

CUMBERLAND GAP, GATEWAY OF EMPIRE

BY ROBERT L. KINCAID

Executive Vice President, Lincoln Memorial University, Harrogate, Tennessee

Read before The Filson Club, November 7, 1940

The break in the Cumberland Range known as Cumberland Gap, on the divide between the two important river systems, the Tennessee and the Cumberland, can truly be called the Gateway to the Empire of the Northwest. Without following coincident movements along other paths of penetration to the western regions beyond the Alleghenies, it is that missing vertebra in the Cumberland Mountain backbone which is the topic of the present discussion.

At the middle of the Eighteenth Century only two principal paths had been made by the English Colonists on the Atlantic seaboard to the unknown regions west of the Alleghenies. One was the trail through the western Pennsylvania mountains to the headwaters of the Ohio and down that beautiful stream to its confluence with the Mississippi. The other, hundreds of miles farther south, was across the Blue Ridge chain, down the headwaters of the Tennessee River tributaries, then northwestward along an ancient trail of war and peace, through a break in the last range of the Alleghenies, and on through the scattered foothills toward the Northwest, and into the region drained by the Ohio.

When Colonel William Byrd II and his surveyors in 1728 set their compass on the sands of Coratuck Inlet and pointed westward through Old Dismal Swamp, attempting to chart latitude $36^{\circ} 30'$ as the dividing line between Virginia and North Carolina decreed by King Charles II a half century before, they were pointing directly to a gateway in the last westward mountain wall, more than five hundred miles away. It was a prophetic needle, because it indicated a pass of destiny for a people soon to be molded into a free and independent nation. That pass was to be the open door into a strange, fertile, inviting land for traders, hunters, settlers, and colonizers. It had already been visited by Gabriel Arthur, in 1674, and by Martin Chartier, in 1692. It was known to James Adair after the turn of 1700 in his friendly traffic with the Cherokees living in quiet and peace

on the western slopes of the misty Smokies. In 1750 it was for the first time definitely mapped and named by Dr. Thomas Walker and his band of explorers for the Loyal Land Company. The discovery of this pass in the Cumberland wall was not an accident. Dr. Walker drifted through the hills and valleys along well-marked trails which led to a much-traveled "Indian road."

In the aeons of the past, a violent convulsion of the earth threw up this Cumberland barrier in a huge overthrust, presenting a broken, jagged, precipitous wall, extending for three hundred miles from the breaks of the Big Sandy to the bend of the Tennessee River at Lookout Mountain. But in that geological upheaval the wall was split in twain about midway, and the winds of centuries hewed the cleft still deeper. Rivulets of water seeped down through the crevices northeast of the pass, and formed an underground artery which likewise was severed at the break in the wall. The stream burst out of the face of the northeast portal, known as the Pinnacle, and plunged hundreds of feet downward in foaming white cascades. The cloven wall took up again on the southwest, at the Three States Peak, scarcely a half mile from the crest of the Pinnacle, and thus hanging between these two portals is the gigantic Saddle of Cumberland Gap, 1,665 feet high, several hundred feet above the valley, and approximately 1,000 feet in depth.

It was first discovered in the misty past, when prehistoric mammoths shouldered their way through the Wilderness in search of feeding grounds. The paths thus worn deep by heavy hoofs were followed by the buffalo, crossing back and forth between the cane breaks and salt licks in the valleys of the upper Cumberland, on the north, and the Powells, Clinch, and Holston on the south. These bovine engineers prepared the way for the first human inhabitants of the central Wilderness, and an ancient highway was naturally established, perhaps more than a thousand years ago, which became the Great Warriors Path of modern history.

So, Dr. Walker deserves no particular credit for finding Cumberland Gap, except that he should have the first opportunity to chart it. Neither does Daniel Boone, nor any of his companions who followed a little later. They chose a well-worn way which was already penetrating the Wilderness, and the tiny hole in the dike which protected the Indian lands of the west from the

flood of acquisitive white men washing up from the east resulted in the final overthrow of Indian supremacy and the domination of the Caucasian race in inland America. It was a hole which was easily found, once the various approaches were discovered, and the thin line into the dark regions beyond the mountain wall lured the white adventurers to the expansive reaches of the Bluegrass and the broad valleys of the Lower Ohio.

The story of these new lands found by the first traders and hunters grew with the telling when they returned to the eastern settlements, and by 1775 colonizing movements were organized. James Harrod and his companions floating down the Ohio, and Daniel Boone and his axmen cutting out a better trace through the Wilderness for Colonel Henderson and his associates, were planting the seeds of a civilization which ultimately was to grow into the mighty West as we know it today.

While the seaboard Colonies were fighting the legions of King George III, from 1775 to 1782, Colonel Richard Henderson, Daniel Boone, James Harrod, George Rogers Clark, John Floyd and other representatives of interests in Virginia and North Carolina were building forts, extending settlements, laying out lands and clearing the Wilderness in the first feeble efforts at permanent colonization. The motives were entirely selfish, as all movements of expansion are selfish. There was little patriotic fervor with exalted impulses of personal sacrifice. It was a struggle for survival for the few hundred pioneers who were huddled together at Harrodsburg, Boonesborough, and other outposts on the Kentucky frontier, fighting off the Indians, clearing the wilderness and planting crops.

The tall, sandy-haired, ambitious young Virginia adventurer and surveyor, George Rogers Clark, was one of the first to realize the proportions of this first effort at permanent settlement. He looked beyond the immediate object of sustaining homesteads in the West to the ultimate mastery of the Wilderness for the Colonies. When he and John Gabriel Jones set out on foot from Harrodsburg, a few days before the Declaration of Independence was adopted, on their hurried journey to the Virginia Assembly in session at Williamsburg, he was beginning to sense the first impulses which led to his final conquests. Harassed by danger along the journey through the wilderness, tired and worn out, with feet scalded and bleeding, he crossed through Cumberland Gap, his face toward distant Williamsburg, where

Patrick Henry would lend a friendly ear to his appeals. He got his five hundred pounds of powder for the Kentucky settlements, after his historic declaration that "A country which is not worth protecting is not worth claiming."

A year later he again returned to the Virginia capital along the same Wilderness Trail; this time piloting a large body of pilgrims returning to the greater safety of the Eastern settlements. This time he was seeking men, as well as powder, for a secret expedition against Governor Hamilton "the Hair Buyer," who was bribing the Indians to continual raids against the white settlements on the frontier. Jefferson, Henry, Mason and Wythe supported Clark in this secret movement. Although he was unable to hold all of his recruits for his expedition, his ill-equipped and ragged band of 150 marched to Kaskaskia and Vincennes and bluffed Hamilton into surrender. Clark's wavering authority on the far frontier was largely maintained by a feeble line of supply through Cumberland Gap, and in the meantime the Indians and British were kept off the backs of the harassed Colonies during the Revolutionary struggle.

To deal with "ifs" in history is idle speculation, but in this situation on the Western Frontier from 1775 to 1782 we find a combination of circumstances which resulted in far-reaching consequences for America. A little stream of hardy humanity beating against a mountain wall found a small notch in the range and filtered through, until a few hundred were scattered around the posts in the far frontier by 1775. They protected the Eastern Colonies from a vulnerable stab in the back; but more than that, they claimed and held fast a new empire for a young nation. Cumberland Gap, the Gateway for this human effort, was playing a leading role in the drama of history, and had it not existed that effort of conquest in the West might conceivably have been delayed until it was too late.

After the disaster of Blue Licks, in August, 1782, the subjugation of the Ohio Indian towns and the treaty of Paris the tide of humanity rushing to the West became a roaring flood. Treasury warrants for services in the war guaranteed hundreds of thousands of acres of free land. The settlers poured down the Ohio; they labored along the Wilderness Trail in almost one continuous caravan, with pack horses loaded with domestic supplies. The prospect of independent livelihood in a land of milk and honey became a bright promise on the Western horizon toward which the travelers set their faces.

A Philadelphia school teacher, John Filson, journeyed down the Ohio to see what he could see, and wrote about it in glowing terms. His book on Kentucky, published in 1784, stirred the adventurous into a fever of excitement. "I am going to Kentucky" became the prevailing cry in hundreds of Eastern communities. Men bundled up their belongings, women tied up their plunder, children climbed on behind their parents, and soon thereafter began the long, long trek through the Wilderness belt of more than one hundred miles to the Kentucky settlements. Often lurking savages would pounce upon a camp and tomahawk and scalp the travelers. Time after time, parties were attacked in the vicinity of the Gateway to the Wilderness. A huge cleft rock just north of the Saddle became noted as a point of ambush. The spring, 200 feet from the crest on the Kentucky side, was a haven for the tired and thirsty. The Yellow Creek bottoms were dark and treacherous. It was always a mad hurry through dangerous places, then across the Ford of the Cumberland below the Narrows in Pine Mountain, and on beyond to the Laurel, the Rockcastle and the Kentucky rivers, and to greater safety in the distant settlements.

The Bluegrass and the regions beyond the Ohio, even to the Illinois country, were the goals for the settlers, and within ten years—by 1792—Kentucky had sufficient population to achieve statehood, and to provide for its own protection and government. Isaac Shelby, seasoned by service on the Frontier, often traveling through Cumberland Gap on missions of importance, was the first Governor. Among his first official acts was a provision for the improvement of the "Wilderness trace" from the State line at Cumberland Gap to its junction with major roads connecting settlements in Central Kentucky. By 1795 wagons were creaking along the Widened Trail, bumping over stones, laboring through bogs, rolling along bottoms and sloshing across streams. The hazardous route which had provided meager supplies for Clark was now lined with teams drawing supplies for the settlers. It was a vital thoroughfare for the new America west of the Alleghenies.

From 1800 to 1825 the Wilderness Road was an important artery of traffic for the young Commonwealth which was leaping into full stature. Soon it became an outlet for the produce of a profligate land. Tobacco, hemp, hogs, cattle and horses were

going southeastward for eastern seaports, principally Charleston. Henry Clay and John C. Calhoun were clamoring for internal improvements. A Bureau of Internal Improvements was set up in Kentucky devoted to the promotion of turnpikes and canalization of streams.

By 1835 R. P. Baker, the state engineer, was recommending a 925-mile water route from the Ohio to Savannah. It was a simple matter: Up the Kentucky River, up the South Fork, up Goose Creek to the salt works, along a canal to the Cumberland River at Barbourville, up the Cumberland to Yellow Creek, up Yellow Creek to the divide at Cumberland Gap, through a huge water tunnel underneath the pass, down Gap Creek to Powells River, down Powells to the Clinch, down the Clinch to the Tennessee, up the Hiwassee to its headwaters in the North Carolina mountains, and then by devious ways across to the Savannah River, and down that stream to the Atlantic Ocean. A magnificent conception of rivers, locks, dams, and canals flanking the whole Appalachian Chain was seriously considered by the Kentucky legislature!

But Clay, Calhoun and others, intrigued by the possibilities of the steam railroad then proving practicable, were advocating a line connecting Louisville and Cincinnati markets with Charleston, cutting across the Cumberland Divide at the historic Gap. This rival proposal and the breakdown of the grandiose attempts at internal improvements threatened bankruptcy for the State; this with the financial panic during the Van Buren administration buried forever the great canal project in the dust of Kentucky archives. The railroad movement was delayed for a generation and the Wilderness Road in the meantime became a neglected and comparatively unimportant thoroughfare, while the Ohio and the Mississippi teemed with boats and barges bound for New Orleans.

It appeared for a time that Cumberland Gap would be remembered only as an old landmark, no longer to figure in important future developments. Currents of humanity were sweeping westward along other channels, extending the frontiers beyond the Mississippi and leaving the isolated Cumberland Range behind as a forgotten eddy in the expansion of the nation. Texas had won her independence under the leadership of Houston and Austin; the last of the Indians east of the Mississippi had been moved to the Western Plains; Michigan had become a

state; slavery was becoming an acute issue, and Preacher Elijah Parish Lovejoy, of Illinois, had suffered martyrdom, in 1837, because of his abolition militancy. Fighting Andrew Jackson had retired to the quiet of the Hermitage, and his political heir, Martin Van Buren, was having trouble in the White House. In this new world, Cumberland Gap, where Kentucky, Tennessee, and Virginia joined, became merely a dot upon the maps of the United States, rather than as the Gateway where momentous events were taking place.

But, in 1840, the people of America became involved in a political campaign which was marked with greater verbal violence than any preceding presidential campaign. It was General William Henry Harrison, the Whig candidate, with his hard cider, coonskins and log cabins hailed as the "friend of liberty," against Martin Van Buren, Democratic candidate for re-election, muddling through with Jacksonian fiscal policies, labeled as an enemy to free government, and his followers smeared as "loco-focos." Southern Whigs, anxious to carry Kentucky, Tennessee and Virginia for the Whig ticket, proposed that a tri-state convention be held at Cumberland Gap. Far from the centers of population, difficult to reach from a distance, this Gateway was chosen for a mammoth political rally on September 10, 1840, the anniversary of Perry's Victory; and Whig papers began to beat the publicity drums. Said the *Cincinnati Daily Gazette*: "Give the mountaineers of Tennessee, Kentucky and Virginia light and they will strike a blow for liberty that shall be felt throughout the land!"

From six to eight thousand people came out of the hills for the celebration, on foot, on horseback, in wagons and in buggies. The Virginians and Tennesseans tented at the base of the Pin-nacle, on the south side, and the Kentuckians bivouacked in the edge of the Yellow Creek basin, north of the Pass. On the morning of the 10th, with drums rolling, fifes tootling, flags and banners waving, the Virginians and Tennesseans marched up the old road from the south, and met a similar column of Kentuckians ascending the other side from the north. The roar of a cannon, planted in the Saddle, punctuated the shouts and songs of the mountaineers, keyed to an enthusiastic pitch by generous draughts of hard cider. On the Kentucky side, in a shady arbor near the spring, the people gathered.

For two days oratory rolled and reverberated among the

shaggy cliffs bordering the Gateway. Senator John J. Crittenden opened the meeting with a two-hour address on affairs of state, and his effort was recorded by reporters as the most powerful and eloquent the noted Kentucky statesman had ever made. General Leslie Combs, with withered arm, followed with vivid first-hand details of the military campaigns of General Harrison; John Bell, of Tennessee, inveterate foe of his neighbor Andrew Jackson, stirred the crowd with his views; former Governor Wyndham Robertson represented the mother state of Virginia in a protest against the administration. Personalities of lesser importance were heard, many to figure prominently in future events. Among the leaders were young William G. Brownlow, of Jonesboro; Thomas W. Humes, of Knoxville; Silas Woodson, of Barbourville; John Campbell, of Abingdon, recently resigned treasurer of the United States under Van Buren; Martin Beaty, former congressman from Kentucky; and Thomas A. R. Nelson, of Tennessee.

It was a great two-day affair, reported fully by Whig newspapers. The *Frankfort Commonwealth* comment (September 22, 1840) on the setting was typical:

"No place is better known in the annals of Kentucky than Cumberland Gap, and none was more often the scene of fierce border conflict between the savage and the white man. And as it was in that day, so it is now in its wild grandeur. The lofty mountains still lift their heads on high, unshorn of their proud forests; the precipices frown around with their primeval gloom and sublimity, and all is fresh and glorious as when it came from the hands of the Creator. Imagination can scarcely conceive of a place where the beautiful and the sublime are more harmoniously blended. And it was to such a spot that the friends of Liberty directed their steps as a fit temple in which to make their vows of devotion to their country. . . . It has been well said that 'Liberty has her home in the mountains,' and to no better guardianship could she be entrusted than to those fearless and independent men who dwell therein."

The booming of the cannon in the Saddle of the Gap in the campaign of 1840 was the portent of a more ominous event already in the making, but was not sensed by those who were taking part in this unusual meeting. It was only a little while until the issues of 1840 were forgotten in the convulsions of hatred and bitterness which seized a growing nation. A new leadership was in the making. While the Whig rally at Cumberland Gap was in session, young Abraham Lincoln of Illinois crossed the Ohio River at Shawneetown and made a speech for the Whig

national ticket at Morganfield, Kentucky. In 1784 Lincoln's father had passed through Cumberland Gap at the age of eight, and a few years later Nancy Hanks, foreordained to be the mother of the frontier lawyer, was carried as a babe in arms along the same path.

Among the legions who migrated to the West were small land owners, rugged individualists, plebeians as well as patricians, who saw in slavery a great human injustice. The Northwest became the refuge of the free, and the frontier settlers, for the most part, were opposed to making chattel of human beings. Slavery might prove profitable for the cotton planters and the larger farm owners in the Bluegrass area, but the spirit of the broad West was not conducive to human serfdom.

The economic difficulties which turned the tide for Harrison and Tyler gave way to more flaming questions in 1860. The young nation was split asunder with cataclysmic issues, and Abraham Lincoln was thrown up on the national horizon as the champion of a strong Union of States supported by a central constitution, rather than a loose Confederation of independent states. And these issues, involved and confused, were to be settled upon the battlefield rather than at the ballot box.

With rebellion sentiment running strong in the Southern States, the majority of the people in the mountain belt in Virginia, North Carolina and Tennessee remained loyal to the Union ideal. Kentucky, sorely divided, endeavored to remain neutral, but the mountaineers from the southeast poured through the passes and over the mountain walls, hurrying to recruiting camps in eastern and central Kentucky.

Cumberland Gap became an outlet for harried Union men in East Tennessee, after Governor Harris and a pro-southern Legislature embraced the cause of the Confederacy. Felix K. Zollicoffer, a former congressman, was placed in charge of the Southern forces in East Tennessee, with instructions to put down "this rebellion against the rebellion," and he immediately fortified the Gap, more to prevent the wholesale flight northward of the mountain men than to repel any forward movement into the South, then threatened by the Northern forces.

The first soldier to enter the age-old passway of the Gap, early in June, 1861, ahead of the regular soldiers, was the chaplain of the 19th Tennessee C. S. A., Rev. David Sullins, who was later to be the founder of Sullins College, at Bristol, Tennessee.

The Confederate flag was planted on the crest of the Pinnacle on the Virginia side, and early in August a squad of Confederate cavalry captured Thomas A. R. Nelson, of Jonesboro, Tennessee, and fifteen or twenty Union men trying to slip across the mountain into Kentucky. Nelson was on his way to Washington, as congressman-elect from his district of Tennessee, and became the first prisoner of war of that section.

Thus began the military action around Cumberland Gap, which was to become a strategic point of contest between contending armies. Zollicoffer entered Kentucky through the Pass on September 10, 1861, in response to the order of Jefferson Davis, thus violating the neutrality of the State, practically at the same time Grant was committing the same offense by crossing the Ohio River to seize Paducah.

The story of President Lincoln's concern for the Unionists of Tennessee and the surrounding mountain territory, his anxiety to push armies to their relief from points in Kentucky, his recommendation that a military railroad be built to Cumberland Gap in order that the railroad life-line connecting the western Confederacy with Virginia might be cut in two, and the reluctance of Sherman, Thomas and Buell to send their armies overland for so long and difficult a distance, has never been adequately treated. East Tennessee loyalists were left to their suffering, except for the partially successful expedition of General George W. Morgan of the Seventh Army Corps, who took Cumberland Gap on June 18, 1862, without firing a shot. But Morgan, deep in a territory where it was hard to get supplies, had to flee northward with his force of 8,000 men in a 200-mile retreat north of the Ohio, while Bragg, Smith and Marshall were converging at Richmond, Lexington and Frankfort in an effort to hold the State for the Confederacy. Perryville became Kentucky's Gettysburg, and the disillusioned Confederate generals with their discouraged armies trailed back, over the Wilderness Trail and through Cumberland Gap, in a retreat marked with hardships and suffering. Over ten thousand men were lost on this retreat, the men being forced to scatter and forage for themselves, and some time elapsed before Bragg and Smith could strengthen their shattered forces in preparation for the campaigns of 1863.

Although the evacuation of Cumberland Gap by General George W. Morgan, when he "blew it up" on the historic night of September 17, 1862, was keenly felt by President Lincoln and

the War Department, it was not considered a major disaster for the Union cause. Morgan's thrust into the heart of the Union territory in the South, maintained only for three months, indirectly led to the failure of the Confederate invasion of Kentucky, because it had temporarily delayed the union of Bragg and Smith's armies, resulting in the indecisive but consequential battle of Perryville on October 8, 1862.

For nearly a year the Confederates retained possession of Cumberland Gap, but when General Ambrose B. Burnside was put in charge of the Army of the Ohio in the summer of 1863, one of his first objectives was to capture the gateway. General John F. de Coursy led a brigade directly to the north of the Pass, while General James M. Shackelford, who had taken his forces through Big Creek Gap to Knoxville, approached from the south side. Thus hemmed in by superior forces, General John W. Frazer on September 9, 1863, surrendered his 2,000 Confederate troops without testing the strength of the enemy in battle, and Cumberland Gap was once again flying the United States flag, much to the disappointment of Jefferson Davis, who ordered an investigation of the surrender.

No further engagements were fought, but frequent skirmishes between foraging parties and small contingents kept the countryside in the throes of almost continual conflict. General Grant, himself, on a cold, icy day early in January, 1864, spent a night at the Pass inspecting the fortifications and seeking to determine whether the Wilderness Road should be continued as a route of supply for the armies in East Tennessee. According to tradition, he declared, upon viewing this Gibraltar, that with two brigades of the Army of the Cumberland he could hold the Pass against the forces that Napoleon led to Moscow. After his inspection he continued his journey to Lexington, and then returned by rail to Nashville, by way of Louisville. Four times the Gap had been occupied or captured or had controlled an important point in the struggle of a nation to maintain its unity.

The Cumberland Gap area was left a desolate waste after the Civil War. Scarred by trenches, breastworks and embattlements, shorn of the timber which had mantled in verdant beauty the twin peaks between which the Saddle of the Gap was hung, the region dropped into virtual oblivion for two decades. The old road had been cut deep by army wagons and heavy guns. Long Tom, a giant "sixty-four" cannon which had been twice

pitched off the face of Pinnacle mountain, lay for several years near the big spring which poured out of the mouth of the cave. The military bridge built across the narrow Saddle to transport guns and supplies from one peak to the other was converted into a store and saloon kept by old Samuel C. Jones. The grist and flour mill at the cave, burned during the War, was re-built; the old iron furnace which had been in operation for nearly a half century, was again in operation. The Pinnacle was often scaled by travelers, along the military road which had been built to its peak. The cave in the bowels of the mountain, which soldiers had explored during lulls between guard duty and foraging raids, became a mecca for visitors.

Because of the opportunities for geological study, it was inevitable that peace-time investigations would bring geologists to this area. Perhaps the reports of Captain Sidney S. Lyon, a Kentucky geologist who had been an engineer with General Morgan in 1862, had attracted official attention. Nathaniel S. Shaler, the celebrated geologist, made the first complete survey of the mineral resources of the region in 1875-76. Following the work of Shaler came John R. Proctor, State Geologist, who had a crew in the neighborhood. Engineers of the U. S. Geological Survey were in the region from 1882-1886, and for the first time authentic information of the rich coal and iron deposits was officially listed in government publications. The thick "coal banks" which Dr. Walker had discovered more than a hundred years before were soon to lure the seeker for wealth and exploitation.

Long-delayed railroad lines were gradually converging from the north and the southeast toward the isolated territory. It was in the summer of 1885 that James Lane Allen, then a young Lexington writer, made a horseback trip through the region. Praising the "incalculable mineral and timber resources of Eastern Kentucky," in an article published in *Harper's*, in June, 1886, Allen closed his account of the trip with the matchless description of his impressions which has so often been quoted. No writer has more eloquently sketched the romantic pageantry which one senses as he stands on the hallowed soil of Cumberland Gap.

The story of Allen had hardly dried on the pages of *Harper's* when one summer afternoon, in 1886, a handsome man of forty, with sideburns, remarkably resembling President Chester Alan

Arthur, came riding leisurely from Morristown, Tennessee, toward the foothills of the Cumberland Range, with the Gap looming up on the horizon. He was Alexander A. Arthur, a Scotchman, a distant relative of the President, and a timber magnate in the mountains of North Carolina. He had been sent to investigate the reported mineral resources and to determine the feasibility of the railroad linking the coal region of southeastern Kentucky with the Carolina markets.

Arthur rested that night in the hospitable home of Dr. Jefferson Monroe Harbison, two miles south of the Gap, before beginning his investigations. Two weeks sufficed to convince him that the region was replete with resources. Supplied with funds from a group of young Northern adventurers sojourning for their health in Asheville, North Carolina, Arthur went to London, with sacks of sample coal and iron ore found in the area. English capitalists were attracted by the stories of the hidden wealth in the heart of the Cumberland Wilderness, and in 1887 and 1888 more than sixty thousand acres of mountain land in the Gap region were purchased from the native mountaineers. A "New Birmingham of the South" was born, full-grown, in the old fields of Yellow Creek Valley, four miles north of Cumberland Gap. Middlesboro, Kentucky, named for an industrial city of England, became, in a few months, a teeming city of 10,000 souls seeking fabulous fortunes. By 1890 twenty million dollars had been poured into the area: building railroads, digging tunnels, erecting furnaces and factories and opening coal mines. Suburban towns were spawned in the magic developments.

The industrial area was north of the mountain on the Kentucky side, and a playground suburb was landscaped and developed on the Tennessee side by the Cumberland Gap Park Company. A hotel of 700 rooms was constructed at Harrogate, Tennessee, called the "Four Seasons," and smaller hotels were built on neighboring peaks. A sanitarium of 100 beds was placed on the Four Seasons Hotel property by investors from New York City, headed by Dr. Allan McLane Hamilton, a grandson of Alexander Hamilton, and a noted alienist who later figured prominently in the trial of Harry K. Thaw for the slaying of Stanford White. A spa to rival the watering places of Europe was envisioned.

The promoters of the various enterprises clustering around the Gap inaugurated a publicity campaign which made the area

the subject of conversation at breakfast tables all over the world. An exhibition car of the region's products was sent to the largest cities. James Bryce, noted English writer, was among the throngs of leading men to visit the development. Henry Watterston ran down from Louisville to write about it first hand. Governor Simon Bolivar Buckner who remembered it from Civil War days looked the project over and signed the charter for the city, in March, 1890. A party of noted English scientists and capitalists came over in 1890 headed by Sir Jacob Higson.

A railroad was built from Knoxville to join the Louisville & Nashville line coming from Lexington, Kentucky. These railroads met in a tunnel seven-eighths of a mile long, penetrating the tips of three states. Engineers, scientists, capitalists, historians, writers, actors, men and women in all walks of life, seeking fame and fortune, turned toward Cumberland Gap. Even the Columbian Exposition was considered for the new national center, and one enthusiastic congressman cast a vote urging that it be held at the historic Pass.

But Middlesboro, Kentucky, and the Four Seasons Hotel at Harrogate, Tennessee, built in one of the widest scale promotion efforts known in the history of the human race, suffered the inevitable reaction which came from the failure of the Barring Brothers Bank of London, and the general panic of 1893. The repercussions of the sudden stoppage of English and American capital were chaotic. The dreams of the capitalists were rudely shattered; the municipal giant on Yellow Creek became a ghost city of lost fortunes; the Four Seasons Hotel was razed and sold for salvage; thirty carloads of furniture were auctioned in Louisville; and half-built industrial plants were left as gaunt unfinished monuments to a shattered dream.¹

With a sob in their throats, the brave remnants of the promoters and natives who lingered on the ruins of the industrial enterprise, began to rebuild. Floods, fires, and pestilence could not destroy the foundations left by the economic failure. The physical heritage of wide streets, railroad lines and operating coal mines were utilized for the era of reconstruction. Although the city which Arthur had created went through dark shadows after the catastrophe, by the time of his death, in 1912, it was well on the way to a new destiny.

¹An account of early Middlesboro is given by Charles Blanton Roberts in his paper entitled "The Building of Middlesborough—A Notable Epoch in Eastern Kentucky History," published in *The Filson Club History Quarterly*, January, 1933.

The scars of the 'nineties were being healed; beautiful residential sections were being constructed; the pattern of the early city was being followed faithfully; the coal mines were shipping trainloads of coal daily; homes, schools, churches and a substantial and prosperous citizenship were being developed. On the property of the Four Seasons Hotel a college was founded by General Oliver Otis Howard and other philanthropic men as a memorial to Abraham Lincoln. This institution, Lincoln Memorial University, Harrogate, Tennessee, has grown into a college of national prominence. Another abandoned hotel, the Harrogate Inn, was converted into an orphanage for homeless mountain girls and continues its service to this day. The Middlesborough Hotel was a tourist hostelry until a few years ago, when fire reduced it to ashes. The belt-line railroad only partially rims the city today and is still used to haul coal from Mingo and Stoney Fork hollows. The street-car system was long ago junked, and the track down Cumberland Avenue was replaced by a boulevard one hundred feet in width. Fern Lake, which is Little Yellow Creek impounded between Cumberland Mountain and a parallel spur, furnishes water sufficient for a quarter of a million people. A federal flood control project of a half million dollars has completed the abortive efforts of the town founders to control the waters of winding Yellow Creek, accustomed to wild rampages during heavy rains. A modern sewer system has at last done what Colonel George A. Waring failed to do fifty years ago, when the panic left the town with an idle pump-house and miles of four-foot concrete conduits through which no sewage ever passed.

And what of Boone's Cumberland Gap, through which wound the old war trail and migration path to the West? There it hangs, 1,665 feet high, suspended between the Pinnacle and the Three States Peak, rough, jagged, scarred and desecrated by the ruthless hand of man. The narrow notch has been scooped out for a modern highway, upon which thousands of cars daily speed through on the wings of the wind. A ghastly scar from a rock quarry maims one side; borrow pits and sand quarries despoil the beauty of the other; dump heaps and piles of refuse line the highway; the ancient spring which long ago served the weary travelers has disappeared with the building of the tunnel and is now piped two miles to furnish water for a tannery; the big rock, Indian ambush, where tradition says two pioneers are buried, is

splashed with lurid signs; a roadhouse is plying its trade on the site where 1840 a Whig convention was held; and in the Saddle is a "blockhouse" filling station and a temporary roadside stand where post cards and trinkets are peddled. Cudjo's Cave has been streamlined and electrified for the ever-increasing army of tourists. A toll highway winds up the back of the Pinnacle to the crest, where traces of the old fortifications are fast disappearing. Erosion is obliterating the names of Civil War soldiers carved in the rugged rocks where the banners of the Star and Bars and the Stars and Stripes alternately floated.

Such is Cumberland Gap, Gateway of Empire, as it is kept today. But there is still another episode in the history of this Pass which is now unfolding. A grateful people, anxious to preserve the important landmarks of our nation, are determined that this mountain area shall be converted into a National Historical Park. The Saddle of the Gap, the segments of Cumberland Mountain reaching northeastward and southwestward, and the portion of the Wilderness Trail to the outer pass at Pineville, where the old Ford crossed the Cumberland River, are to be restored, landscaped, beautified and preserved for posterity. When this park has been fully established, it will constitute a National Monument where the sons of the pioneers may always find inspiration.

There the men and women and children of our America will linger to hear the silent messages of the phantom legions. They will listen to the stories of hardships and pioneering, of unconquerable purposes and empirical conquests; they will feel the impulses of the frontiersmen, sense the majesty of the mountains which have built into our national life the bone and sinew of might and mastery, and brood over the drama of the heroic age of our land when men were free to explore, to conquer and to enjoy the fruits of hard-won victories. They will glimpse the whole perspective of a nation's growth, widening its frontiers, developing its heritages and building its civilization.

At Cumberland Gap, America's most historic pass, future generations may easily catch all these voices. Truly, the Gateway of Empire is eloquent with the trumpet tongues of past events as the Twentieth Century tide of humanity moves ever onward.