

JOHN LOONEY  
(ca. 1732 – ca. 1817)  
s/o Robert Looney & Elizabeth Llewellyn  
h/o Esther "Hettie" Rentfro

Source: Botetourt County, Virginia Heritage Book 1770 – 2000, pgs. 153 & 154.

John Looney (ca 1732 – ca. 1817) was born in Pennsylvania to the immigrants from the Isle of Man, Robert and Elizabeth Llewellyn Looney. He had four older brothers on the Muster Roll of 1742, but he was not the required age of over eighteen. John became a hunter and explorer and knew Southwestern Virginia well. Augusta County paid John for wolf heads several times from 1755 to 1763. One report listed two old and 5 young wolf heads and he was paid 560 pounds of tobacco.

Many records in Augusta and Botetourt Counties, during John's lifetime, show he served on juries, signed petitions, was a witness in court cases, and on deeds, gave flour to the militia, appraised many estates, and performed other civic duties.

About 1760 John Looney and Esther Rentfro were married, probably in Augusta County, Virginia. She was born about 1739 on the Roanoke River in the area designated to be Augusta County. She was the first white child born west of the Blue Ridge Mountains and south of the James River. Family tradition always held that Esther was a daughter of Stephen Rentfro. In 1994 this author and son found proof of this in a legislative petition in the Virginia State Archives. More about this later.

A persistent tradition in the old histories and down through the generations stated that John Looney was two years with Daniel Boone in Kentucky. It is not surprising that John would have been interested in the vast fertile lands of Kentucky. His name, John Luney, can be found on the monument at Boonesborough, Kentucky. Also found in the Draper manuscripts ICC99 excerpts from the Journal of Richard Henderson (who was at Boonesborough at the time) for Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> June 1775 the following: "Daniel Goodman went away with Jno. Luney, Wm. Wilson, and Page Portwood. Divine service by Mr. Lyth. Wrote by Daniel Goodman to my wife, Daniel Williams, and Jno. Christmas." The Journal continued on Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> June 1775 "Col. Boone set off for his family, and the young men went with him for salt, etc."

John had already bought land on Meadow Run of Craig's Creek before this and continued to add to his holdings. Meadow Run also went by the names Stone(y) run or Creek and Bryan's Creek. Many of his friends sold out at this time and went to Kentucky. John must have weighed the advantages and disadvantages and decided to stay in Botetourt. In June 1807 John and Esther Looney divided up their lands. The wording in the deeds was about the same, stating: "in consideration of the Natural affection they have for their daughter – plus 5 shillins" or "5 dollar." The sons-in-law were always named in the daughters' deeds. Those named in this division were: John Walker and wife Esther, John Looney, Jr., Joseph Looney, David Looney, Stephen Holston and Jane, and George Walker and wife (Eleanor).

Other possible children, not listed in the division: Peter, married Judith Robinson, Mary, married Henry Cartmill, and maybe other daughters.

In the census of 1810, John Looney and his youngest son, Robert, are both listed as “head of family.” This is not seen very often. In this census there was a male and female in the 20-45 year list and a male and female in the over 45 year list. There was one slave. This was probably the slave Esther Looney received as her inheritance from her father, Stephen Rentfro, when his estate was settled in 1806. Esther made the trip to Knox County, Tennessee to claim her inheritance. However, Virginia had passed a law forbidding the importation of new slaves into the Commonwealth. This slave was to be a gift to John and Esther Walker for the consideration of maintaining John and Esther Looney during their natural lives. John Walker entered a legislative petition Dec. 6, 1817 to make owning the slave legal.

John Looney obtained three parcels of land, total 315 acres, “on the head branch of Stone Creek, a branch of Craig’s Creek in the Valley of Sinking Creek” in Botetourt County in 1811. John and Esther Looney sold this 315 acres to their youngest son, Robert Looney, for 800 pounds, March 23, 1816. A little more than a year later Robert and Catherine Looney sold this 315 acres to Eliezer Sweetland for \$3000. John Looney probably died in 1817 and his wife Esther is found in the census of 1820 in the household of John and Esther Walker. On July 2, 1821 a newspaper called the Herald of the Valley published a brief obituary: “Died, on Sinking Creek, the 26<sup>th</sup> of Feb. last, Esther Looney, consort of the late John Looney, in the 82<sup>nd</sup> year of her age – after a short illness.”

There are many descendants of John and Esther Looney living in many places in the United States.

*Submitted by Madge Looney Crane, Waterford, OH. Sources: Hardesty’s Historical and Geographic Encyclopedia (Roane County), p. 337, Draper Manuscripts, records at The Library of Virginia, Botetourt County deeds and surveys.*

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