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The first sheriff of Boone County, Kentucky was John Cave Jr. His term of office commenced on June 17, 1799 after James Garrad, Esq., the then-Governor of Kentucky, appointed him to serve.

John is believed to have been born in Spotsylvania County Virginia in 1764 and emigrated with "The Traveling Church" in 1781, when he was 17, to Kentucky. John's father, Reverend William Cave Sr., was one of several Baptist preachers who were under the leadership of Reverend Lewis Craig and Captain William Ellis during the exodus, which was the largest body of Virginians that ever set out for Kentucky at one time.

By the 1790s, the Cave family joined this migration stream and established themselves in what is now western Boone County. They settled in the fertile Ohio River floodplain known as the North Bend Bottoms, a broad stretch of bottomland lying a few miles west of present-day Petersburg. This area became one of the earliest settlement locations in the county.

On December 13, 1798, the Kentucky Legislature created Boone County from the western portion of Campbell County. The county's first court convened on June 17, 1799 and notably, this inaugural session was held at the William Cave homestead, underscoring the family's prominence in the region. At this meeting, the court began the work of organizing the new county's civil structure, and the newly appointed Sheriff took several oaths required by law and secured his promise to faithfully execute the office with a \$3,000 penalty.

At that same first court session, the justices selected a 74-acre tract donated by Robert Johnson and John Hawkins Craig as the site of the new county seat.

In the early years of Kentucky statehood, the sheriff was the county's principal law enforcement official. Sheriffs were central figures in frontier governance, and John Cave's service helped establish the administrative foundations of Boone County.

On August 9, 1802, John Cave married Polly Craig in Boone County, linking two prominent early families. After completing his term as sheriff, it is generally believed that he returned to private life. No records indicate that he held additional public office.

Correspondence indicates that John Cave died intestate near North Bend, Boone County about 1819. Despite extensive research, no death or burial records have been located for either him. Polly Craig Cave is believed to have died after November 24, 1838, according to probate records. As with her husband, her final resting place remains unknown.

