

This is a partial transcription only. The full transcription of both journeys is available and for sale from the Bluegrass Heritage Museum, Winchester, KY.

**Original Journal of John Halley
of His Trips to New Orleans
Performed in the Years
1789 & 1791**

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John Halley

According to John Halley's sworn statement, "[I] first came to Kentucky on 21st March 1780. I landed at the Falls from thence I came to Boonesborough and stayed but a short time before I returned to the land office. Became acquainted with the names of upper and lower Howard's creeks, two mile creek and Otter creek in the spring of 1780." John Halley (c1746-1838) was the son of James Halley of Fairfax County, Virginia, whose will named six sons and four daughters. He served as a private in Capt. Nathaniel Hart's militia company that was ordered to build a fort at the Falls of the Ohio in 1782. In 1788 the county of Madison granted Halley "a License to retail all kind of goods wares and merchandise in the Town of Boonesborough." He was appointed one of the county commissioners and was called upon to "undertake the building of the public Warehouse at Boonesborough" for the inspection of tobacco and flour. John Halley took a fleet of flatboats to New Orleans the next year, 1789, and again in 1791, keeping a journal on both trips.¹

In addition to farming and mercantile interests, Halley was heavily involved in the land business. John and his brothers William and Richard made entries on several tracts of land in 1780, not long after the Kentucky land office opened. That year Lincoln was set off as a county, and John was appointed one of the deputy surveyors. He acquired a number of lots in Boonesborough and nearly 4,000 acres on nearby Otter Creek, where he developed additional business interests. In 1795 he petitioned the county court for permission to build a water gristmill on Otter Creek. Halley received permission to keep an ordinary at his dwelling house in 1818 and had the tavern for at least three years. In 1824, he petitioned the court for additional mills, one described as "a water Griss and Saw Mill on otter Creek" and the other "a water Griss Mill near the mouth of the East fork of Otter Creek."²

John Halley and his wife Susan Ann had no children. In 1821, the aging couple made an arrangement with John's nephew, Samuel Halley, who had recently come out from Fairfax County. Samuel was to receive one half of his uncle's estate in return for paying \$1,000 towards his debts and agreeing to manage all his business and legal affairs (Halley was involved in numerous lawsuits). Samuel was to take possession of John's land "on the left hand side of the road leading from Richmond down otter creek by Lindseys to Stevens ferry." He may not have given Samuel enough authority over his affairs, since in a second agreement signed in 1829, John stated that he had suffered "great embarisment and from age and infirmity incable of managing his concerns." This time Samuel was given an irrevocable power of attorney that allowed him to sell any of John's assets except "the land and houses on the east side of the road leading to Stevens ferry" and "such servants [slaves] as may be necessary for their comfort." In 1829, John Halley still listed his address as the "Town of Boonesborough."³

Family tradition credits Halley with a number of unique accomplishments, such as planting the first orchard in Kentucky, building the first stone house at Boonesborough, the first store at Boonesborough, building the first tobacco barn, and shipping the first tobacco to England. Tobacco has been grown on John Halley's bottomland near the river from the 1780s to the present. His stone house stood on the west side of KY 388, nearly opposite the Boonesborough State Park entrance. A frame house, built by his nephew Samuel, stood next to it (burned 1968-1972). The tobacco warehouse site was just south

of the Halley home sites. Halley died in 1838 and was buried in the family cemetery near the home site. His gravestone at one time stood by the park entrance fence but is now lost. The home site, graveyard and warehouse site may all lie under the overflow parking lot on the west side of KY 388.⁴

Kentucky and the Mississippi River

As soon as early Kentuckians were able to produce a surplus from their farms and small industries, they had to begin looking beyond their borders for markets. Goods could not be profitably carried over the mountains to eastern cities; as Dr. Thomas Clark wrote of this period, “not one of the farm products of Clark County could pay its transportation costs overland, not even whiskey.” Westerners were counting on using the Ohio-Mississippi waterway as an economical shipping route to New Orleans. At the close of the Revolutionary War, the Spanish were in control of the city as well as the lower Mississippi. Spain essentially shut down river traffic while negotiating a treaty with the newly formed United States. Then James Wilkinson, the famous scoundrel and intriguer, broke the barrier. Wilkinson shipped a flatboat load of tobacco, hams and butter from Frankfort to New Orleans in 1787, and while there entered into a secret alliance with Spain. His triumphant return to Kentucky in spurred a fury of interest in trading down the river. Wilkinson arranged for a second, larger venture in the spring of 1789, but by then a number of market hungry entrepreneurs had decided to make the trip on their own. With perhaps slight exaggeration, a gentleman wrote from New Orleans in April of that year, “the Mississippi has been covered with fleets of boats from Cumberland, Kentucke, &c. floating down great quantities of provision, flour, plank, &c.” John Halley’s voyage the same year was part of that early movement.⁵

The Kentucky River provided access points for products of the Bluegrass region and a link to the Ohio-Mississippi route to New Orleans. Previously viewed only as a barrier to land transportation, the river soon was dotted with warehouses for inspection and storage of tobacco, flour and other products, as well as boatyards for constructing flatboats. Madison County records indicate that the Boonesborough warehouse was established in 1788. In 1792 the Kentucky General Assembly established three warehouses for Clark County—one at the mouth of Boone Creek (Eli Cleveland’s), one opposite Boonesborough (William Bush’s) and one at the mouth of Lower Howard’s Creek (John Holder’s).⁶ Inspectors were appointed by the Governor. They were required to check each barrel of flour and hogshead of tobacco accepted by the warehouse in order to ensure the quality of products exported from Kentucky. Warehouses were typically located near shipping points on the Kentucky River. John Holder operated a boatyard near his warehouse, one of the first in the state—the first according to Francis F. Jackson:

The first boat built in Kentucky was at Holder’s landing, now Comb’s ferry. . . . William Harris was the foreman in building it. Built in 1788. Thompson and McCroskey (Shane’s note: for them?) Both Scotchmen. . . . The second set of boats were built for General Wilkinson. Harris the superintendent.⁷

Holder’s boatyard turned out numerous flatboats for the New Orleans trade. These boats followed a similar design, of which the one below was typical:

[S]pecifications called for gunwales “fifty feet long and six inches square, the bottom planks two inches thick, twelve boards to be put across the boat, the side planks to be one

and one-half inches thick. The stanchions or studs to be three by six, five feet high and five to a side. The boats to be finished in a workman-ship-like manner, to be pinned with seasoned white oak pins and bored, and the sides to be five feet high and the whole to be of oak timber.” This was the structural description of the “Kentucky boat.” A stout cabin, a pair of ornamental deer horns, a pair of side sweeps, and a long steering oar topped off the equipment.⁸

New Orleans, Natchez and other ports would remain important markets for Kentucky goods and produce until the coming of the railroads in the mid 1800s.

Halley’s Journals

Halley’s journals of this trips to New Orleans are noteworthy documents from several perspectives. Not only does he provide insightful accounts of what would become one of Kentucky’s major early industries—shipping goods and produce to the port of New Orleans—but he does so almost at the birth of that industry, just two years after Gen. Wilkinson’s inaugural voyage in 1787. Halley was a keen observer, and his record includes a wealth of detail on a broad range subjects. On both voyages there was much concern about the threat of “ingeons,” and Halley comments on his encounters with Native Americans. He describes each visit with Spanish officials and relates something of the customs and manners as he saw them. Halley must have gotten along well with everyone he met, as all seemed to like him. He wrote after every encounter that he was “treated with a great deal of complisance.” He tells of capturing an army deserter, shooting the rapids at the Falls of Ohio (Louisville), getting stuck on a sandbar, breaking his steering oar, almost losing one of the men in a pile of driftwood, etc. He also comments on hunting and fishing along the way, local flora and fauna, weather and river conditions, settlements, and notable landmarks.

The journal of the first voyage in 1789 begins on May 2 at the mouth of the Ohio and ends at New Orleans on June 2. There are descriptions of visits to New Madrid, Ozark (Post Arkansas), and Natchez. Halley mentions “boats” in the plural but does not say how many vessels were in the little fleet. He does not describe the cargo they were carrying, with the exception of some “bacon hams,” nor does he name the crew. He mentions a few of the men in his party: Maj. John Williams (who seems to have functioned as a guide for the trip), Wilkerson (who may have been pilot for the boat named the *Merow*), Capt. Paulin, Mr. Hoy and John Ahearn.

He provides more detail about the 1791 trip. They left Boonesborough on April 27 and arrived in New Orleans on June 8. He started with two boats, stopping at warehouses on the Kentucky River to pick up 80,000 pounds of tobacco, and then caught up with two of his other boats at Louisville. Halley reported that the four boats carried 159,000 pounds of tobacco, plus about 2,000 pounds of bacon and lard and 2,000 pounds of flour. The boats were piloted by Halley, Sharp, Mr. Wilkerson and Capt. Blincoe (or Briscoe). Halley describes stops at Louisville, New Madrid, Walnut Hills (Vicksburg), Natchez, David Tanner’s place, and Baton Rouge. Halley stayed in New Orleans until starting home on September 15. He left his nephew, William Wilkerson, behind to collect \$377; Wilkerson was directed to take payment in cattle, which he was then to sell and split the profits with Halley.

Halley did not say how he came out financially on the ventures, but we might infer that he did very well. At that time, tobacco was selling in New Orleans for ten dollars a hundredweight, which would have produced gross revenues of \$15,900. Even after paying a Spanish import duty of twenty-five percent, there would have been considerable room for profit.⁹

Other Accounts of Flatboat Trips to New Orleans

Several other travelers left accounts of their voyages down the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers. Two of these—John Pope’s and Samuel Forman’s—occurred very close to the time of John Halley’s trip. William Calk’s trip was a little later, 1804; Calk was a one-time neighbor of Halley at Boonesborough

John Pope of Richmond, Virginia kept a colorful account of his river journey from Pittsburgh to New Orleans. After a two month sojourn in Louisville, he departed on March 4, 1791 and reached New Orleans on April 4. Pope mentions numerous encounters with boats going up and down the river, including a fleet of Gen. James Wilkinson’s boats bound for New Orleans. Many of his colorful observations parallel those of John Halley and are included here in the footnotes to Halley’s journal.¹⁰

Samuel Forman (1765-1862) left a memoir of his trip down the Ohio and Mississippi. He made the journey in two stages, first, accompanying his uncle from Pittsburgh to Louisville in January 1790 and, second, leaving Louisville in May on a fleet of tobacco boats and debarking at Natchez. His brief account recalls only a few happenings along the way. He gives a lengthy description of their visit to New Madrid and an encounter with a group of friendly Indians.¹¹

William Calk (1740-1823) kept a journal of his voyage from Boonesborough to New Orleans in 1804 (not nearly so colorful as his account of the trip from Virginia out to Kentucky in 1775). Calk was making his “first adven-ter on speculation with a Boat loaded with corn tobacco bacon & laird.” He notes the dates many landmarks were passed but includes little detail of events or things he saw on the way. One interesting feature is his description of the journey back to Kentucky, which took 44 days. His route was by way of Lake Pontchartrain, Natchez, Chickasaw town, Tennessee River, Duck River, Nashville, Green River, Danville, Boonesborough and finally home to Mt. Sterling. The road from Natchez to Nashville was the famed Natchez Trace, formally established in 1803.¹²

It is appropriate to mention in this section Zadok Cramer’s *The Navigator*, which was first published in 1801 and went through many editions. Sold for a dollar a copy, this book filled the need for a dependable guide for safely navigating the uncharted waters of the Ohio and Mississippi. In a time of westward expansion, Cramer’s book was used by people descending the river in search of new homes. He described the rivers’ courses in great detail, warned readers of dangers and alerted them to impressive sights. In the process, Cramer documented the river and its landmarks for future generations. His work is cited here frequently, in the footnotes to Halley’s journals.¹³

Transcribing the Journals

Several sources have reported that the original journals were donated to the University of Kentucky Library by Halley family descendants. The journals cannot be

found at the UK Library nor is there any record of their receiving them. UK Special Collections does have a bound photostatic copy of the original donated by Judge Samuel M. Wilson. The transcription was made from this copy. In trying to make the journal more accessible to modern readers, several conventions were followed. Paragraphing has been added along with periods at the end of sentences and commas where essential for clarity. However, capitalization and spelling follow the original. John Halley was not consistent in his spelling but he always gave a pretty close phonetic rendering. All of the people and places are recognizable, even though there must have been instances where he only heard the names spoken and never saw them spelled out. An effort has been made to identify the many names and places mentioned in Halley's journals (see footnotes to the text).

Notes

¹ John Halley's deposition in *Nathaniel Hart's heirs vs Samuel South and William Calk*, 1806, in Charles S. Staples, "History in Circuit Court Records, Fayette County," *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* (1933) 31:316; Fairfax County (Virginia) Will Book F:134; Margery H. Harding, *George Rogers Clark and His Men, Military Records, 1778-1784* (Frankfort, 1981), p. 131; Madison County Order Book A:97, 99, 125, D:438, E:136.

James Halley's 1792 will listed the following children: William Halley, James Halley Jr., John Halley, Richard Halley, Francis Halley, Henry Simpson Halley, Sarah Haney (married 1st, William Wilkerson and, 2nd, William Haney), Sybill Peake (married Jesse Peake), Mary Crump (married Richard Crump) and Susanna Said (married William Said). John's brother Francis and sister Sybill died in Madison County; brother Richard lived in Clark County.

The name was pronounced like "holly" and as a consequence was often spelled "Holley." There was another John Halley in Kentucky in early times. John Halley (c1726–1802) of Bedford County, Virginia was at Braddock's Defeat and later came to Boonesborough. In 1778 while out with Daniel Boone's salt makers at the Lower Blue Licks, he was one of the men kidnapped by the Shawnee and taken to Ohio. He was rescued in 1782 and returned to Bedford County. He claimed 400 acres of Kentucky land on a settlement certificate. His tract on Glenn Creek in Woodford County was surveyed in 1791 and patented in 1795. John Halley Jr., who settled and died in Montgomery County, sold the tract for his father. Lyman C. Draper MSS 12CC200; Ann H. Mack, "Hawley/Halley in Seventeenth Century Virginia," *Virginia Genealogist* (1985) 29(1):21.

² Fayette County Entries A:170, 171, 271; Lincoln County Order Book 1:129; Joan E. Brookes-Smith, *Master Index, Virginia Surveys and Grants, 1774-1791* (Frankfort, 1976); Joan E. Brookes-Smith, *Index for Old Kentucky Surveys & Grants* (Frankfort, 1975); Madison County Deed Book A:145; Madison County Order Book B:288, D:438, E:136, 336.

In his interview with Rev. John D. Shane (1840s), William Clinkenbeard mentioned the mills and recalled that Halley owned with John Wilkerson: "Wilkerson & John Holley had a mill on Otter Creek, just tother side of Boonesborough." Lyman C. Draper MSS 11CC65.

Thomas Hinde's map (c1820s-1830s) shows "Holley's Mills" on Otter Creek and "Holley's House" nearby on the Boonesborough-Richmond Turnpike. The house may have been for the miller and owned by Halley. Nancy O'Malley, *Searching for Boonesborough* (Lexington, 1989), Appendix B.

³ Madison County Deed Book R:124; S:226.

⁴ George N. MacKenzie, *Colonial Families of the United States, Vol. III* (Boston, 1907), p. 303; Charles Kerr, editor, *History of Kentucky, Vol. II* (Chicago and New York, 1922), p. 1171; William Eaton, "John Halley Bought Ferry To Promote Boonesborough Agricultural Potential," *Winchester Sun*, June 17, 1965; Nancy O'Malley, *Searching for Boonesborough* (Lexington, 1989), pp. 32, 65-68, 73.

Among the other graves identified in the cemetery, one was John Halley's sister's, "Sibbl Peak, died November 1823, aged 80 years," the wife of Jesse Peake. Kathy Vockery, *Cemetery Records of Madison County, Vol. I* (n.p., n.d.).

Photographs of John Halley's stone house and Samuel Halley's frame house may be seen in the "Halley family papers, 1740-1865," Special Collections, M. I. King Library, University of Kentucky, Lexington.

⁵ Thomas D. Clark, *Clark County, Kentucky, A History* (Winchester, 1996), p. 103; Mary Verhoeff, *The Kentucky River Navigation* (Louisville, 1917), pp. 42-81.

⁶ Madison County Order Book A:97; Mary Verhoeff, *The Kentucky River Navigation* (Louisville; 1917), pp. 231-232.

⁷ Rev. John D. Shane interview with Francis F. Jackson, Lyman C. Draper MSS 15CC10. The first flatboats built in Kentucky were constructed prior to 1788. Josiah Jackson and his son Francis produced tar used to caulk flatboats, including Wilkinson's.

⁸ Thomas D. Clark, *The Kentucky* (Lexington, 1969), p. 69.

⁹ Mary Verhoeff, *The Kentucky River Navigation* (Louisville, 1917), p. 57.

¹⁰ John Pope, *A Tour through the Southern and Western Territories of the United States of North-America, etc.* (Richmond, Virginia, 1792).

¹¹ Samuel Forman, *Narrative of a Journey Down the Ohio and Mississippi in 1789-90* (Cincinnati, 1888).

¹² William Calk, "William Calk's Trip to New Orleans, 1804," The Calk Collection, Kentucky Historical Society, Frankfort.

¹³ Zadok Cramer, *The Navigator, 8th edition* (Pittsburgh, 1814).

Journal of the First Trip 1789

The 2nd Day of may in morning we entered the River mississippi & were Salluted with several guns and a yell on the shore which we suppos'd wer injeons but not seen By us. the River was moderate highth but much fluctuateed with mud & tis said by the inhabitants it continues so the yer Round.¹ the Bancks are very low in general & a great number of Islands & *biowes*² brakeing out throu a very low woodland country that abounds with millions of little insects cald the *misqueto*.³

The 3th Day at 9 in the morning we drew in sight of *Lanslegress Town*⁴ on the west side of the River, newly settled & govern'd by *Colo. Morgan*.⁵ we landed and were saluted by a number of Ingeons of Different tribes men women & children, one which were for Chief. They appear'd very friendly and number came on board the Boats & Behav'd well in general. their manner of [missing] appear'd very odd, though Richly [missing] after their mode of dressing. they had abundance of silver [missing] half moons & crosses on their [missing] head bands, year rings & nose Jewels with a grate number of broaches in their shirts set in rows and other tinckling ornaments. there faces painted read and Black. The Cherrykee Squaghs appeared more natural, wareing shifts & petycoats, but richly adorn'd with silver arm bands, rings, ear rings & a number of tinckling ornaments. some of the young squaghs were very handsom among which was said to be a Daughter of *Colo. Christians*.⁶ The white inhabitants of this town were but

¹ The Mississippi River, also known as "The Big Muddy," was remarkable for its muddy waters from early times. Cramer noted in 1814 that "the Mississippi below the mouth of the Missouri is always muddy." Zadok Cramer, *The Navigator, 8th edition* (Pittsburgh, 1814), p. 147.

² Bayou has a special meaning on the Mississippi, referring to a breach in the bank where water flows out of the river, in contrast to tributaries which flow into the river.

³ John Pope had a similar complaint regarding mosquitoes on the Mississippi. He commented in his journal that "for two Days past we have been much harassed by Musquettoes." *Pope's Tour*, p. 35.

⁴ L'anse a la Graisse was an early French trading point. The name means "cove of grease," as it was founded on a bend in the river called Greasy Bent. Later the site of New Madrid, Missouri. On December 16, 1811 the area was devastated by the first of three magnitude 8 earthquakes, ten times larger than the 1906 San Francisco earthquake. New Madrid was totally destroyed. Goodspeed's Publishing Co., *Goodspeed's History of Southeast Missouri* (Chicago, 1887).

⁵ George Morgan (1743-1810) made his mark in western Pennsylvania as an Indian trader, land speculator, and scientific farmer. He was the first Indian Agent appointed by the Continental Congress and was promoted to the rank of colonel while serving as commissary general at Fort Pitt. After the Revolutionary War, Col. Morgan received a large land grant just below the mouth of the Ohio River from Don Diego de Gardoqui, the Spanish minister to the United States. Here in January 1789 he established a colony of emigrants from Maryland and Pennsylvania. He called the colony New Madrid; however, his efforts were soon undone by the intrigues of Gen. James Wilkinson and Morgan went back home. Max Savell, *George Morgan, Colony Builder* (New York, 1932).

⁶ William Christian (1732-1786) married the sister of Patrick Henry, settled in Bottetourt County and served as a colonel in the 1st Virginia Regiment during the Revolutionary War. In 1785, he moved his family to Kentucky, settling on his large military survey near the Falls of the Ohio, and the following year he was killed by Indians. Humphrey Marshall, *History of Kentucky, Vol. I* (Frankfort, 1812), p. 278.

fiew in number, about 20 amerricans, & some french Traders that supplied the ingeons with goods and took the young squaghs for their companions. They were very kind & Complisant. the land appeared rich and furtile but not Equal to kentucky.

on monday the 4 instant at 5 in the after noon the Boats mov'd on 10 miles. met two large Battoughs loaded from new orlins & Bound to the Ilenois.⁷ Commanded By . put two.⁸

lay til 8 in the morning and on Teausday the 5 about 45 miles. met one battow. put two on the west side at the lower end of a large Bend runing eastward.

Wednesday the 6 mov'd on at 5 in the morning. about sunrise one of our men *John Ahearn*⁹ By name went out in a small canough for wood & runing against some *drift wood*¹⁰ sunk the Canoug & was plung'd under the drift for some minutes. we had given him out for lost but at length appeared cralling up through the Drift. I went a canough & took him on Board. pas'd a *large Bluff*¹¹ on the east side at 2 in the afternoon and saw some ingeon camps & a dog on the shore. pas'd another Remarcable large B[luff] at 4. put two at 8 on the lower end of a large Island.

Mov'd on at Day Brake on Thursday the 7. pas'd a *large Bluff*¹² at sunrise on the East side. pas'd *Wolf Creek*¹³ on the east at 4 in the afternoon. put two at the lower end of the *forth and lower Bluff*¹⁴ on the East side at ½ after 4. the weather has Been fare and very pleasant for the season in general, But now some showers of Rain with thunder and cool for the season. several of our young men went out to hunt this evening.

⁷ John Pope also reported seeing a number of boats coming up the Mississippi under sail or oar. *Pope's Tour*, pp. 26-27, 35.

⁸ Halley uses this term for landing his boats, meaning "put to" shore.

⁹ John Ahearn probably lived near Boonesborough at this time. Edmund Ahearn was one of the petitioners in 1789 who requested two new tobacco inspection warehouses be established on the north side of the Kentucky River near Boonesborough. That same year John, Edmond and Owen Eyhern appeared on the list of Madison County taxpayers. James R. Robertson, *Petitions of the Early Inhabitants of Kentucky to the General Assembly of Virginia, 1769 to 1792* (Louisville, 1914), p. 139.

¹⁰ Cramer's guidebook provided detailed descriptions of the dangers encountered on the Mississippi River. These included 1) instability of the banks; 2) currents called bayous rushing out of the river in a state of high waters; and 3) planters, sawyers and wooden islands (or driftwood). "Wooden-Islands are places where by some cause or other large quantities of drift wood has through time been arrested and matted together in different parts of the river." *The Navigator*, p. 164.

¹¹ There are four high bluffs on the Tennessee side of the Mississippi River, all in territory formerly occupied by the Chickasaw Nation. The uppermost bluff was called Chickasaw Bluff No. 1. Marion Bragg, *Historic Names and Places on the Lower Mississippi River* (Vicksburg, Mississippi, 1977), p. 62.

¹² Chickasaw Bluff No. 3. On his first trip down the Mississippi in 1682, LaSalle stopped here and built a defensive fort against the Indians. Bragg, *Historic Names*, p. 67.

¹³ Named Margot River by the French, Las Casas by the Spanish, then Wolf River by American settlers. The mouth of Wolf River serves as the port harbor for Memphis, Tennessee. Bragg, *Historic Names*, p. 76.

¹⁴ Chickasaw Bluff No. 4, where the city of Memphis now stands.

it being cloudy one of them got lost. the clouds Blew over about sun set. he came in at ten at night after firing several guns for him. We Caught no game here.

Friday morning the 8 Day of may the northwest wind prevented our sailing til 10 oclock moved on. put two ½ after Six. the wind Blew all night & continued very cold.

Saturday the 9 mov'd on at 5 in the morning. continued very Cold & like for snow. pas'd *Saint Franciway*¹⁵ river at 2 in the afternoon on the west side. put two at 3 at a *large perarie*¹⁶ on the west side to hunt. the place appeared very beautiful at a Distance like a plain or meadow newly moan But when we came on shore found it cover'd with bushes about fore feet high loaded with fruit call *Chickcasaw Plumbs*.¹⁷ we saw several Camps that appear'd to a been made a few days before and a Buffelow pictur'd on a tree. we walked out through the perarie, But were much Disappointed in our expectations of game here. caught nothing. Mov'd on at 5. Put two at 7. had some showers of Rain to day. the cold moderates and is more pleasant.

10 Sunday morning mov'd on at ½ after 4. at 6 saw Canough with 3 or 4 men which we suppos'd to be ingeons Crossing the River. had pleasant sailing to day. put two at Eight oclock at night in a fine eddy on the west side.

11 Munday morning mov'd on at day Brak. put two at 7 in the morning at the mouth of *white River*¹⁸ on the west side. ½ after twelve the Boats mov'd on 15 miles to the mouth of *noahs ark River*. Major John Williams¹⁹ Capt. Paulin & myself with two

¹⁵ St. Francis River rises in the Ozark hills of southeastern Missouri and flows 475 miles, entering the Mississippi above Helena, Arkansas. William Calk used a form of spelling similar to Halley's: "River ST franceway." Both probably attempted a phonetic rendering of the French pronunciation of the name, i.e., River St. Francois. Bragg, *Historic Names*, p. 94; *Calk's Trip*.

¹⁶ Prairie Point, Arkansas. A small settlement called Big Prairie formed here before 1800 and was abandoned after the earthquakes of 1811-1812. Bragg, *Historic Names*, p. 95.

¹⁷ Chickasaw plums, *Prunus angustifolia*, a small shrubby tree bearing ½-inch fruit ripening in early to mid summer.

¹⁸ The White River has since early times provided a convenient route to access to the Arkansas River via a connecting bayou. *The Navigator*, p. 195.

¹⁹ John Williams came to Kentucky from the Holston region as a volunteer under Gen. George Rogers Clark and played a prominent role in the "Winning of the West" in 1778-1779. He served as a lieutenant in the Kaskaskia campaign, a captain at the capture of Vincennes, and soon after was promoted to major. His brother, William Williams Jr., was captured during the campaign but escaped. Maj. Williams married a French woman in Kaskaskia and in 1788 moved to Natchez in the Spanish district. He died near there, at Dead Mare's Branch, in 1808. His connection to Halley must have been through his father, William Williams Sr., who lived in the northern end of Madison County, where he bought 200 acres of land in 1787. James A. James, editor, *George Rogers Clark Papers, 1771-1784, Vol. I* (Springfield, Illinois, 1912), pp. 98, 146, 165; Lyman C. Draper MSS 36J37, 37J191, 194, 196, 200, 210(a), 38J40(56); Madison County Deed Book A:209.

Maj. Williams was in ideal guide for Halley's party, having made the river journey himself on at least two occasions and being personally acquainted with a number of the Spanish governors and commandants. Williams spoke of his trips to New Orleans in a letter he wrote to his father in Madison (then Lincoln) County (Lyman C. Draper MSS 53J10):

others imbarck'd in a Perogue up white River for *noahs ark*.²⁰ struck across at the 1st large Biowe to noahs ark river 15 mile above the Mouth. Was held by the gard set there by the Governer to prevent Boats tradeing with ingeons up the River without his permission. The sergent of the gard after knowing our business gave us what *taffa*²¹ we woud drink & filled our Bottles and sent one of his men to conduct us to the Town. it lies about 40 Miles West of the Mississipi on a Beautifull River. We arriv'd there at 11 oclock at night. Just as we landed we heard the centinals proclame alls well all wel &C By which we percev'd Regular order Was kept up. we then left our pirogue with one man to sleep on board & take care of some bacon hams we had taken as a present for the Governer.²² Was conducted by Major Williams to Mr. a gentleman of his acquaintance in the village, a frenchman. Was treated with a great deal of complisance & plenty of Taffay. went to Bead after 2. slep very little the misquetos being very troublesom.

Kaskakia, June the 20th 1784

My dear daddy

I hope this will find you & all the family In a proper state of health as I and mine are at Present. I after my arrival last summer from your Countrey filled my self out on a salling Vorge for new orlines. I was Verely unfortunate In the Beginning But Cannot Complain of the Rest of my Vorge. I got lost a way at the setting out & Refitted Verely late however I arrived at the Place of my distination with fortety two Beafs which Producted me Seven hundred & thirty Eight dollars which amounts to a Prettety little Some here. I am about to Start down again this fall. I have bought a large Battow and thirty Bushels of Salt which will Salt me two hundred Bushels. likewise I have made a Corrispondent In new orlines that is obligated to Receve It & we are to load up my Battow In Partnership.

I have wrote to Colonel Bowman In Consequence of what I ow him. he Is a man of much good Since and humanity to Press you If I had not wrote however I hope you will go and Se him. he will Certainly Assist you in Selling the land. If you can Pay him with it I am Verely well Contented but Perhaps you may sell It to advantage or If any thing Remains turn It Into Cattle or a negro.

I Promised My good friend Mr. [David] Tanner to Inform him of the Priceses of Commodities at Neworlenes. Beaf well Conditioned Eight dollars pr hundred. Pork one Shilling pr pound. tallow two. hemp I Cannot tell what. flower 12 & 15 pr hundred. In Most Everey Commodity Sells high.

Tell him that Next fall Come 12 Months I shall have the Pleasure of Seing him when I Shall [illegible] to account Everey Circumstance, for If god Is Pleased to Spaire my life I shall Come and Se you.

be Pleased to give my Respects to my old mamey and all the family as well as those of my acquaintances Not forgetting Capt. hoy and harrey Dougherty. Peggy Presents you all her Respect & Clark has not yet forgot you. tell Polley I wont forget to Bring her Something Verely [nice] from orlenes. I have said Everey thing thats Necessasarey And am with due Submission your Verely Deutiful

John Williams

For Mr. Wm. Williams
Lincoln County
Kentucky

²⁰ Halley said his destination was “noahs ark”; he was referring to Ozark, which was a post and village on the Arkansas River near the Spanish garrison at Arkansas Post.

²¹ Taffia, a cheap version of rum produced from sugar cane in the West Indies.

²² Samuel Forman also used “good hams” as presents to his Spanish hosts. *Forman's Narrative*, p. 48.