

A Brief Biographical Sketch of Daniel Boone©
Frontiersman, Explorer, Leader

Written by Patrick Lee

Ever hear of Sheltoewe? (“Big turtle” in the Shawnee language)
How about old Wide Mouth?

Probably not. You’d know him better by his Quaker name, his Christian name, given in the fall of 1734 when he was born the sixth child to Squire and Sarah Morgan Boone. They named him Daniel.

Home for the Boones was Exeter Township, in eastern Pennsylvania, now known as Reading, PA. Daniel lived there until his mid-teens. He never attended school and didn’t learn his ABCs until he was 14. At an early age, though, he displayed a keen gift for exploring, hunting and learning the ways of the wild from the natives.

By age 16, his family had relocated to the Yadkin River valley in northwestern North Carolina. It would be his home for the next 25 years. There he met and married Rebecca Bryan, who would be his wife for 56 years and bear him 10 children. He was an explorer and hunter at heart. Each spring, after the crops were in the ground, Daniel would take off with a few trusted friends to explore new lands and hunt in the process. He might be gone months at a time.

The lure of news lands was strong, and Boone provided the leadership in 1775 for a number of families to make a new home in the west, across the mountains in “land of the great meadow.” The Iroquois called it Kanta-Ke. He hunted and explored most of all, but he was also a surveyor, horse-trader, ginseng digger, boarding house owner and tobacco shed landlord.

Boone was as naïve at business and the ways of the world as he was shrewd in the out-of-doors. Although he acquired many thousands of acres as payment for his surveying work, he eventually lost it all. While personally an honest man, he continually found himself at odds with the law, primarily over issues not entirely of his making.

A quarter century in Kentucky proved plenty, and Boone again moved his family west, to a Spanish land across the Mississippi called Louisiana. The Spanish government paid him in land for his leadership in bringing more Americans to their territory. They made him the agent for their government, “syndic” they called it, in the Femme Osage, the area west and north of the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers.

Boone’s westward leadership eventually netted him 10,000 acres in Missouri, but circumstances beyond his control took it away. A Congressional grant of 800 acres in his 70s met the same fate.

A hunter, explorer, pioneer and leader until the end of his long life, Daniel Boone rested from his labors in the fall of 1820. He was almost 86.