

The Expedition of Batts and Fallam:
A Journey from Virginia to beyond the Appalachian Mountains,
September, 1671.

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The Expedition of Batts and Fallam: A Journey from Virginia to beyond the Appalachian mountains, in September, 1671.

Thomas Batts,¹ Thomas Woods and Robert Fallows having received a commission from the honourable Major General Wood for the finding out the ebbing and flowing of the Waters on the other side of the Mountaines in order to the discovery of the South Sea accompanied with Penecute a great man of the Apomatack Indians and Jack Weason, formerly a servant to Major General Wood with five horses set forth from the Apomatacks town about eight of the clock in the morning, being Friday Sept. 1, 1671. That day we traveled above forty miles, took up our quarters and found that we had traveled from the Okenechee path due west.

Sept. 2. we traveled about forty miles and came to our quarters at Sun set and found that we were to the north of the West.

Sept. 3. we traveled west and by south and about three o'clock came to a great swamp a mile and a half or two miles over and very difficult to pass. we led our horses thro' and waded twice over a River emptying itself in Roanoake River. After we were over we went northwest and so came round and took up our quarters west. This day we traveled forty miles good.

Sept. 4. We set forth and about two of the clock arriv'd at the Sapiny Indian town. We traveled south and by west course till about even(ing) and came to the Saponys west. Here we were joyfully and kindly received with firing of guns and plenty of provisions. We here hired a Sepiny Indian to be our guide towards the Teteras, a nearer way than usual.

Sept. 5. Just as we were ready to take horse and march from the Sapiny's about seven of the clock in the Morning we heard some guns go off from the other side of the River. They were seven Apomatack Indians sent by Major General Wood to accompany us in our voyage. We hence sent back a horse belonging to Mr. Thomas Wood, which was tired, by a Portugal, belonging to Major General Wood, whom we here found. About eleven of the clock we set forward and that night came to the town of the Hanathaskies which we judge to be twenty five miles from the Saponys, they are lying west and by north in an island on the Sapony River² rich land.

Sept. 6. About eleven of the clock we set forward from the Hanathaskies; but left Mr. Thomas Wood at the town dangerously sick of the Flux, and the horse he roade on, belonging to Major General Wood was likewise taken with the staggers and a failing in his hinder parts. Our course was this day West and by South and we took up our quarters West about twenty miles from the town. This afternoon our horses stray'd away about ten of the clock

Sept. 7. We set forward, about three of the clock we had sight of the mountains, we traveled twenty-five miles over hilly and stony Ground our course westerly.

Sept. 8. We set out by sunrise and Traveled all day a west and by north course. About one of the clock we came to a Tree mark'd in the past with a coal M. AN i. About four of the clock we came to the foot of the first mountain went to the top and then came to a small descent, and so did rise again and then till we came almost to the bottom was a very steep descent. We traveled all day over very stony, rocky ground and after thirty miles travill this day we came to our quarters at the foot of the mountains due west. We passed the Sapony River twice this day.

Sept. 9. We were stirring with the sun and travelled west and after a little riding came again to the Sapony River where it was very narrow, and ascended the second mountain which wound up west and by south with several springs and fallings, after which we came to a steep descent at the foot whereof was a lovely descending valley about six miles over with curious small risings. Our course over it was southwest. After we were over that we came to a very steep descent, at the foot whereof stood the Tetera Town³ in a

¹ Thomas Batts (Batt, Batte) was in Virginia as early as 1667. He was a son of John Batts and grandson of Robert Batts, fellow and vicarmaster of University College, Oxford. With his brother Henry, to whom Beverly ascribes the leadership of the present expedition, he patented five thousand, eight hundred, seventy eight acres of land in the Appomatox Valley, August 29, 1668. Henry Batts was burgess for Charles City County in 1691. Thomas Batts died in 1698, and his will is on record in Henrico County.

² This is the Staunton River.

³ Near Salem, Virginia.

very rich swamp between a branch and the main River of Roanoke circled about with mountains. we got thither about three of the clock after we had travelled twenty-five miles. Here we were exceedingly civilly entertain'd.

(Sept. 9-11) Saturday night, Sunday and monday we staid at the Toterias. Perceute being taken very sick of a fever and ague every afternoon, not withstanding on tuesday morning about nine of the clock we resolved to leave our horses with the Toterias and set forward.

Sept. 12. We left the town West and by North we travell'd that day sometimes southerly, sometimes westerly as the path went over several high mountains and steep Vallies crossing several branches and the Roanoke River several times all exceedingly stony ground until about four of the clock Perceute being taken with his fit and verrey weary we took up our quarters by the side of Roanoke River almost at the head of it at the foot of the great mountain. Our course was west by north, having travell'd twenty-five miles. At the Teterias we hired one of their Indians for our guide and left one of the Apomatack Indians there sick.

Sept. 13. In the morning we set forward early. After we had travelled about three miles we came to the foot of the great mountain and found a very steep ascent so that we could scarce keep ourselves from sliding down again. It continued for three miles with small intermissions of better way. right up by the path on the left we saw the porportions of the mon. When we were got up to the top of the mountain and set down very weary we saw very high mountains lying to the north and south as far as we could discern. Our course up the mountain was west by north. A very small descent on the other side and as soon as over we found the vallies tending westerly. It was a pleasing tho' dreadful sight to see the mountains and Hills as if piled one upon another. After we had travill'd about three miles from the mountains, easily descending ground about twelve of the clock we came to two trees mark'd with a coal MANI. the other cut in with MA and several other scratchments.

Hard by a Run just like the swift creek at Mr. Randolph's in Virginia, emptying itself sometimes westerly and sometimes northerly with curious meadows on each (side). Going forward we found rich ground but having curious rising hills and brave meadows with grass about a man's height. 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 travelled about seven miles we came to a very steep descent where we found a great Run,⁴ which emptied itself in to the great River northerly. our course being as the path went, west-south-west. We set forward and had not gone far but we met again with the River, still broad running west and by north. We went over the great run emptying itself northerly into the great River. After we had marched about six miles northwest and by north we came to the River again where it was much broader than at the other two places. It ran here west and by south and so as we suppose round up westerly. Here we took up our quarters, after we had waded over, for the night. Due west, the soil, the farther we went (is) the richer and full of bare meadows and old fields.

Sept. 14. We set forward before sunrise our provisions being all spent we travelled as the path went sometimes westerly sometimes southerly over good ground but stony, sometimes rising hills and then steep Descents as we march'd in a clear place at the top of a hill we saw lying south west a curious prospect of hills like waves raised by a gentle breese of wind rising one upon another. Mr. Batts supposed he saw sayles; but I rather think them to be white cliffs.⁵ We marched about twenty miles this day and about three of the clock we took up our quarters to see if the Indians could kill us some Deer. being west and by north, very weary and hungry and Perceute continued very ill yet desired to go forward. We came this day over several brave runs and hope tomorrow to see the main River again.

Sept. 15. Yesterday in the afternoon and this day we lived a Dog's life--hunger and ease. Our Indians having done their best could kill us no meat. The Deer they said were in such herds and the ground so dry that one or other of them could spy them. About one of the clock we set forward and went about fifteen miles over some good, some indifferent ground, a west and by north course till we came to a great run which empties itself west and by north as we suppose into the great River which we hope is nigh at hand. As we march'd we met with some wild gooseberries and exceeding large haws with which we were forced to feed ourselves.

Sept. 16. Our guide went from us yesterday and we saw him no more till we returned to the Toras. Our Indians went aranging betimes to see and kill us some Deer or meat. One came and told us they heard a

⁴ This "great run" was really the New River and identical with their "great river." That they realized this is shown by the second sentence following and by the last words of the entry for Sept. 14.

⁵ Mr. Batts supposed he saw houses but Mr. Fallam rather took them to be white cliffs..." New York Colonial Documents. This sentence shows that Fallam wrote the journal.

Drum and a Gun go off to the northwards. They brought us some exceeding good Grapes and killed two turkies which were very welcome and with which we feasted ourselves and about ten of the clock set forward and after we had travelled about ten miles one of our Indians killed us a Deer and presently afterwards we had sight of a curious River like Apomatack River. Its course here was north and so as we suppose runs west about a certain curious mountains we saw westward. Here we had up our quarter, our course having been west. We understand the Mohecan Indians did here formerly live. It cannot be long since for we found corn stalks in the ground.

Sept. 17. Early in the morning we went to seek some trees to mark, our Indians being impatient of longer stay by reason it was likely to be bad weather, and that it was so difficult to get provisions. We found four trees exceeding fit for our purpose that had been half bared by our Indians, standing after one the other. We first proclaimed the King in these words: "Long live Charles the Second, by the grace of God King of England, Scotland, France, Ireland, and Virginia and of all the Territories thereunto belonging, Defender of the faith etc." firing some guns and went to the first tree which we marked thus [symbol of a crown] with a pair of marking irons for his sacred majesty.

The next then WB [a symbol] for the right honourable Governor Sir William Berkely, the third thus AW [a symbol] for the honourable Major General Wood. The last thus: [a symbol similar to TB]; RE. P. for Perceute who said he would learn Englishman. And on another tree hard by stand these letters one under another TT. NP. VE. R after we had done we went ourselves down to the river side; but not without great difficulty it being a piece of very rich ground where the Mocketans had formerly lived, and grown up with weeds and small prickly Locusts and Thistles to a very great height that it was almost impossible to pass. It cost us hard labor to get thro'. When we came to the River side we found it much better and broader than expected, much like James River at Col. Stagg's, the falls much like these falls.⁶ We imagined by the Water marks that it flows here about three feet. It was ebbing water when we were here. We set up a stick by the water side but found it ebbed very slowly. Our Indians kept such a hollowing that we durst not stay any longer to make further trial.

Immediatly upon coming to our quarters we returned home wards and when we were got to the Top of a Hill we turned about and saw over against us, westerly, over a certain delightful hill a fog arise and a glimmering light as from water. We supposed there to be a great Bay. We came to the Toteras Tuesday night where we found our horses, and ourselves wel entertain'd. We immediatly had the news of Mr. Byrd and his great company's Discoveries three miles from the Teteras Town. We have found Mehetan Indians who having intelligence of our coming were afraid it had been to fight them and had sent him to the Toteras's to inquire. We have him satisfaction to the contrary and that we came as friends, presented him with three or four shots of powder. He told us by our Interpreter, that we had (been) from the mountains half way to the place they now live at. That the next town beyond them lived on a plain level, from whence came abundance of salt. That he could inform us no further by reason that there were a great company of Indians that lived upon the great Water.

Sept. 21. After very civil entertainment we came from the Toteras and on Sunday morning the 24th we came to the Hanahathskies. We found Mr. Wood dead and buried and his horse likewise dead. After civil entertainment, with firing of guns at parting which was more than usual.

Sept. 25. on monday morning we came from thence and reached to the Saponys that night where we stayed till wednesday.

Sept. 27. We came from thence they having been very courteous to us. At night we came to the Apomatack Town, hungry, wet and weary.

October 1 being Sunday morning we arrived at Fort Henry. God's holy name be praised for our perservation.

⁶ The point reached by the explorers was Peters' Falls, where the New River breaks through Peters' Mountain, near Pearisburg Virginia.