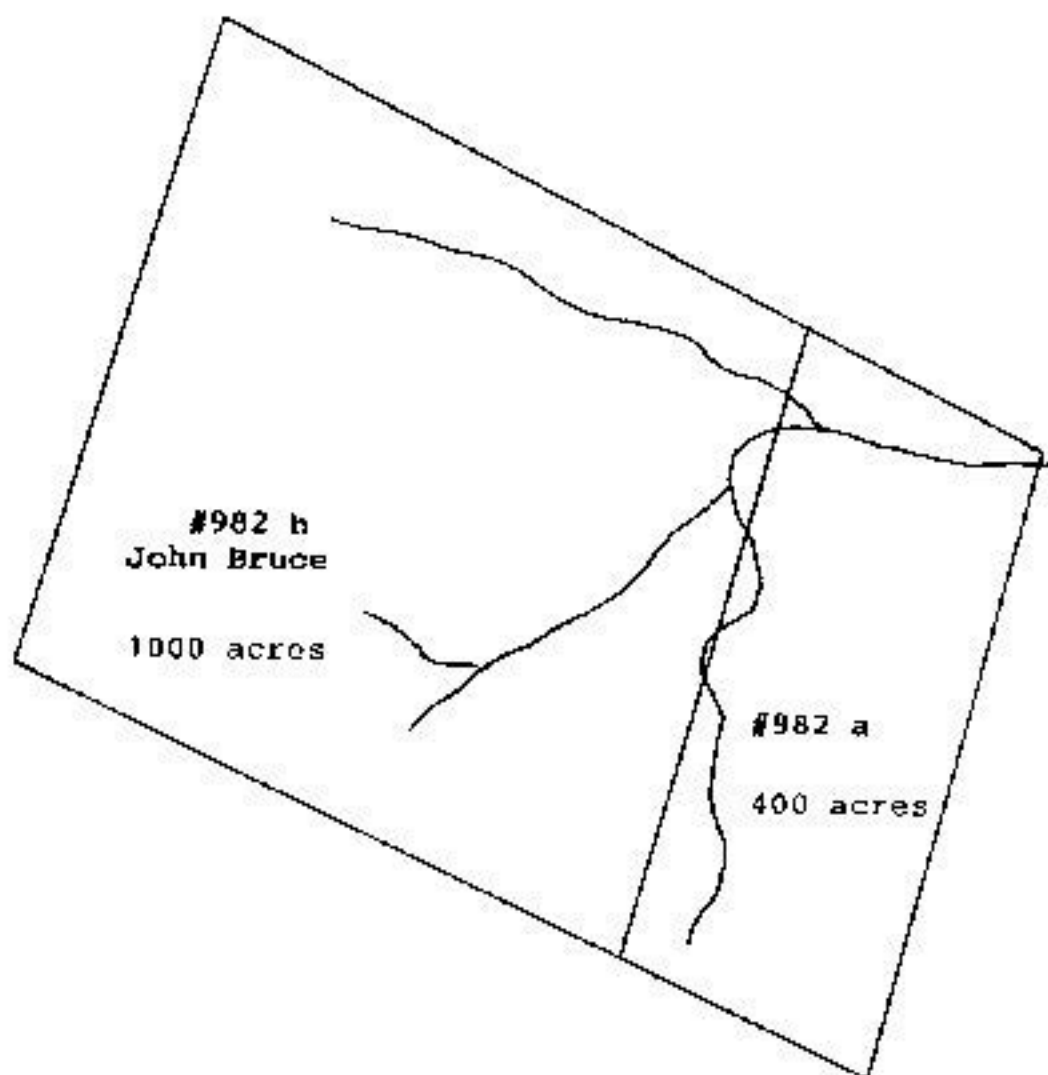
It seems unlikely John Bruce settled on his survey on Back Creek before the year 1788 as he is not listed on the 1787 tax list in the district of Michael McNeely where the tract lay. When he did settle there he chose the western portion of the survey, south of today's Point Leavell, probably due to the fact that Benjamin Estill was living on the disputed eastern section.

Surveyed 6-18-1780

by John Kennedy
George May

Beginning at a poplar, a corner to his settlement, Thence North 75° West 400 poles to a sugar tree, North 15° East 400 poles to an elm, South 75° East 400 poles to a black locust, South 15° West 400 poles to the Beginning.

Granted 12-20-1783 to John Bruce by Benjamin Harrison,
Governor of Virginia



This survey extends from south of Point Leavell to the East Fork of Back Creek in Flatwoods.