

Why Not Frances Slocum State Park?

Not much remains in Wyoming Valley to bring to mind a tragedy of a little more than one hundred and eighty-three years ago.

A playground, once complete with a well-constructed bard covered building, at the corner of North Pennsylvania Avenue, and Scott Street, Wilkes-Barre, was given to the city in 1907 to commemorate it. There was also a brass plaque on the North Street school.

The bark covered building is gone but a plaque on a conglomerate boulder nearby bears the name of the donor, George Slocum Bennett. The other plaque on the school is tarnished for want of attention.

What was this tragedy? It was the kidnapping of a little girl, so horrible that the heartaches of her family had repercussions in homes for miles around and for many decades in time.

The Slocum family, father, mother, and four children, being of Quaker Faith were at the time quite secure from ravaging Indians from outside the Valley. This security was assured until an Indian one day saw Ebenezer Slocum, too young for military service, but old enough for the Home Guard, drilling with other young boys and some very old men.

When word of this reached the Sachem (Council Head) of the Delaware (Lenna-Lenape) Indians, a plan was devised to discourage other Quakers from bearing arms. This plan was the abduction of Frances Slocum.

A FATEFUL DAY

Jonathan Slocum had just returned from Philadelphia with supplies for his blacksmith shop. He also had crops to harvest. Corn, standing in shock, had to be husked and brought to crib. Accompanied by his eldest son, he was undertaking this task at the far end of a field, on the fateful day.

Helping him was Wareham Kingsley who crossed the upper end of the corn field and turned toward the Slocum home where he and his brother, Nathan, had been living since the death of their parents.

Nathan had just finished sharpening his knife on a grind stone when a gun shot disturbed the stillness.

Running to the door Mother Slocum saw an Indian stoop and scalp Nathan, tucking the scalp of his young victim under his belt, the Indian disappeared into the woods to the east.

Sensing danger, Mary, the eldest girl, and a younger brother ran toward the Fort. Mother Slocum taking up her youngest child fled from the rear door toward the river. She was unaware that another Indian was stealthily creeping into the cabin to complete the planned abduction.

Remembering that Frances and her crippled brother were still in the cabin, Mrs. Slocum hid her baby in the brush and returned in time to see the Indian pull Frances from under the loft ladder where she had bravely tried to hide.

Roughly pushing mother Slocum aside, ignoring her pleadings, he threw Frances over his shoulder, dashed into the woods and disappeared.

Another Indian lurking nearby jumped into the clearing, grabbed Wareham Kingsley and fled toward the east.

Later in the day the three Indians and their two captives met in a dense wooded area.

FIFTY YEARS LATER

Some fifty years later, Colonel George Ewing, on duty with the Army, near New Reserve, Indiana, sought shelter one evening from a torrential storm in the home of an elderly Indian woman. He noticed marks of refinement about her, and after much persuasion and a prom-

INDEED, WHY NOT?

The new State Park to be created by the State Department of Forest and Waters along Abraham's Creek in Kingston Township should be named "The Frances Slocum State Park."

That is the belief of William Robbins, Carverton Road, who wrote the accompanying article on the abduction of Frances Slocum by Indians from her home in Wyoming Valley.

Much of his material was obtained by Mr. Robbins from notes gathered by his father, the late William J. Robbins, during conversations with a Delaware Indian living in the St. Lawrence River Valley.

It is an historical fact that Frances Slocum spent the first night of her abduction in a crude shelter beneath a ledge of rocks at the summit of a gentle ridge on the Jacobs Estate to the west of Brown's Corners.

This spot will not be inundated when the new horseshoe shaped lake is created.

Over a period of many years, Mr. Robbins and his late father did considerable excavating in that area for Indian artifacts. The late Mr. Robbins was for many years curator of Indian Archaeology for Wyoming Historical and Geological Society and gave many lectures on the Indians in full Indian regalia.

He was the grandson of a full-blooded Mohawk Indian girl who married Colonel Willet, a famous soldier of the Cherry Valley in New York State.

The Delaware Indian from whom William Robbins, Sr. obtained much of the information which his son used in this article was a descendant of one of the abductors who took part in the plot to abduct Frances Slocum.

ise that she could remain with her people, she told him who she was.

When word of her discovery reached Wyoming Valley, her brother Ebenezer and a friend began immediate preparations for a journey west.

After a long and tedious trip, the two weary travelers from Wyoming Valley found Frances at her home in New Reserve.

Though years in the great-outdoors, and deprivation had changed her features, brother Ebenezer showed signs of recognition.

Some of the events of her early life in Wyoming Valley and her abduction were indelibly impressed in her mind. However, being reared and having lived among Indians for so long she was hesitant to talk freely.

THE INDIANS' STORY

And now comes the Indian side of this story as passed down to later generations by one of the abductors.

Meeting at the north end of the Valley the abductors made plans as follows: the Indian with the Kingsley boy's scalp was to return to the camp of the Delawares and report their mission accomplished. A second Indian was to take Wareham Kingsley through the Lackawanna Valley to a point north of a settlement, then turn west until they reached the flowing water below the settlement of Tunkhannock, where a rendezvous was planned with the third member who had little Frances.

This parting was planned to thwart any attempt of being followed.

After the rendezvous at the northern end of the Valley, Frances was placed in a dugout canoe and the Indian crossed with her to the opposite shore. After landing, Frances was again thrown over his shoulder and the Indian headed for the second notch of the mountains on the west side.

With the setting of the sun, the Indian put Frances to the ground and urged her ahead of him along the creek, (now called Abrahams).

The Indian knew exactly where he should go. Just at dusk they reached a rock shelter where he planned to spend the first night.

A large protruding ledge of rock with poles leaning against it, and these covered with skins, formed a comfortable wilderness abode. Primitive though it was, it afforded a sad little girl with protection from the harsh November elements.

It was at this shelter that Frances made a noble attempt to escape. Sometime after the Indian had covered her, and she was quite satisfied that he was asleep, she stealthily slipped away down the hill to the edge of the swamp. She traveled along the swamp until she came to the spring from which the Indian had dipped water. Feeling sure she was headed in the right direction toward home, she mustered a spark of courage and started to run. The cracking sound of dead twigs on the ground led the Indian to her.

In the struggle to free herself from him, she scratched his face. The Indian cried out, "Moconaqu!" (Little Bear). But he would not let her go.

After sunrise, and a few mouthfuls of dried meat, the journey continued. About midday they arrived at a well worn trail, (Saug-eamaska-hanna) which was followed until they reached an almost deserted settlement (Tunkhannock) of wigwams on the bank of the Susquehanna river. It was then several hours after sunset of the second day of captivity.

Two days later the Indian with the Kingsley boy arrived. Somewhere along their route they had found a horse and the Kingsley boy was astride when they reached Tunkhannock.

Plans were made to spend the fourth night of captivity in a wigwam for sleet and rain had started to fall.

At dawn the two captives were awakened and given a breakfast of dried corn cakes. Then placed astride the horse they were led onto the trail to Tioga. (Where pleasant waters meet.) At Tioga a tradewas made with other Indians—A horse for four blankets.

From Tioga, guided by the rising and setting sun they went north. Much time was lost on this leg of

their travel. Once, hearing voices of avowed enemies, they were compelled to jump from the trail, clamping their hands over the mouths of their captives to keep them from screaming for help.

These despised Delawares were now near the Long House of the Iroquoian Federation.

Though the fall season of 1778 was an open one, severe winter did descend upon them when the journey was about half accomplished. For comfort, especially during the cold nights, the Indians shared parts of their skin garments as covers. Their food supply of dried meats and corn cakes was consumed by the end of the second week. Faced with, what would have been a period of terrible hunger, the Indians, using their lore, caught animals and fowl; a porcupine, a wild goose, found alive, but caught in the quick freeze of a lake lagoon, and pieces of fresh meats occasionally found hanging in trees near shelters along the route.

Ten weeks passed before they reached their destination in a forest on the opposite shore of the great river, (Niagara).

Placed in a primitive concentration camp (unlike those found in Europe) they were well fed and warmly clothed.

After about two weeks, the Kingsley boy was released to an Indian planning a trip south. He finally reached Wyoming Valley where he was released.

Frances was detained for another week and finally adopted by an Indian couple that had lost a daughter through sickness.

Not knowing that she had already been named, her foster parents called her "We-let-a-wash." (Star of the evening). Her life with this family afforded her some childhood joys. She was also given more freedom than Indian children of her age.

It was deduced from what Frances related through an interpreter years later that at the age of twenty she was wooed, won, and married in characteristic Indian fashion. But as fate would have it, the marriage turned out later to be not such a happy period of her early life. The white man's brandy was the cause of this. The marriage ended in about five years. It was presumed that her husband died in a battle.

After a period of mourning, she married a deaf man, and gave birth to four children. Two boys and two girls.

She said there were times when she longed to dress and appear as a white woman. But these longings were quickly dispelled by the knowledge that she had to teach her children the ways of the Indian; to gather food and clothing from that which nature provides.

Their home in Deaf Man's Village, (named in honor of her husband) was surrounded with many pleasant memories in spite of short supplies of corn, meat and fish.

Given an opportunity to better her lot, she followed the advice of friends and moved to New Reserve shortly after the death of her second husband.

Her remaining days were spent with her two daughters and son-in-law, the two boys having died during early childhood.

In 1838 at the age of 68 years she passed away and was buried in a newly established cemetery.

A monument was placed at her grave many years later by descendants of other members of her family in Wyoming Valley, a bleak reminder of the heartaches and anguish of an entire community, for the "Little Lost Sister of Wyoming."

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AND EXPANSION PROGRAM!

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