

*Escape From Indian Captivity: The Story of Mary Draper Ingles and her son Thomas Ingles*, by John Ingles; Edited by Roberta Ingles Steele and Andrew Ingles; 1969, Radford, Virginia.

This little booklet offers a rare early account of the story of Mary Draper Ingles, a woman who was captured at Drapers Meadows (Blacksburg) and taken with her two sons (George and Thomas), her sister-in-law (Bettie Robinson Draper), and a neighbor (Henry Leonard), to a Shawnee village on the Ohio River, in the summer of 1755. She earned her place in the history books by escaping (from a salt lick in present day Kentucky) along with another prisoner, a German woman, and the two of them somehow managed to stay alive (for about forty-four days) as they walked home to Virginia (a distance of 600-800 miles). Much has been written about the early pioneers in the Virginia backcountry, in family accounts (passed down orally over several generations) and in larger works by nineteenth and twentieth century historians, but the information is often conflicting...leaving the serious researcher with more questions than answers. This little book offers a fascinating, almost first hand, version of the story. John Ingles (1766 – 1836), the youngest son of William and Mary Ingles, wrote this manuscript in 1835, at the request of others in the family. His spelling (atrocious) and style of writing (rather quaint) are vintage examples of the writing skills of the early settlers in the Virginia frontier, and his details (gathered directly from his parents' accounts) are convincingly authentic.

While there are only a few references to Bedford County (as the place where William Ingles brought his wife in 1756, to seek shelter from further Indian attacks), researchers may glean from this book a much richer understanding of the experiences of the hardy pioneers who struggled to live in Bedford, and throughout the border country of Virginia during the French and Indian Wars. For those interested in Native American history, it is interesting to note the tone and language John Ingles uses to describe the Shawnee and Catawba Indians, and to wonder how closely John Ingles' attitudes mirrored those of his parents a generation earlier. The Ingles family had an especially complicated relationship with the Shawnee. Thomas Ingles, captured at age four, was raised with the Shawnee, but returned to Virginia at age seventeen. He married a woman from Albemarle County (Eleanor Grills), and in 1782 his family was attacked by Shawnee in Burkes Garden, killing their two oldest children, William and Mary. It is quite a story!