

**Natural Tunnel  
State Park**

**The Wilderness  
Road Blockhouse**



**Self-Guided Tour**

**Blockhouse Visitor Center Hours  
and Annual Events:**

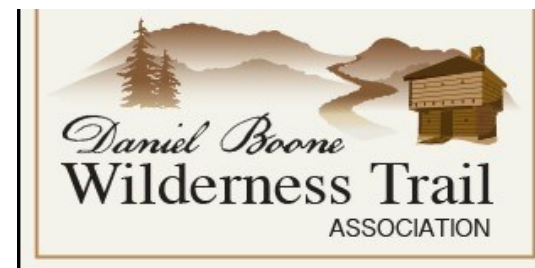
**Blockhouse Visitor  
Center Hours**  
Memorial Day -Labor Day  
Fri-Mon 10 a.m.-6.p.m.

**The Colonial Experience at  
The Blockhouse**  
Last Weekend in April  
Sat 10 a.m.-5.p.m.  
Sun 10am-4pm

**Old Christmas**  
First Saturday in January  
5 p.m.-7 p.m.

\*Please see current park  
programming for up to date events

1420 Natural Tunnel Parkway  
Duffield, VA 24244  
276-940-2674

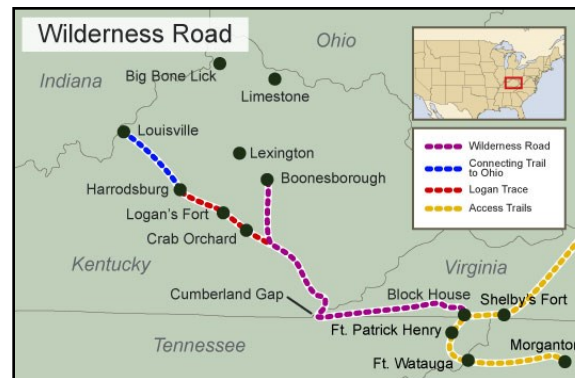


**The Anderson Family**

Born in 1750, Colonel John Anderson came from a line of Scots-Irish farmers in the Shenandoah Valley. He and his wife, Rebecca, moved to the Holston area in 1773. Anderson decided to build a more fortified home two years later to protect his family after nearly losing his life. Anderson and his wife raised 8 children and 64 grandchildren.

Anderson's eventful life not only included his role as the blockhouse proprietor but also as a regional militia leader and judge.

John Anderson lived in his creative masterpiece until his death in the 1800's. Thanks to John Anderson's creation, the blockhouse's unusual structure design and historic significance has brought many visitors to Natural Tunnel State Park and will continue to for years to come.



Continue your journey at the Daniel Boone Wilderness Trail Interpretive Center, a satellite of Natural Tunnel State Park.

371 Technology Trail Lane  
Duffield, Va 24244  
276-431-0104

**#7 The Lower Floor**

The lower half of the building shows common appliances you would find in an 18th century home. It includes some hand carved wooden furniture, a few herbs that would be common in a pioneer home and the most prominent piece on the lower floor, the fireplace. The fireplace would be extremely important due to the fact that it was used to cook food, as well as provide light and warm the house in the winter.



**#8 The Upper Floor**

The upper floor of the house showcases a pioneer bed, including woolen blankets. There is also a spinning wheel displayed that 18th century women would use to spin fibers into thread or yarn. The upstairs floor also gives a great view of the gunports that were installed due to the unusual shape of the structure, which was used to defend the blockhouse from any



### **About the Wilderness Road Blockhouse**

The original Anderson blockhouse was built by John Anderson in Carter's Valley in 1775. If you look back across Bishoptown Road and notice the grey barn on the hill, the original site lies about 15 miles in that direction. Whether Anderson knew it or not, his choice of location would play a pivotal role in the future of the Wilderness Road and all who travelled it.

The blockhouse provided a way station for the pioneers seeking to cross through the Cumberland Gap into Kentucky. Travelers would camp on Anderson's land and trade their goods with him. From here, it took the approximately 300,000 individuals around two weeks to travel to Cumberland Gap.

### **#1 Gazing out over Rye Cove**

Standing by the blockhouse and gazing out over Rye Cove provides one of the best views in the park. Rye Cove is a rich karst area, meaning that it is full of caves, sinkholes, and exposed rock outcroppings. Thousands of settlers passed through the Cove on their journey on the Wilderness Road. Rye Cove was also immortalized in the famous Carter family song "The Cyclone of Rye Cove," which told the story of the 1929 tornado that ripped through the Cove and destroyed the local schoolhouse.



### **#2 Nature's Kitchen**

The pioneers obtained much of their food through hunting, gardens were also vital food sources. One of the gardens at the blockhouse is modelled after a Three Sisters Garden, which were popular among Native American tribes. The sister plants were corn, beans, and squash. The corn provided a pillar that the beans could grow on and the squash provided shade for the roots of the corn. The other garden is an herbal garden, where herbs could be grown for cooking and medicinal purposes.

### **#3 Genius Design**

The overhanging second floor is only one of several notable architectural features. If you gaze up at the overhang from directly below, you will notice gunports that allowed the residents to shoot down on attackers while still being shielded. Additionally, the fireplace was constructed on the inside of the blockhouse because it could be pulled apart from outside to allow attackers to shoot inside the building.

### **#4 The Blockhouse Blacksmith**

Blacksmiths were essential to pioneer life, providing valuable tools and items like nails and horseshoes. In this blacksmith's shop, you can examine the bellows that are used to heat the fire and the anvil that is used to shape the hot metal.



### **#5 Pioneer Baking**

Most families did not have ovens yet, so they had to improvise. Due to this, many people had a great deal of knowledge on various cooking methods, which included an intricate spicing system. A common method of cooking included cooking food in cloth bads, which would first be sterilized by boiling and then would be floured or buttered to produce pudding. Good preservation was also very important in the survival of pioneers.



### **#6 The Role of Flax**

For settlers on the frontier, new clothing was a rarity. To make new clothes, they would grow flax and then laboriously process it until they could spin the fiber into linen. The flax had to be retted, scutched, and combed to obtain the silky fibers from the plant's stem. Settlers would sometimes mix the linen thread with wool to make linsey-woolsey, which tended to make warmer clothing.

