

The Story of Jane McCrea



CAPTURE OF JANE MCCREA
From Painting by F. C. Yohr, Courtesy
Glens Falls (N.Y.) Insurance Co.

BY ELMO SCOTT WATSON

MOST Americans know that the assassination of the Austrian archduke at Sarajevo, Serbia, in 1914, was the spark which set off the greatest conflagration in the history of mankind, the World War, but how many of them knew that the murder of an American girl by Indians in 1777 played a part in determining the destiny of their own nation? Yet there are historians who will agree that her death, the one hundred and fifty-third anniversary of which comes on July 27 of this year, was a factor in the so-called "turning point" in our struggle for independence. In these years so many sesquicentennial celebrations of important battles of the Revolution are being held, it is fitting that Americans should hear again the story of lovely Jane McCrea and her tragic fate.

In June, 1777, Gen. John Burgoyne with an army of 7,000 British and Hessians and a large force of Canadian and Indian allies swept down from Canada for the invasion of New York by the way of Lake Champlain. After he had captured Ticonderoga, Crown Point and Fort Edward, he expected Sir William Howe to come up the Hudson river from New York and join him at Albany. Thus they would drive a wedge between New England and the other colonies and put an end to the rebellion. Fort Edward was in a dilapidated condition and was held by only a small rear guard of Gen. Philip Schuyler's army, which had been forced to retreat before Burgoyne's greater numbers.

Near Fort Edward stood three cabins, one of which was occupied by a Mrs. McNeill, who is described as "a fat and talkative old woman, who had been twice widowed." She was a cousin of Brig. Gen. Simon Fraser of Burgoyne's army, and for that reason felt no apprehension at the approach of the invaders, even though Burgoyne's Indian allies had been killing and scalping settlers as they advanced. On July 27 she welcomed a guest into her home—Jane McCrea, a twenty-three-year-old girl, who lived with her brother, John McCrea, a lawyer and colonel of the local militia, near the mouth of Moses Kill, south of Fort Edward. Jane McCrea was noted throughout the countryside both for her beauty and for her long and lustrous hair which would reach to the floor when she stood and let it down.

Because of the near approach of the enemy, John McCrea was preparing to move to Albany, but his sister refused to go with him or even to stay at their home on Moses Kill. The reason was that she had a lover, David Jones, a neighbor who, being a Tory, had fled to Canada soon after the outbreak of the war and was now returning as an officer in one of Burgoyne's Loyalist regiments. He had written to her, proposing that she should ostensibly pay Mrs. McNeill a farewell visit, then slip away to the British lines and he would have the chaplain marry them. There are several contradictions in the various stories of the Jane McCrea tragedy. One of them is in regard to how she happened to fall into the hands of the Indians. According to one story Jones sent a party of Indians under the leadership of a half-breed to escort her to the British camp, and Burgoyne's account of the affair gives color to this version.

Some historians, however, do not mention this fact. According to their version, about nine o'clock on the morning of July 27 a party of Indians attacked and drove into the fort a picket guard of the Americans, killing the commander and capturing one man. Incidentally, this man's name was Standish and he was a descend-



BEN FRANKLIN

GEN. JOHN BURGUYNE

ant of the valorous Miles Standish of Pilgrim fame. The Indians then discovered the two women in the cabin, entered it and dragged them out. Standish saw them rushing their prisoners along the trail up the hill to a place where they had two horses.

They tried to place the women on these mounts and easily seated Jane McCrea on one. But fat old Mrs. McNeill was a different proposition and, try as they could, the savages could not lift her into the saddle. Meanwhile the others led Jane McCrea away and, as she and her captors passed near the spot where Standish was held captive, he saw two of them engaged in an angry dispute. Suddenly one of them turned and shot her from the saddle, scalping her as she fell. Then, according to their savage custom, they stripped her of the wedding finery, in which she was going to meet her lover, and mutilated her body horribly. They then continued on to Burgoyne's camp, where they told what had happened and exhibited her scalp.

While this was taking place fat old Mrs. McNeill was having her troubles. Although she had not been injured by her captors, they had stripped her to a single undergarment and in this she appeared in camp where the Indian turned her over to her cousin, General Fraser. That officer was much embarrassed, for he was not able to find in camp any women's clothes large enough for Mrs. McNeill. Finally, out of his own wardrobe, he produced a great coat large enough to cover her. All the while he was forced to listen to a torrent of abuse from the irate old lady because of her treatment at the hands of his "rascally Indians."

But this comic aspect of the affair soon became a tragic one when Jane McCrea's scalp was shown to her. She recognized it at once, as did David Jones, who then learned of the fate of his bride-to-be. Upon being informed of what had taken place, General Burgoyne immediately held an inquiry, ordered the Indians to hand over the murderer, put him under arrest and announced his intention of executing him. But St. Luc, the French-Canadian leader of the Indian allies, informed the general if he did that the Indians, who were already resentful of Burgoyne's efforts to restrain them from the atrocities which they had been committing against the settlers, would desert in a body and go home, probably solacing themselves by killing any whites they found, whether Loyalist or Patriot. So Burgoyne yielded to St. Luc and pardoned the slayer.

It is doubtful if even the loss of his Indian allies would have been as severe a blow to his hopes as were the results of the murder of Jane McCrea. From the beginning of his expedition the excesses of his savages had brought down upon him criticism in England and furious denunciation by the Americans. Patriot propagandists had let loose blasts of scorn and bitter anger at him because he had employed

savages. Of course, they were ignoring the fact that during the wars with the French the Colonists had been glad enough to have the aid of Indians, over whom they had little more control than had Burgoyne over his allies. They were ignoring, too, the fact that early in the struggle for freedom, they themselves had solicited the aid of Indians and even then so-called Christian Indians from Stockbridge, Mass., were fighting on their side. But propagandists then, as ever since that time, have not always been concerned with telling the whole truth.

Burgoyne had hoped that not only active Loyalists, but those whose allegiance was doubtful would rally to his army as it advanced. When he captured Ticonderoga so easily, it was such a blow to the Patriot cause that it began to look as though the whole rebellion might collapse, especially since there were so many Colonists who cared little for either king or congress and wanted only to be allowed to continue in their peaceful pursuits. But the unpunished murder of Jane McCrea made even those, who might be inclined to swear allegiance to the crown and receive a certificate of loyalty, waver. If the bride of an officer in his army was killed by his savages, what assurance would they have that anyone would be safe from his painted demons, they asked themselves. Among those who favored the Patriot cause her death helped fix in them a stubborn determination to resist the invader to the end and to quicken them into action. "Remember Jane McCrea" became something of a rallying cry along the hurried frontier of New York, for the fame of the victim made the story of her death spread like wildfire and greatly stimulated recruiting.

Thus the story of Jane McCrea was spread broadcast throughout the colonies. It became a leading item of Patriot propaganda.

No doubt that master propagandist of them all, canny Ben Franklin made good use of it, just as he used the famous "inventory of scalps" story (which he had manufactured) so efficiently in stirring up the Patriots to a high pitch of fury against the British. Although it is impossible ever to lay a finger upon the definite results of propaganda, there can be no doubt that this story had an important effect upon Patriot morale at a time when it was very low. It took the fighting of a Willett and a Gansevoort at Fort Schuyler (Stonewall), of a Stark and a Warner at Bennington and of a Morgan and an Arnold at Saratoga to crush the invader and to make his defeat one of the fifteen decisive battles of the world and his surrender the real turning point in the American Revolution. But the beautiful girl who was struck down by an Indian bullet that July morning, 153 years ago, deserves a share in that great victory. Unwittingly she played an important role in a mighty drama. So Jane McCrea did not die in vain.

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Adrift With Humor

MUST BE DEAF

A telegraph linesman, working in a street, had attached a portable telephone to a telegraph pole and was ringing up the exchange. It was rather a long job, and during the process a dear old lady came along and asked:

"Excuse me, sir, are you very deaf?"

Linesman—Yes, madam, I am a trifle deaf.

Dear Old Lady—Oh, you poor man! I'm so sorry for you. Your radio isn't playing.

A CLOSE SHAVE



"They say the barber went suddenly insane and nearly cut Jones' throat."

"Yes; Jones had a close shave."

The Modern View

Twinkle, twinkle, little gem,
Shining brightly as a star,
In these days of imitation
How we wonder what you are?

Life Full of Variety

First Chorus Girl—O, what a life!
Yesterday I dined like a queen, and today the wolf is at the door.

Second Chorus Girl—Yes, and tomorrow, the furrier with a silver fox.

A Flapper's Dates

Flapper—Now, mother, do try to remember what I want you to do. If Harry comes, telephone Jack that I can't meet him because I've got to keep an appointment with George.

THE WRONG TREE



He—It's going to rain, let's get under this tree.

She—We can't keep dry under a weeping willow, dear.

Thrift

A tolling friend of yore I met.
He was no idle sleeper.
He worked himself most out of debt
And then got in still deeper.

In Costume

The revellers were going home, when a policeman stepped out of the darkness.

Revellers—We are not real foot-pads, but only dancers in fancy dress.

Policeman—And I am not a real policeman—come along, hand over purses, watches, jewels—

A Discouraging Feature

"Cheer up!" said the lawyer. "We may still win this case. I haven't exhausted all the means—"

"But you've exhausted all mine!" interrupted the client, gloomily.

Following a Custom

Cook—If you please, ma'am, may I entertain my fiancée in the kitchen this evening?

Mistress—But I thought you broke it off with her last night, Mary?

"So I did, ma'am; but, naturally, I gave him a month's notice."—London Opinion.

Hah!

"My man, can you drive a car?"

"Not me, boss. Sorry."

"Good. Will you watch mine for a few minutes?"

Not a Hercules

Piano Movers' Boss—You're fired. I won't have a man in my gang that can't lift a piano.

One of the Huskies—Hold on a minute, boss. 'Tain't his fault. They's a Sunday paper on it.

Expensive Fine

Madge—So you were up before a sterner traffic judge than usual?

Marge—Yes, I had to smile at him three times before he dismissed the charge.

Strategists Plan for Large Scale Inundation

The story of how the Dutch, in the days of the prince of Orange, opened the dikes and flooded the country to drive off the Spanish invaders is well known. The story of how the Allies did the same in this last war to hold back the Germans for a few precious weeks is also well known. Now the French ministry of war plans to make inundation a regular part of their defense at the north.

Before, when the dikes have been opened, it was only as a last resort, because land flooded by salt water is rendered sterile for years, so that only the greatest necessity would force the French to open the gates to the seas.

However, they plan to build a line of dikes and levees that will permit mixing salt water with fresh water, so that the land will be fit for cultivation sooner.

This new system would allow flooding the land at any time and in a very short period of time. Army manuevers this fall will include manipulation of the existing locks.

Not a Miracle

While drawing a bucket of water from a well on his property at Greenwich, Conn., Joseph Krom lighted a cigarette and tossed the match in the bucket. The explosion which followed consumed the contents of the bucket. He drew another bucket and threw it on the ground and set a match to it. Again there was a brisk blaze. He summoned the fire company and an investigation disclosed that a leaking gasoline tank in a nearby factory was causing the seeming miracle.

Airplanes Intrigue Kanakas

The promise of an airplane ride has instilled great energy in the usually lethargic native Kanakas of New Guinea. The natives slave hard to save up \$10 to take a good ride, with a loop-the-loop thrown in. The first plane that passed over their district between the gold fields and the coast sent the natives wild with fear, but they have become accustomed to planes.

Wild Pigeons Hurt Crops

Bakersfield, Calif.—Thousands of pigeons, identified by local people as "wild pigeons," are migrating from the high mountains and damaging ranches in the Arvin and Weed Patch districts.



When Food Sours

Lots of folks who think they have "indigestion" have only an acid condition which could be corrected in five or ten minutes. An effective anti-acid like Phillips Milk of Magnesia soon restores digestion to normal.

Phillips does away with all that sourness and gas right after meals. It prevents the distress so apt to occur two hours after eating. What a pleasant preparation to take! And how good it is for the system! Unlike a burning dose of soda—which is but temporary relief at best—Phillips Milk of Magnesia neutralizes many times its volume in acid.

Next time a hearty meal, or too rich a diet has brought on the least discomfort, try—

PHILLIPS Milk of Magnesia

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Designed to Draw Load

What is asserted to be the largest wire rope in the world is to be used at a Hongkong dockyard in hauling huge vessels up the slipways. The rope contains 854 wires, is 1,656 feet long, weighs 30 tons and has a breaking strain of 800 tons.

Dumb Dumbell

Daisy—How was your date last night?

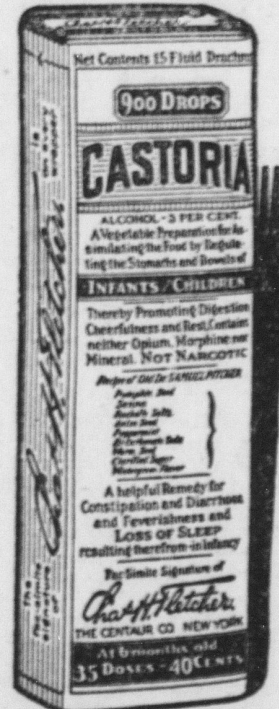
Maizie—Say, that poor fish thought his arms were given him to put in his coat sleeves and that my neck was just something to connect my head with the rest of me.

When Babies CRY

Babies will cry, often for no apparent reason. You may not know what's wrong, but you can always give Castoria. This soon has your little one comforted; if not, you should call a doctor. Don't experiment with medicines intended for the stronger systems of adults! Most of those little upsets are soon soothed away by a little of this pleasant-tasting, gentle-acting children's remedy that children like.

It may be the stomach, or may be the little bowels. Or in the case of older children, a sluggish, constipated condition. Castoria is still

the thing to give. It is almost certain to clear up any minor ailment, and could by no possibility do the youngest child the slightest harm. So it's the first thing to think of when a child has a coated tongue; won't play, can't sleep, is fretful or out of sorts. Get the genuine; it always has Chas. H. Fletcher's signature on the package.



Don't be Stung!

Here's the sure, quick, easy way to kill all mosquitoes indoors and keep 'em away outdoors!



Spray clean smelling

FLIT

The World's Largest Selling Insect Killer

Flit is sold only in this yellow can with the black band.



Kills Flies Mosquitoes Moths Bed Bugs Roaches Ants

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