

The Frontier Forts

THE FRONTIER FORTS NORTH & WEST BRANCHES Of the SUSQUEHANNA RIVER By JOHN M. BUCKALEW

Mr. Buckalew, in his article, lists 2 forts in what would become Clinton County. Fort Horn, located on the P & E Railroad, about midway between Pine and McElhattan stations in Clinton County. Fort Reid (Reed), located in the town of Lock Haven, Clinton County, Pennsylvania on Water Street, in close proximity and east of the Bald Eagle Canal, fortified, Spring of 1777.

With the uprising of the Indians in the Wyoming Valley of Pennsylvania in 1778, the settlers of the West Branch of the Susquehanna River, including those who lived in what would become Clinton County, fled to Fort Augusta in Shamokin (Sunbury) in what became known as “The Great Runaway of 1778”. It would be several years before they returned to their homes. The Seneca’s, the western most tribe of the Iroquois Indian Nation used the Pine Creek Path to come to the “Great Island” at Lock Haven which they used to stage raids on the white settlements.

The first tragedy of consequence to strike on the upper West Branch was in the spring of 1777 at Fort Antes. The settlers were living in the Fort and on a Sunday morning in early June some women went out to milk the cows which were being pastured on the island opposite the fort (and also opposite present Jersey Shore). The men who were serving as guard detail went after a cow wearing a bell which had been decoyed back into the thicket by lurking Indians. Unsuspecting the trap four men who went after her were shot by Indians, two of them were killed immediately and scalped. They were Zephaniah Miller and Isaac Bouser (or Bonser). Abel Cady, also shot, expired in his wife’s arms, as soon as she could get to him. The 4th man, James Armstrong, lived until the next evening. This incident served to draw up a company of Militia which was stationed at Fort Reed (at present Lock Haven) and they patrolled that frontier for 3 months that summer. Col. William Kelly was in charge, with Lieutenant James Van Campen, Job Chilloway, the friendly Indian acting as their scout.

Next of the tragedies on the West Branch began during the winter. To enumerate a few: there were the Culbertsons, John and James with Isaac DeLong, killed when they left Reed’s Fort to do some chores at their mill which was about 5 miles up Bald

Eagle Creek, or a mile from present Flemington. There was a Mr. Jones (Levi probably or Daniel). Two men unnamed killed above "Great Island". One man killed at the mouth of Pine Creek, two at the mouth of Bald Eagle Creek. Two families who lived N. E. of present Williamsport, who were burned out, murdered and some of them carried off as captives.

We should know that these victims were made to suffer horrors. It is said that the Indian women were especially clever at devising new ways and means of torturing their victims.

We will relate just one instance, that Anthony Saltzman, who was killed above Lock Haven that winter when the river was frozen over. After being tomahawked and scalped, the Indians deliberately chopped his body to pieces on the ice, in full view of his companions.

Contributed by Richard Winters