

## Life on the Frontier was a Struggle for Survival

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Life on the frontier was not an easy life to live. Back in the mid-1800s, to survive a person had to grow or kill his food. Also, for shelter, they built log cabins. Many people moved from Virginia, and settled in this region. Frontiersmen brought seed corn and meal with them from Virginia. When the supplies were eaten, they could not get any more until they grew it themselves.

In the mid-1800s, there were no doctors or preachers in this county. Most children had never seen a doctor. Occasionally, a few preachers would come over from Powell's Valley and stay a few days. The first town meetings were held in log cabins. These cabins had dirt floors and many cracks in the walls. The seats in the cabins were made from split logs, with no legs. Most of these preachers were Baptist. The first preacher to be raised in this county was Cutbearth Webb, who lived on Brimstone Creek.

John L. Smith was the first merchant in this region. About the year 1852 or 1853, he built his store. He only had a few dry goods and shoes and bought them from a retail merchant at Jacksboro. He bought and sold homemade jeans.

People here did not have much tinware nor earthenware. Plates were worth about \$3 per set and tin cups were worth about 15 cents each.

Lead was bought from Jacksboro. At this time lead was worth about 25 cents per pound. People used to make gunpowder by hand. A cap lock gun was never seen, everybody had flintlock guns. There were no revolvers then.

Many people from around this area helped survey Scott County. Huntsville was the first town in the county. When Scott County was established by an act of the legislature on December 17, 1849, Scott County was named in honor of Winfield Scott. About the time Scott County was established, pioneers had settled along New River and along many small streams and creeks. The names of some of these pioneers are Joe



Figure 1 Frontier life revisited in portrayal of a cabin in the Museum of Scott County.

Lewallen, Hinchie Redman and Matthew Davis. The pioneers who chose to settle along Brimstone Creek were Johnnie Triplett, Felin Griffith, Hikey Robbins, Mose Sexton, Harry

Bagely, Tim Sexton, Bill Sexton, Zeke Newport and Bailey Buttram. The names of those people who lived on Straight Fork were Delap L. Smith, Billy and Jessie Byrd and Johnie Spoonman. Pioneers who settled along Buffalo Creek were Billie Jeffers, Joshua Duncan, Billie Hughett, Tommy Chambers and Ben Dagley. The Terry and Chitwood families settled around the area we know now as Oneida and Winfield.

Not many people traveled in this area. There were not many wagon trails. When they did travel it was along well beaten paths. These paths were so worn and smooth that you could run barefoot on them.

Wagons were so uncommon that when you went to other small towns and saw one pass, men, women and children would follow for small distances.

Before the war took place in this region, it was covered with lots of deer. It was common to hear people talk of killing five to 10 deer in one day. Most people hunted with a flintlock rifle. If you wanted a big buck with a nice rack, the place to go was Brimstone Creek. The people held some big shooting matches in the area. It was most men's favorite sport. Major Duncan had competitions where if you were the best shot out of ten then you got the prize. They also had matches so people could win horses. These matches took place on Brimstone Creek. Each man paid one dollar to play. If you could hit the old oak tree within two inches of the center of the tree then you won a horse.

In the early 1800s, 20 frontiersmen ventured to this region from Virginia. They had set up camps in the Big South Fork. They killed 2,300 deer in the period that they spent here. While the frontiersmen were out on a hunting trip, Indians came into their camp and stole every one of the deerskins. After the Indians stole the deerskins, the frontiersmen gathered their belongings and headed back to Virginia.