Prior to the “British Invasion,” which was forged by the Beatles, very little popular music from Britain was broadcast in the U.S. It might then come as a surprise that the top chart performer in Britain during those pre-invasion years sang what can only be described as Scotch-Irish music. It was a kind of “British Invasion” in reverse.

The purveyor of these hits was a young man who came with the proper pedigree. He was born in Glasgow to a Scottish father and an Irish mother. The family moved to London when he was a youth because his father, a professional musician, found work there.

His name was Lonnie Donegan. The media labeled his genre of music as skiffle, but this was a little misleading, for it suggested amateurism and washboards. Lonnie was no amateur. He began his career playing banjo in various jazz bands, including with Chris Barber, Britain’s most famous purveyor of the New Orleans traditional sound. This was a direction the Beatles would not have qualified for.

Donegan then formed his own group and began recording the music he loved, traditional Scotch-Irish standards set to a fast “modern” tempo. Kids all across the British Isles loved it. His recordings rocketed to the top of the charts. He had no fewer than thirty chart toppers, mostly before the Beatles hit the scene. Of course his British record company did not refer to his music as Scotch-Irish but rather as “American folk songs.”

A sampling of Lonnie Donegan’s hit singles includes “Rock Island Line,” “Cumberland Gap,” “Fort Worth Jail,” “Battle of New Orleans,” “My Dixie Darling,” “Grand Cooie Dam,” “Pick a Bail of Cotton” and “Louisiana Man.” His albums are filled with many more.

The Beatles themselves were weaned on his music. Paul McCartney said he entered the business upon hearing Lonnie Donegan perform live in Liverpool in 1956. George Harrison ran to the house where Donegan was staying to beg for his autograph and went right out and bought a guitar. It is ironic that Donegan died just days before he was scheduled to perform with the Rolling Stones at a memorial concert for George Harrison.

If you would like to hear a fine example of Lonnie and his band perform Scotch-Irish music, then just type into Google: “Lonnie Donegan My Dixie Darling” and his high spirited live rendition of that song will pop up. Or better still, type in the words: “Lonnie Donegan Ottalie Patterson” and you will hear a live performance on British television in which Lonnie and his good friend Ottalie Patterson from County Down in Northern Ireland, are singing a southern spiritual. Ottalie also sang with the Chris Barber band.

It is perhaps an odd sort of conundrum that a Scot, recording in studios in London was the most successful purveyor of Scotch-Irish music of the twentieth century.
No one knows for sure just how many hereditary societies, fraternal societies and “secret societies” exist in the United States. With the exception of those with passwords and secret handshakes, they all have one thing in common. That is to perpetuate their goals, beliefs and public recognition. To grow and continue, an organization must recruit new members, but that is impossible if the name and purpose is unknown. All successful societies have recognized these needs right from the day they organized. Each has awards and insignia designed for quick recognition of their members. These include items to be worn on formal occasions (sashes, medals and medallions suspended from ribbons around the neck or pinned to the chest) and other items for use on informal occasions (miniature medals and rosettes). All of the societies have their own “society colors” which in most cases have significance to them.

The General Society of Colonial Wars has red and white which represent the Colonial British Troops’ uniforms, while the Sons of the American Revolution have blue, white and buff to represent the uniform of General George Washington and the Continental Army. The American College of Dentists uses lilac and American rose. Lilac in the academic tradition represents dentistry and the American rose was suggested by one of the founding members of the College. The American Association for the Advancement of Science uses blue and gold, representing engineering and science. The Swedish Colonial Society uses blue and yellow to represent the national flag of Sweden. Our Scotch-Irish Society rosette uses purple for the heather of Scotland, shamrock green represents Ireland and gold signifies the united contributions of both countries to our Scotch-Irish heritage.

To quote a past president, “Wear your rosette proudly, and be prepared to explain it to those who inquire about it. If they are of Scotch-Irish ancestry, invite them to join The Scotch-Irish Society of the United States of America.”

David Croas joined the Society in 2014. He has a collection of rosettes and would enjoy hearing any comments.
Just thirty years before a young Virginian named George Washington said this unique tree covered location would be a good spot to build a fort. The settlers who congregated at the Point and began to plot out the land, “were generally Presbyterian,” as stated in the diary of Reverend David McClure of the Synod of New York and Philadelphia who was sent there to survey.

Sydney George Fisher remarked in his book The Making of Pennsylvania that the Scotch-Irish of western Pennsylvania were considered much more “excitable and violent” than those in the eastern part of the state. This became historically clear in 1794 when the Scotch-Irish of Pittsburgh and western Pennsylvania refused to pay taxes to the new federal government on the alcohol they produced. The resulting Whiskey Rebellion was an ultimate demonstration of the stridently independent Scotch-Irish.

Today, visitors can see and witness this time 250 years ago, at the Fort Pitt Museum and the Blockhouse Museum, a remnant of the original fort. Both museums are located in beautiful Point Park in downtown Pittsburgh at the juncture of the Allegheny, Monongahela and Ohio Rivers.

**Dave Borland**

**Richard Keeney**

Sharing His Family History

A popular captioned version of the term Scotch-Irish would typically state they were Dissenters from Scotland who migrated to Ulster in the seventeenth and eighteenth century and later sailed to America where they helped establish the United States. But of course a search of one’s Scotch-Irish roots back into Ulster, might not then lead you to Scotland at all. A portion of the Scotch-Irish family originated in England, Ireland and even France.

Member Richard Keeney has shared with us his family research and his search has taken him back to ancient Ireland. He has even identified the family coat of arms, which shows he has links to clans O’Cathain and Mac Cathain.

Richard’s family were indeed part of the Scotch-Irish move west. He has traced the birth of his 3rd great-grandfather Peter Keeney to Fort Lewis, Virginia in 1743 and finds he later was a deacon of one of the first Baptist congregations in Kentucky (Duck Creek Baptist Church).

His great grandfather George was born in Kentucky in 1828 and moved the family to Cass County, Indiana about 1833. They later moved to Kansas where Richard now lives.

Richard is the president of the Blackthorn Watch, Scotch-Irish Guild, a group “committed to development of non lethal self-defense measures, using traditional Blackthorns.” Blackthorns are traditional canes carried for support and defense. Today some Irish regiments of the British army carry them in ceremonial functions.

We appreciate members telling us of their family history and we will try to publish this information whenever we can.

**Bill McGimpsey**
During the course of researching my Scotch-Irish paternal line I came across the work of an amateur genealogist that included unbelievable details of his family’s history. His family had married with mine several generations back so I was interested in his research but skeptical it was proven or factual. His incredulous descriptions included the condition of the harbor waters in Newcastle, England from where his ancestor departed in 1775.

The most ridiculous story told was that of a pack horse used to carry stones for the foundation and walls of a Presbyterian Church in a Pennsylvania Scotch-Irish settlement. The church was the Donegal Springs Presbyterian Church which still stands, registered as a National Historic Place and operates today. The first church structure was a log structure built about 1720. Around 1740 the present day church building was constructed of limestone gathered or quarried from the surrounding area and hauled to the building location. This genealogist’s patriarch, William Stewart, was supposedly the architectural mason during the building. However, historians have proved the church was built no later than 1740 and William Stewart did not arrive in America until 1775. The legend, passed down to him when he was twelve from his grandmother, a granddaughter to William Stewart, was that the pack horse used to haul the stones had been carelessly loaded by untrained boys and fell, breaking a front leg at the planned altar location.

Noting that William Stewart was not even born when the stone church was erected, I sought to understand other details that would disprove this amateur genealogist’s credibility. But to my surprise, I found an article that supported his horse legend. In 1958 when the Donegal Spring’s Presbyterian Church added an education wing and installed heating ducts under the church building, a horse’s skull was unearthed under the pulpit. It was photographed and then placed back in its ancient burial place.

Interesting, the genealogist’s work was completed in 1960, two years after the legend was unearthed. I suspect he might have been trying to force fit his William Stewart as the architectural mason when sources suggest he was more a tailor or weaver that arrived on the scene in Pennsylvania some 35 years after the fact.

Beware the storyteller, but there may be some truth there too. Who would have thought our staunch Calvinistic ancestors would have held an animal in such esteem as to bury it under their altar?

**PLEASE NOTE**

**The Eighth Scotch-Irish Identity Symposium**

“The Scotch-Irish in the American Revolution”

The symposium scheduled for May 29–30, 2015 has been postponed. Tentative plans are to reschedule it later this year in October. We will get back to you when we know more. Please direct any questions to the Society. If you are considering writing a paper, go to the Society Website, Events & Links page and click on “Call for Papers.”
Genealogy research

My Great-Grandfather
Robert Gillespie

Charles R. Rogers

The name Gillespie is associated with the Clan Macpherson in Scotland but over the years I have found a strong connection with Ulster. My maternal great-grandfather was Robert Gillespie. He was born in Belfast and then moved to Kirkcaldy, Scotland where he met and married a Sara Jean Mays. He left his family in Scotland and moved to Kearny, New Jersey sometime prior to 1892 to work and get money to move his family. I have his citizenship paper in my possession and it is dated November 1892. He boarded with a family and wrote back to Scotland about the Frenchwoman who ran the house. By 1902 most of the Gillespie family was living in New Jersey.

In 1924 my father began dating my mother. The first time he visited her in her home he was surprised to see a large picture of a distinguished gentleman hanging in the living room. It was, he thought, a picture of his grandfather. The discussion ensued as to why my mother had a picture of his grandfather in her living room.

The picture was my mother’s grandfather Robert Gillespie. As it turned out, Robert had boarded with father’s family and apparently had given them a photograph which was hung in their living room. The person in the photograph was always referred to as “grandpa.”

The Frenchwoman was my grandmother who was not really French but a Channel Islander. In the photograph Robert was wearing a sash. Oral tradition held that he was a member of the Orange Order, the Royal Arch Purple and the Royal Black Institution. I accept this as true because I do not know how else my family would know this as they had no experience with the Orange Order. My grandfather was always held in great esteem.
parents rather than a Scottish Highlander bedecked with kilt, bonnet and brogue. The real Robert Rogers was, in typical Scotch-Irish fashion, America’s first great frontier hero, during the French and Indian War. Unfortunately and not so true to Scotch-Irish tradition, his service in the British army during the American Revolution made him one of America’s first great traitors.

Rogers was born November 7, 1731 in Methuen, Massachusetts. According to family tradition, which has not been confirmed, James Rogers and his wife Mary (McFatridge or Macphedran) left Montelony, near Londonderry in Ulster, and arrived in America shortly before Robert’s birth. His family later moved to a farm near what is now Dunbarton where local lore has his father being mistakenly shot by a neighbor who thought him a bear. Praised as America’s first national hero, Robert Rogers was a frontier soldier who raised and commanded a militia force, known as Rogers’s Rangers, which won wide repute during the French and Indian War (1754–1763). Rogers did not invent the ranger concept that adapted Native American tactics as colonists had previously practiced them. Instead, he codified twenty-eight rules for such combat (still used to some degree by twenty-first century U.S. Army Rangers) and recruited and trained frontier companies who defended British North America in the area of the Hudson River of New York.

Unlike the Redcoats, the Rangers wore green uniforms and were comparable to modern special forces. They emphasized self-sufficiency, daring and stealth while scouting and raiding enemy positions. Rangers were armed with musket and hatchet, drilled constantly and were experts at interrogation by any means necessary. Rangers marched in single file to reduce targeting, did not fire until the enemy was close and would quickly disperse if odds were against them. British forces bound by a conventional code of battle thought the Rangers unsophisticated but valuable against an elusive frontier enemy. They were prominent in General James Wolfe’s expedition against Quebec (1758) and in the Montreal campaign (1760). Later Rogers was sent by General Jeffery Amherst to take possession of Detroit.

During a lull in 1761 Robert married Elizabeth Browne and lived for a time in Concord, New Hampshire, where they possessed indentured servants and slaves. Rogers returned to service in the Pontiac Rebellion of 1763, participating in the Battle of Bloody Bridge. He went to London in 1765 where he published a *Concise Account of North America* and his *Journals* of service in the French and Indian War. While there he proposed leading an overland expedition from the Mississippi River to the Pacific Ocean. Though this was refused he was given command of the northwest post of Michilimackinac where he sent out the first English expedition to explore the upper Mississippi and Great Lakes in 1766.

His independent streak led to his arrest and court-martial for treason, though he was acquitted. His separation at this time from his wife was the topic of the John Greenleaf Whittier ballad naturally titled *The Ranger*. He again went to England, this time to retrieve his fortune but was unsuccessful. Returning to America he applied for an officer’s commission during the early days of the Revolution. He was rejected by George Washington and instead arrested as a spy. He escaped and openly joined the British as a loyalist. In August 1776, he formed a ranger type unit called the Queen’s Rangers, which saw service in operations around
New York City. In September 1776, Rogers, as Colonel commanding the Queen’s Rangers, assisted in the capture of patriot spy Nathan Hale who was later executed by hanging, famously stating “I only regret that I have but one life to lose for my country.”

In May 1777, Rogers was forcibly retired on grounds of poor health due to his excessive drinking and his cantankerous relations with his superiors. A return home now was impossible as his role in capturing Hale and raising troops for the British confirmed Washington’s suspicions. After a brief time in England, Rogers went to Canada in 1779 to raise the King’s Rangers. Once again, drinking was his downfall, so the command was given to his brother James. Rogers was then captured by an American privateer and imprisoned in New York, where, true to form, downtrodden as he was, he still managed to escape captivity in 1782! The following year he returned to England for the last time, dying in obscurity and debt in London on May 18, 1795.

In 1778, Elizabeth had petitioned the New Hampshire General Assembly for a divorce, citing desertion and infidelity. Ironically, she married Captain John Roche the man who had originally been chosen to command the continental warship The Ranger. Roche, who like Rogers was a heavy drinker and of questionable character, was replaced by an ambitious young John Paul Jones. Jones sailed Ranger into naval history even as Rogers led the Queen’s Rangers against his own homeland. Although Rogers fought for the British, most Rangers, such as John Stark (a general in the Revolution) and Ebenezer Webster (father of statesman Daniel Webster) were staunch patriots. Though negatively and inaccurately portrayed in Turn the Rogers legend has previously done well with the 1936 novel Northwest Passage by Kenneth Roberts, 1940 film of same name with Spencer Tracy as Rogers, and the 1958-1959 NBC television series starring Keith Larson.

Member William John Shepherd has worked as an archivist for over 20 years in Washington, D.C. For further reading he recommends John F. Ross’s “War on the Run: The Epic Story of Robert Rogers and the Conquest of America’s First Frontier” (2011) in addition to “Northwest Passage.”

Genealogy research

Researching Orphan Court Records Alfred Young

When researching family history at local court houses, it is common practice to examine land records and individuals wills. Another potentially beneficial source are orphan court and letters of administration records. These records may help when researching an ancestor who died intestate (that is, without a will) and when their children still were in their minority at the time of death. I would like to share my personal research that shows how these sources can assist you, especially when searching for our Scotch-Irish families of the eighteenth century.

My paternal 3rd great-grandfather was Joseph Young, born about 1781, the eldest son of Revolutionary War soldier John Young and Margaret Kelly. Joseph married Martha E. Thorn, born 1787, the daughter of Joseph Thorn and Jane/Jennet Walker. Joseph and Martha first resided in the Young’s home area of Salem Township, Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania. Martha’s parents lived in neighboring Washington Township. Martha’s father had purchased this property just prior to the beginning of the American Revolution. Some time after 1797, when Martha’s father died intestate, her mother Jennet and seven of the eight children moved to nearby Butler County, Pennsylvania. Martha stayed with her husband Joseph Young in Salem Township. Letters of administration records in Westmoreland County revealed the names of Joseph and Jennet Thorn’s eight children (in order of birth): Mary, John, Joseph, Margaret, Robert, Martha, Jane and Ann. Each inherited one-eighth of their father’s property. Most of them eventually sold or gave their share to Martha. At some point after, Martha and Joseph moved to her family’s former land in Washington Township.

Several years after doing this research, I discovered that the modern-day descendants of the Thorn family had been holding annual family reunions at a county park located near the Thorn property where Joseph and Martha had lived. My wife and I eagerly attended this event and met many new cousins. Sandy Thorne was the family historian and descended from Martha’s brother, Robert Thorn, who married Prudence Matthews. Sandy told us that the present Thorn(e) family did not know the origins of the patriarch Joseph Thorn and his wife Jennet Walker.

Together, we initially researched earlier records from counties in the middle of the state since many of the Scotch-Irish that settled in southwestern Pennsylvania after the Revolution came from there. The only record we found that sparked our interest was a will for a Joseph Thorn, but the children’s names did not match and this Joseph Thorn lived 200 miles away. This was clearly not the correct connection.

Shortly thereafter, Sandy obtained a significant document from a friend who resided in Harrisburg, the state capitol.

Continued on next page.
It showed that our Joseph Thorn’s property (of 400 acres) had been purchased in the spring of 1775 for 80£. This friend had compiled all known records of Thorn’s from early state and church records. A record dated 1765 indicated that a Robert and Mary Elder took out a warrant for the children of her former (late) husband John Thorn, vis. Joseph, James, Martha, Esther and Ann. This land was located in Hamilton Township, Cumberland (now Franklin) County in central Pennsylvania.

Arméd with this new information, we discovered two records in Orphans Court Docket (Book) 2, dated February 17, 1773, which confirmed the 1765 warrant. The eldest son Joseph had petitioned the court to resolve his deceased father’s property in Hamilton Township. The judge requested the county sheriff to appoint twelve lawful citizens (men) to examine the tract and render an opinion as to whether it could be divided among the heirs (five children and mother) without being spoiled. Their response, following an examination of the property, was that it should not be subdivided but needed to be sold. The judge then set the price and awarded a distribution of the receipts to the heirs. As eldest son, Joseph Thorn was assigned a sum of 76£ and change, double of that given to his siblings. The sale of the land and award of the funds was completed in November of the same year.

This sum of 76£ is mentioned because Sandy was then able to prove from the Westmoreland County record that our Joseph Thorn had purchased 400 acres in the spring of 1775 for 80£. We then examined all of the records to gauge if the Joseph Thorn from Hamilton Township was one and the same with the Joseph from Washington Township. In addition to the trail of money, the chronology of the known events appeared to fit quite well. There also appeared to be a clear commonality between the names of the siblings of the first Joseph and the children of the second Joseph.

We agreed then that we wanted more proof. We took a second look at the identities of the men who were requested by the sheriff to examine the property of the late John Thorn. They include an Alexander Matthews and a James Kelly. Sandy recognized Alexander Matthews as the grandfather of her ancestor Prudence Matthews Thorn and James Kelly was the maternal grandfather of my ancestor Joseph Young. We found it amazing that each of these men had a grandchild who married a child of our Joseph Thorn. In addition, we concluded that we had finally found the parents and origins of our ancestor Joseph Thorn.

**Alfred Young is a member of the Society and resides in Derry, Pennsylvania.**

**Orphan Train Riders Carole Smith**

A few years ago I attended a house concert outside of Philadelphia. A small group of us paid a nominal fee to hear two California musicians sing traditional folk music and share stories in this intimate setting. A fellow musician had introduced them to a song, which they sang for us about the Orphan Train Riders. Listening to the lyrics, both of them had been amazed. They were unaware that over 200,000 children had been put on trains between 1854 and 1930, out of New York and other large cities.

To be honest, so was I and the song piqued my interest.

Promoted as a “placing out” program to find homes for orphans and for children whose parents could not take care of them, Orphan Train Riders went to every state in the Union, but most went to the Midwest. When the Orphan Train arrived, the children would be lined up and interested families could then choose the child they wanted.

Andrea Warren’s book *Orphan Train Rider* is the true story of Lee Nailling’s experience. “After a few days on the train, the matron told the children that there would be stops in several towns. In these towns, people would have the chance to select children. But none of the children was sure what this meant. Lee tried not to think about it. The next day the train stopped at a town, and instead of being allowed to play, the children were marched to a church and seated on the stage. A crowd of people began to talk to them, touch them, and ask them questions. None of the children had written medical records, but, as the children quickly learned, people had their own ways of deciding if a child was healthy and strong. Lee remembers a farmer in overalls coming up to him and feeling his muscles. Then the man stuck his hand in the man. When Lee glared at him, the farmer moved away.”

Recently, I learned of a novel published in 2013 by Philadelphia author Christina Baker Kline called *Orphan Train*. It has been selected this year for the Free Library of Philadelphia’s “One Book, One Philadelphia” series. One story that Kline tells is of a young Irish immigrant named Vivian Daly who took the Orphan Train when her family died tragically in a tenement fire in New York City. As I read the story of Vivian I began thinking about Ulster immigrant children who would most certainly have been Train Riders and Scotch-Irish families who had moved westward to find land and enterprise. They surely would have taken these children into their homes. What do you think?
The Remarkable Story of Mary Thorn  

Alfred Young

While researching my Thorn ancestors I uncovered an amazing account of Mary Thorn, the grandmother of Martha Thorn who married Joseph Young my paternal 3rd great-grandfather. Little is known of her personally. The Thorns settled in Hamilton Township, Cumberland County (now Franklin) County about 1750. Hamilton Township was part of the broad Cumberland Valley which spans from the border with Maryland on the south to the Susquehanna River on the northeast. At this point in history, this valley had been settled almost exclusively by Scotch-Irish immigrants. The western to northern edges of the valley were the general limit of English-speaking settlement in this part of Colonial Pennsylvania and, for all intents and purposes, it was the frontier.

Greater geo-political events conspired to alter the life of the settlers in the Cumberland Valley at this time in history. During most of the eighteenth century Britain and France engaged in a continuous rivalry for dominance in Europe, North America and even southern Asia. In 1754, this rivalry ignited into open conflict known as the French and Indian War. During the summer of 1755, the British attempted to drive the opposing French and their Native American allies out of southwestern Pennsylvania. This force, led by General Edward Braddock, met with a rather devastating and inglorious defeat near modern-day Pittsburgh.

The key element pertinent to this story is that Native Americans, emboldened by this success and encouraged by the French, violently attacked the frontier areas during the spring and summer of the following year (1756). One of the principal targets was the western to northern edge of the Cumberland Valley. The Scotch-Irish settlers were well aware of the threat and attempted to take preventive measures by constructing a series of small frontier forts in their locales. The McCord family constructed one such small structure and invited the Thorn’s and other neighboring and related families to seek refuge there.

And so Mary Thorn and two of her daughters, Martha and Ann, were present at so-called Fort McCord on April 1, 1756. Her husband John, two sons and daughter Esther, were apparently not at the fort on this occasion. The men and boys were probably working the fields at this time. A raiding party of Delaware, Shawnee and Wyandot Indians, led by Chief Shingas, was apparently viewing this scene from the dense woods on North Mountain. They waited until late morning and then attacked the small fort. They rapidly overpowered the one man left at the fort and took all the women and children captive. According to a current study, the captives included at least four adult women, one teenage girl and ten young children, ranging in age from one to seven or eight.

The warring party quickly collected their captives and drove them expeditiously westward back over North Mountain and then Kittatinny and Tuscarora Mountains. Overnight, they stopped at a location along Sideling Creek, near modern-day Maddensville, in southern Huntingdon County. This movement over three ridges was reportedly very exhausting for the captive women and children. The women had to carry the youngest children and comply with continuous efforts by their captors to keep moving. In the case of Mary Thorn, she carried her 14 month daughter Ann for most of the day. According to one historical report, the one teenage girl became loud and hysterical on one occasion. She was quickly dispatched with a blow to her skull and reportedly left dead along the trail.

The party of Native Americans was anxious to move rapidly away from the fort toward their base along the Allegheny River near modern-day Kittanning in northwestern Pennsylvania. They were certain there would be a response to this attack. In fact, a relief party of about 52 hastily organized settlers and local militia set out later that day. On the following day, they caught up with the Indians along Sideling Creek. They attacked and initially garnered some success but they failed to detect the arrival of more Indians from the southeast. This second party had apparently been conducting a similar raid into western Maryland (to the south). These Indians struck the flank and left rear of the Colonial party and ended the effort to rescue the captives. Both sides lost very heavily in this engagement. Only 14 of the 52 settlers and militia escaped unscathed. One of the dead was John Kelly, the uncle of Margaret Kelly Young.

The Indians had apparently separated or segregated the children by age or height. Mary Thorn must have been assigned to watch the younger children, for during the confusion of the battle, Mary acted with considerable valor and impunity. She gathered three young McCord children plus her daughter Ann and escaped. This was done by leading them northeast away from the combatants and across Sideling Creek. Overnight Mary kept the children together and eventually reached the safety of Fort Littleton, a permanent frontier post. This itself is remarkable considering the wooded character and rugged landscape of

Continued on next page.
the area. Furthermore, it can be deduced that Mary had to recognize that she was leaving her eldest daughter Martha as a captive. There apparently was insufficient time to find and collect her at the instant she made her decision to escape. Martha, along with one of the McCord women, was subsequently rescued during the expedition of Colonel John Armstrong to Kittanning roughly five months later.

Within a year, Mary Thorn was a widow. It is not clear how her husband John died. He is not listed among the casualties from the action at Sideling Creek but he could have been wounded outside Fort McComb on April 1. As already stated in the previous article, Mary was then left to raise five children. She did what was common in those times and married a widower named Robert Elder. This immigrant from Scotland had lost his first wife, Elizabeth Watt Elder, from an illness leaving him with two young sons, David and Abraham. After the war ended, Robert and Mary settled in Path Valley, Franklin County, Pennsylvania and had five more children, born between 1757/58 and 1768. Mary had given birth to ten children but overall raised twelve. Of this total number, nine were boys! Judging by her husband’s will in 1807, Mary lived into her eighties and passed away after her second husband. Hers is indeed a remarkable story.

The Society thanks Alfred Young for telling us this remarkable story of his ancestor, Mary Thorn. We hope that it stimulates you to do your own research and unearth remarkable stories. When you do, please share them with us!

more...

It is estimated that there were over 2,000 incidents of kidnapping white settlers during the French and Indian War (1754–1763). Reading Alfred Young’s account of Mary Thorn I was reminded of the very similar and amazing ordeal of Mary Draper Ingles. I first read about her in Grace Toney Edwards’ paper published in the 2009 Journal of Scotch-Irish Studies.

Not that long ago I was enthusiastically handed a book to read by a friend. The pages were ragged from use. It was called Follow the River by James Alexander Thom. For the next few days, every moment I could steal, I spent reading. It was a novel based on the story of Mary Draper Ingles. Thom wrote that of all the personal accounts he was able to uncover, hers was the most amazing and inspiring. “It is one of those focused demonstrations of what the human spirit – not just the hardened, trained spirit of the professional soldier or adventurer, but the spirit of a vulnerable, frightened, ‘ordinary’ person – can endure.”

The Drapers had emigrated from Donegal, arriving in Philadelphia in 1732. Mary was born here. By the 1740s they had traveled down the great Valley of Virginia. They hooked up with the Ingles family and ended up at a place called Draper’s Meadow where Mary Draper married William Ingles. It is here, somewhere on the present site of Virginia Tech, that Shawnee Indians attacked. They killed at least four people, burned the settlement and took five captives, including a pregnant Mary Ingles. The amazing and inspiring part is that she escaped and with one other woman traveled 800 miles in late fall, following the waterways and surviving on nuts and roots. Her odyssey took forty days. She was reunited with her husband, bore four more children and survived another Indian attack. She lived for sixty more years and was 83 years old when she died in 1815. The final sentence on the monument to Mary Draper Ingles at Radford West End Cemetery reads “No greater exhibition of female heroism, courage and endurance are recorded in the annals of frontier history.” In 1995, a TV movie was aired that was based on Thom’s novel.

First published in 1929, The Indian Wars of Pennsylvania by C. Hale Sipe begins with the French and Indian War and the causes that led up to it. Sipe covers 40 years of conflict with the Indians, from 1755 to 1795. During this time all the major wars had their roots in Pennsylvania history. Most of the military leaders and the majority of their fighting men where also from Pennsylvania. Sipe’s book includes the attack on Fort McComb as well as the story of Mary Jemison. Mary was born on the way to America to Scotch-Irish parents. At fifteen she was captured by Indians, adopted by the Senecas and spent most of her life with them. She lived to the age of ninety. Her biography was recorded by James E. Seaver, told to him personally by her. Seaver published A narrative of the life of Mrs. Mary Jemison in 1824 when Mary was in her eighties. Here is an account of the abduction and massacre published in the Pennsylvania Gazette. “Three Indians were seen this day by two boys near Thomas Jameson’s, at the head of Marsh Creek; upon which gave alarm, when 6 men went to said Jameson’s house and found there one Robert Buck killed and scalped; also a horse killed, that belonged to William Man, a soldier at Carlisle. Thomas Jameson, his wife and 5 or 6 children are all missing. This has thrown the country into great Confusion.”

Carole Smith

Thanks to Dan Orr for telling me the story of Mary Jemison.
The Discovery of a Revolutionary War Battlefield

Michael C. Scoggins

The Battle of Williamson’s Plantation, or “Huck’s Defeat” as it is also known, was one of the most important battles fought in the South Carolina backcountry during the American Revolution. It was the first defeat of British regular army troops by the backcountry patriot militia after the British captured Charleston in May of 1780. Even more importantly, Huck’s Defeat set the stage for larger and more significant patriot victories like the Battles of Kings Mountain and Cowpens in the following months. It was a morale booster and a rallying cry for the patriots in the Carolina backcountry, and gave much needed encouragement to the revolutionary cause in the southern colonies at a time when things looked dark for American independence.

Not only was it an important patriot victory, but like the Battle of Kings Mountain, the Battle of Huck’s Defeat occurred in York County, South Carolina. In the late eighteenth century, York County and the surrounding areas of the Carolina Piedmont were very heavily settled by Scotch-Irish Presbyterians from the Ulster Province of Ireland. These Scotch-Irish settlers proved to be among the most diehard revolutionaries in the southern colonies, and more than one British commander referred to them as the staunchest opponents to British authority in North America. Huck’s Defeat takes its name from Captain Christian Huck, the British cavalry commander who was defeated and killed during the battle. Huck was a Philadelphia lawyer of German parentage who was noted for his particular dislike of the Scotch-Irish in the Carolina backcountry. His defeat and death in battle occurred on the morning of July 12, 1780, when his detachment of 120 British Provincial troops and loyalist militiamen were ambushed and defeated by 140 patriot militiamen under the command of Colonels William Bratton, Andrew Neel, Edward Lacey and other local officers, almost all of whom were drawn from the early Presbyterian congregations of present-day York and Chester counties. The battle took place near the homes of Colonel William Bratton and his neighbor James Williamson, both of whom were early Scotch-Irish settlers from Pennsylvania who lived on the South Fork of Fishing Creek near the modern town of McConnells. The sites of the Bratton and Williamson plantations and the Huck’s Defeat battlefield are now part of the 825 acres that make up Historic Brattonsville, an eighteenth and nineteenth century living history plantation.

“Aurora’s Council,” by Dan Nance. About 3:00 AM on the morning of July 12, 1780, the Whig militiamen of Sumter’s Brigade approached the British camp at Williamson’s Plantation. The men halted about two miles down the road and made their plans of attack. A very rare and spectacular appearance of the aurora borealis overhead made the night almost as light as day. The Whig officers were almost all Scotch-Irish Presbyterians from Ulster; from left to right, the officers’ council includes Captain Richard Winn (facing viewer), Colonel Edward Lacey, Colonel William Bratton (pointing), Captain John McClure and Colonel Andrew Neel.

Digital image of original painting courtesy Dan Nance, Patriot Art Inc., and Culture & Heritage Museums of York County, SC.

“Huck’s Defeat, July 12, 1780: The Battle of Williamson’s Plantation” by Don Troiani. This painting shows the main attack by the Whig militia on the British Provincial troops camped around James Williamson’s log house. The British troops include the New York Volunteers provincial infantry (on the left, in red coats), and the British Legion provincial cavalry (on the right, in green coats). The New York Volunteers are led by Lieutenant William Adamson (in red coat on horseback) and Captain Christian Huck (in white shirt on horseback).

Digital image of original painting courtesy Don Troiani, Historical Art Prints, and Culture & Heritage Museums of York County, SC.
in southern York County. However, for much of the twentieth century the exact location of the battlefield and Williamson's plantation was a source of some uncertainty. Descendants of the Bratton and Williamson families remembered that the battle took place about a quarter of a mile southeast of the Colonel William Bratton House at Brattonsville, but pinning it down to a more precise area was difficult.

Beginning in 2006, as historian of the Culture & Heritage Museums (CHM) which operates and maintains Historic Brattonsville under the mantle of the York County government, I undertook a series of detailed archeological studies to locate the site of the battle and the Williamson plantation. Working with archeologists from the South Carolina Institute of Archeology and Anthropology (SCIAA), led by Dr. Steven Smith, and using early accounts of the battle and nineteenth century maps as guides, we discovered dozens of rifle and musket balls as well as buttons, buckles, horseshoes, household utensils, and even the pomell of an eighteenth century officer's sword. This research was supported by two grants from the National Park Service's American Battlefield Protection Program (ABPP) in 2009 and 2011. These funds allowed the archeological team to precisely locate both the battlefield and the site of the Williamson plantation. The National Park Service also commissioned CHM to nominate the battlefield for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places, and to create an interpretive plan to open the battlefield and the Williamson plantation site to the general public.

Once the archeological research was complete, CHM hired consultants to draft a National Register nomination and a plan to preserve and interpret the battlefield. This plan included recommendations for an interpretive trail around the battlefield and plantation site with signage and kiosks highlighting important aspects of the Huck's Defeat story. CHM staff members then worked with the consultants to create a final draft of the interpretive plan, which was used to develop the battlefield and make it more accessible to public visitation and educational programs.

During 2013 and 2014, CHM created a trail that loops around the battlefield and takes visitors to the sites of the loyalist militia camp, the British Provincial camp and the Williamson log house, which was dismantled sometime after the end of the war. The trail incorporates an eighteenth-century road that was known locally as “Williamson’s Lane,” which connected the James Williamson home to the William Bratton plantation. Bratton's plantation, in turn, lay on one of the main colonial roads running from western North Carolina to Charleston, known locally as the Armstrong Ford Road. Using funds from a York County hospitality tax grant, CHM then commissioned original artwork depicting scenes of the battle to be used in the interpretive signage and kiosks on the battlefield trail. The artists hired for this project included Don Troiani of Connecticut, one of the best known military artists in America, and Dan Nance of North Carolina, one of the “next generation” of talented new artists working in the field. The grant also allowed CHM to create a 15-minute video documentary about the Battle of Huck's Defeat and the discovery of the battlefield, as well as an audio “walking tour” and a “ghost frame” of the Williamson log house located on the site of the original building. The trail opened in July 2014 during the annual re-enactment of the Battle of Huck's Defeat and was a huge success, bringing in several thousand visitors from all over the United States.

This coming July will see even more activity at Brattonsville and the Huck's Defeat battlefield, as the CHM unveils an official South Carolina state historical marker commemorating the Bratton and Williamson plantations and the 235th anniversary of the battle that took place there. Brattonsville will also host a reunion of descendants of the men who fought in the battle on both sides, loyalist and patriot, along with descendants of the families who lived and worked at Brattonsville during the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries. CHM would like to invite all members of the Scotch-Irish Society of the USA, as well as history buffs and Revolutionary War aficionados everywhere, to join us this year as we celebrate the 235th anniversary of one of the most important battles in the Southern Campaigns of the American Revolution. Y'all come!