

CAPTAIN JACK—MAN OR MYTH?*

A PERSISTENT tradition of Juniata Valley tells of a heroic figure called "Captain Jack." According to this tradition, Captain Jack lived an idyllic existence with his wife and children somewhere on the Juniata River. He lived by hunting and fishing and, according to the story, asked nothing more from life but to live in the wilderness with his little family. However, this happy life did not last long. His family was murdered by Indians during his absence on a hunting trip. He immediately renounced his peaceful ways, swore revenge and spent the rest of his life killing Indians.

Several entire books have been written about Captain Jack, the earliest in 1873.¹ They located his cabin on the Juniata and have

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1. At least four books primarily based on the story of Captain Jack have been published. As a rule, they attempt to portray the period rather faithfully and, to a greater or lesser degree, are true to actual historical events and places.

Harvey Allen, *The City in the Dawn* (New York: Rinehart & Co., 1943. Reprinted 1944, 1948, 1950).

The hero of this book is a young pioneer who survives capture by the Indians and escapes to Fort Pitt while the Swiss mercenary Captain Ecuyer is commanding officer there. The period prior to, during, and after Forbe's campaign (1763) is faithfully depicted. Captain Jack is here associated with Bedford Village and a group of rangers trying to protect the road to Ligonier and Fort Pitt. He is no longer a young man in this account.

Curwood, James Oliver. *The Black Hunter* (New York: Cosmopolitan Book Corporation, 1926).

This book is centered around the Richelieu River in Canada and portrays Captain Jack as a mysterious personage who roams the frontier from the Richelieu to the Juniata during the French and Indian War. His real name is said to be Peter Joel.

Jeffries, Rev. Cyrus. *Legends of the Juniata or Jackson* and Keturah Culberson (Altoona, Pa.: Altoona Tribune, 1873).

This places Jack's wilderness home at present day Tyrone, and weaves such historical persons into the story as George Croghan, Jacob Hare, John Weston, etc. It should be noted by more credulous readers that Croghan's life is well-known and documented and is quite inconsistent with the account given in this book.

him offering his services to General Braddock prior to Braddock's disastrous attempt to dislodge the French and their Indian allies from Fort Duquesne. These books elaborate upon his life and adventures, weaving them together with historical events, such as Braddock's campaign. Indeed, if these ample accounts were true, there could be no mystery about the life of this man. Unfortunately, a search of local histories and sources dealing with the western Pennsylvania frontier in the mid-1700s shows no trace of Captain Jack prior to 1829.²

There seems to be but a single basic story about Captain Jack. The earliest published version (1829) can be found in Hazard's *Pennsylvania Register*. It is as follows:

Provincial Correspondence;
1750 to 1765

A friend in the interior has furnished us with the following extracts from Provincial Letters, &c. which will be found interesting. We hope he will continue them: as he kindly promises to do.

August, 1750

The "Black Hunter," the "Black Rifle," the "Wild Hunter of Juniata," the "Black Hunter of the Forest," is a white man; his history is this: he entered the woods with a few enterprising companions; built his cabin, cleared a little land, and amused himself with the pleasures of fishing and hunting. He felt happy, for then he had not a care. But on an evening, when he returned from a day of sport, he found his cabin burnt, his wife and children murdered. From that moment he forsakes civilized man; hunts out caves in which he lives; protects the frontier inhabitants from the Indians; and seizes every opportunity of revenge that offers. He lives the terror of the

Furthermore there seems little or no justification for the presence of Hare or Weston on the Juniata at such an early date. This story places George Washington and Captain Jack together holding off the Indians so Braddock's army could retreat. It contains more historical distortions than the other accounts listed here, in addition to its rather original account of Jack's life.

McKnight, Charles. *Old Fort Duquesne, or Captain Jack the Scout* (Philadelphia: Porter & Coates, 1873).

The background for this account consists of events in western Pennsylvania during the 1750's and 1760's from Braddock's defeat until Forbes arrives at Fort Pitt. Captain Jack is given a major role in Braddock's campaign and subsequent events. The historical background is well depicted.

2. Samuel Hazard, ed., *Pennsylvania Register*, 4 (1829), 5 (1830).

Indians and the consolation of the Whites. On one occasion near Juniata, in the middle of a dark night, a family were suddenly awaked from sleep by the report of a gun—they jumped from their huts and by the glimmering light from the chimney, saw an Indian fall to rise no more. The open door exposed to view the “Wild Hunter.” “I have saved your lives,” he cried, then turned and was buried in the gloom of night.

“I could give you many a remarkable tale of the “Black Protector.” His look is as unerring as his aim. I believe however he never shoots without good excuse.”³

Compare this with the next earliest account published in 1843. This account was said to be taken from notes by Redmond Conyngnam who was born in Philadelphia in 1781.

Captain Jack—the “black hunter,” the “black rifle,” the “wild hunter of Juniata,” the “black hunter of the forest”—was a white man. He entered the woods with a few enterprising companions, built his cabin, cleared a little land, and amused himself with the pleasures of fishing and hunting. He felt happy, for he had not a care. But on an evening when he returned from a day of sport, he found his cabin burnt, and his wife and children murdered. From that moment he forsook civilized man, lived in caves, protected the frontier inhabitants from the Indians, and seized every opportunity for revenge that offered. He was a terror to the Indians; a protector to the whites. On one occasion, near Juniata, in the middle of a dark night, a family was suddenly awakened by the report of a gun. They jumped from their huts, and by the glimmering light from their chimney saw an Indian fall to rise no more. The open door exposed to view the “wild hunter.” “I saved your lives,” he cried; then turned and was buried in the gloom of the night. He never shot without good cause. His look was as unerring as his aim.⁴

Since the wording of the two accounts is very similar, it is reasonable to assume that the latter was derived from the earlier, or that both were derived from a third account apparently not now extant. Other writers who have used the story of Captain Jack seem to have drawn from the same source as there are great similarities in wording among their versions of the story. Few details are offered which do

3. Hazard, 4 (1829):389.

4. Sherman Day, *Historical Collections of the State of Pennsylvania*, p. 264.

not appear in Hazard although greater or lesser amounts of the story are frequently omitted in different versions.

The earliest known published source on Captain Jack, Hazard's *Register*, contains a number of problems and inconsistencies. First, the letter in the *Register* is dated 1750. This would place Jack's activities on the Juniata, from his idyllic existence with his family to his Indian-killing obsession, in the 1740s. Surprisingly, in spite of the other similarities among the various versions, all other accounts place him on the Juniata in the 1750s, generally between 1750 and 1755.⁵

It was in 1750 that Secretary Peters and George Croghan toured the settlements in the Juniata region for the purpose of removing white settlers from Indian lands.⁶ Records show settlers removed and cabins burned at "Big Juniata" (probably Mifflintown), Sherman's Creek, Path Valley, Aughwick (Burnt Cabins), and the Big and Little Coves. The name of Captain Jack does not appear among these squatters. Of course no records mention any isolated cabins overlooked on this trip.

The years prior to the outbreak of the French and Indian War were a time of increasing tension between settlers and Indians on the Pennsylvania frontier. Efforts were made on both sides, however, to avoid hostilities. For example, in 1744, an Indian trader, Jack Armstrong, was murdered on the Juniata as a result of his sharp dealings with a Delaware brave. This murder was extensively investigated and reported upon by the Six Nations chief Shickalemy and the Pennsylvania Indian agent Conrad Weiser in order to reduce tensions and avoid further bloodshed.⁷ A real effort to maintain law

5. Samuel P. Bates, *History of Pennsylvania*, p. 58, (1750-1755). Day, p. 264, (1750-1755). George P. Donehoo, "Pennsylvania's Historic Indian Cave," pp. 11-14, (1755-1760). William H. Egle, *An Illustrated History of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania*, p. 615, (1750-1755). *A History of the Juniata Valley*, pp. 31-33, (1752ff). Uriah J. Jones, *History of the Early Settlement of the Juniata Valley*, pp. 134-139, (1750ff). John W. Jordan, ed., *A History of the Juniata Valley and Its People*, p. 35, ("about the time of Armstrong's murder, or shortly afterwards," 1744ff). Will H. Lowdermilk, *History of Cumberland*, p. 134, (before 1755). Milton Scott Lytle, *History of Huntingdon County*, p. 28, (1751ff). Charles McKnight, *Our Western Border One Hundred Years Ago*, p. 109, (before and after 1753). Joseph S. Walton and Martin G. Brumbaugh, *Stories of Pennsylvania*, p. 103, (1750ff).

6. See report to Governor Hamilton by Secretary Peters quoted by Israel Daniel Rupp, *History and Typography of Dauphin, Cumberland, Franklin, Bedford, Adams and Perry Counties*, pp. 379-384.

7. Paul A. W. Wallace, *Conrad Weiser*, pp. 175-183. See also *Provincial Records*, p. 291; *Colonial Records* 4:667, 680-5; *Provincial Papers*, 8:59-63; *Pennsylvania Archives*, First Series, 1:643-649; *Pennsylvania Archives*, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

and order seems to have been demonstrated by both the colonial government and responsible Indian chiefs.

However, from 1748 on, more and more squatters moved into Indian territory; problems between the races multiplied. Since this period seems a likelier setting for the murder of Jack's family, the early date given in the *Register* does not improve the credibility of the letter quoted there.

A second problem with the material in Hazard's *Register* is the confusion which it causes as to who Captain Jack may have been. In the same issue with the previously quoted letter a second letter was published, apparently referring to the same person as "Captain Joel."

Provincial Correspondence

Extract of a letter in 1754—Carlisle

Captain Joel is one of the most remarkable characters in the province of Pennsylvania. He emigrated at an early period to the west. Bold, daring, and intrepid, ardent in his affections, zealous in his occupation as a hunter; when the Indians assumed a warlike attitude, he formed an association of the settlers to defend the settlements from this aggression. On a given signal they would unite. On the Conococheague and Juniata, are left the histories of their exploits. At one time you may hear of the band near Fort Augusta, next at Fort Franklin, then at Loudon, then at Juniata—rapid were the movements of this hardy band. The very name of Joel strikes terror in his enemies. He at present is defending the settlement on the Conococheague.⁸

From this letter, no direct connection can be made between Captain Jack and Captain Joel, although certain things in common are evident—fighting Indians, locating on the Juniata and Conococheague. The following month another letter was published, written by the same correspondent. It says:

Miscellaneous

Letter from the gentleman who furnished the extracts from 'Provincial Correspondence,' published in our last.

In your *Register* which I saw last evening, I observed the publication of the Provincial Letters, &c. and only one

8. Hazard, 4:390.

mistake: in the name of the celebrated Captain Jack, and not Joel . . .⁹

While it has been noted that there are certain things in common between the Captain Joel letter and the previous account of Jack's life, there were also differences. The first account speaks of his idyllic life in the woods with his family and his solitary revenge for their deaths. Other companions remain in the background. The second letter, however, tells of someone who was an organizer, who brought settlers together on a moment's notice to defend themselves against a common enemy. The question must be raised: is the error one of name only, as the correcting letter insists, or are two quite different persons being described? Unless either or both persons can be verified independently through other sources—something not accomplished to date—this question cannot be finally answered. According to Hazard, both extracts are from the same correspondent. If they are genuine, the name Joel may be simply an error, perhaps in interpreting handwriting. Yet the differences in description raise doubts as to the reliability of Hazard's source.

A third doubt is raised by the listing of forts attached to the letter about Captain Joel. This list purports to name frontier forts and the numbers of troops assigned to each in 1755.¹⁰

The list of forts includes some like Augusta and Loudon which, according to William Hunter, were not built until one, two, or three years later.¹¹ Also Montgomery dates Halifax and Raystown (Bedford) as 1756 and 1757 respectively.¹² Yet they all appear on a list supposedly dated 1755 and unpublished until 1829.

Furthermore there exists considerable controversy over the actual existence of a Fort Louthier at Carlisle. The presence of a fort at Carlisle is not in dispute, but its name and date of its earliest existence are definitely in question. On 15 February 1756, William Trent wrote to Richard Peters, secretary of the commonwealth, from Carlisle: "A Fort in this Town would have saved this part of the Country, but I doubt this Town in a few days will be deserted if this party [of marauding Indians] that is out should kill any people nigh here."¹³

9. Hazard, 4:416.

10. Hazard, 4:390.

11. William A. Hunter, *Forts on the Pennsylvania Frontier, 1753-1758*, p. 437.

12. Thomas L. Montgomery, ed., *Frontier Forts of Pennsylvania*, 1:474.

13. *Pennsylvania Archives*, 2:575.

On 21 August 1756, Colonel Armstrong wrote Governor Morris that "Lyttleton, Shippensburg, and Carlisle (the last two not finished) are the only forts, now built, that will in my opinion, be serviceable to the public."¹⁴

The provincial correspondence printed by Hazard includes several letters purported to be about and from this Fort Louther.¹⁵ Many later authorities accept these as genuine but no supporting evidence has been found showing the existence of a fort at Carlisle by this or any other name prior to 1756. These letters are included in the *Pennsylvania Archives*, but are listed only in the *Appendix* together with some other material which contradicts the information given in the letters from the *Register*.¹⁶

William Hunter goes so far as to state that "There is no documentary authority for the name Fort Louther (or Lowther), frequently used by later writers."¹⁷ He considers the material published by Hazard in the *Register* to be "so inconsistent with what is known from genuine records that they must be rejected as fabrications."¹⁸

A fourth problem arises with another letter published by Hazard, supposedly from George Croghan to the governor.

The following is a copy of a letter in June, 1755, to the Governor of the Province.

Fort Louther, June 6, 1755

SIR—Captain Jack has promised his aid in the contemplated attack of Fort Du Quesne. He will march with his Hunters, by a circuitous route and join Braddock. He and his men are dressed in hunting shirts, mocasins &c. are well armed, and are equally regardless of heat and cold. They require no shelter for the night. They ask no pay. If the whole army was composed of such men, there would be no cause for apprehension. I shall be with them in time for duty.

Yours, &c. George Croghan¹⁹

If genuine, this would be an extremely important letter. It would be an original source certifying Captain Jack's existence and linking

14. Rupp, p. 395.

15. Hazard, 4:389-390, 416.

16. *Pennsylvania Archives*, 12:348-9.

17. Hunter, p. 436.

18. Hunter, p. 437.

19. Hazard, 4:416.

him with General Braddock. Indeed it is widely quoted in historical sources, although rarely attributed. Many historians do apparently credit this letter, and therefore, the existence of the man and the reality of his encounter with General Braddock.²⁰

Like the other documents, the Croghan letter is of questionable authenticity. First, it is supposedly written from Fort Louthier in 1755, a fort which probably did not exist. Furthermore, it seems probable that Croghan was already with Braddock on his way to the forks of the Ohio. Braddock left Fort Cumberland the end of May and moved slowly toward Fort Duquesne. Croghan had joined Braddock earlier with perhaps one hundred friendly Indians. Most had left to escort their families back to Aughwick but Croghan seems to have remained with Braddock and was apparently expecting many of the Indian warriors to return.²¹

If this letter were genuine, one would expect it to be similar to Croghan's other correspondence—which is totally consistent, having numerous misspellings, doubled letters, and irregular use of capitals. Neither are the short direct sentences in the Hazard letter consistent

20. The following sources accept the reality of Captain Jack's encounter with General Braddock. In order of publication they are:

Hazard, 4:416 (1829). Another "Extract of a Letter" is included in 5:191 (1830). It is dated 27 June 1755 but is neither addressed nor signed. Its contents are echoed in subsequent sources but cannot be substantiated elsewhere.

Captain Jack, on joining General Braddock with his company, requested and obtained, an interview with the General. He told him he was a man inured to hardships; that he knew the Indians habits; and requested him to let his company act as a reconnoitering party and ascertain the places where the Indian forces were lodged, especially as the Indians preferred stratagems to open warfare. General Braddock told him there was time enough for making arrangements, and that he had experienced troops on whom he could depend with confidence. Captain Jack, finding the General was firm, soon after withdrew into the interior of Pennsylvania.

Day, p. 264 (1843). A. W. Patterson, *History of the Backwoods*, p. 79 (1843). Israel Daniel Rupp, *Early History of Western Pennsylvania and of the West from 1754 to 1833*, p. 99 (1849). Winthrop Sargent, ed., *A History of an Expedition Against Fort Duquesne in 1755*, pp. 196-7 (1856). James Veech, *The Monongahela of Old*, p. 57 (1858-1892). Charles McKnight, *Our Western Border*, p. 476 (1875). William H. Egle, M.D., *An Illustrated History of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania*, p. 616 (1877). Will H. Lowdermilk, *History of Cumberland*, p. 109 (1878). Samuel P. Bates, *History of Pennsylvania*, p. 58 (1886). Uriah J. Jones, *History of the Early Settlement of the Juniata Valley*, pp. 137-8 (1889). T. L. Montgomery, ed., *Frontier Forts of Pennsylvania*, I: 576 (1896). George Dallas Alpert, *Frontier Forts of Western Pennsylvania*, 2: 51 (1896). Charles Howard Welch, *History of Mt. Union, Shirleysburg, and Shirley Township*, pp. 10-11 (1909-10). Charles H. Ambler, *George Washington and the West*, p. 102 (1936). *A History of the Juniata Valley*, p. 32 (1936). Douglas Southell Freeman, *George Washington*, 2: 57 (1948). Harrison Bird, *Battle for a Continent*, p. 48 (1965).

21. Nicholas B. Wainwright, *George Croghan, Wilderness Diplomat*, p. 90.

with Croghan's other letters. One of Croghan's biographers, Nicholas Wainwright, goes out of his way to label this letter as "fictitious" and confusing.²²

Most important, if Croghan's letter linking Captain Jack to Braddock were historically accurate—regardless of the merits of the letter itself—then some trace of Captain Jack should be available in the many and well-documented accounts of Braddock's campaign. Indeed, the "Heroic Captain Jack," or the "Well-known Captain Jack" is mentioned fairly often in secondary accounts of the campaign.²³

However, no mention can be found in any primary source. An example of the dubious quality of secondary sources can be found in Israel Rupp's *Early History of Western Pennsylvania and of the West*. Rupp footnotes his account of Captain Jack with a reference to Benjamin Franklin's *Memoirs* and says:

In addition . . . [the Half King] a chief of the Delawares joined him with between forty and fifty friendly Indians; and the Heroic Captain Jack, with George Croghan, the English Indian interpreter, who visited his camp, accompanied by a party, increasing the number of Indian warriors to one hundred and fifty and proposed to accompany the army as scouts and guides.²⁴

However, Franklin's version is much less specific:

George Croghan, our Indian interpreter, joined him [Braddock] on his march with one hundred of those people [Americans and Indians] who might have been of great use to his army as guides, scouts, etc., if he had treated them kindly; but he slighted and neglected them and they gradually left him.²⁵

Only the most wishful of historians could stretch the words "those people" into proof that Captain Jack was among them.

The historical person accompanying the expedition who has perhaps left the longest written record of his life was George Washington. In his correspondence, journals and diaries much history of the time can be viewed firsthand. Unfortunately, no diaries exist

22. Wainwright, p. 90. fn.

23. See sources listed under note 20.

24. Rupp, *Early History of Western Pennsylvania*, p. 99.

25. Benjamin Franklin, *Life of Franklin*, 1: 160.

for the years 1755-1759, although diaries for most of the years from 1748 to 1799 have been published.

Washington was with Braddock during most of his march and during the fateful battle. Many of his letters from that period have been preserved. In one letter he wrote: "Arrived here an Indian trader with the Half-King," apparently referring to Croghan and one of his Indian chiefs arriving at Fort Cumberland to join Braddock.²⁶ There are, however, no references to Captain Jack or anyone like him in any of the correspondence examined.

General Braddock himself wrote, "I have engaged between forty and fifty Indians from the Frontier of your Province to go with me over the Mountains, and shall take Croghan and Montour into Service."²⁷ The record of his orders during the campaign does not contain any material relevant to the search for Captain Jack.²⁸

It is true that the trunk full of Braddock's papers (and probably containing some of Washington's as well) was captured by the Indians.²⁹ At least part of those papers were preserved and later published in France. Possibly some were lost that might have contained references helpful to this research.

Numerous first-hand and contemporary accounts of the battle itself have been published. None which have been examined make any mention of Captain Jack in any way. With no contemporary evidence of Captain Jack's connection with the Braddock expedition other than the dubious Croghan letter, the association seems doubtful.³⁰

CAPTAIN JACK AND THE ROVING COMMISSION

Another persistent story about Captain Jack states that Governor Hamilton gave him some kind of roving commission in 1753. The source appears to be another letter published by Hazard. In this instance, however, the letter is dated and signed.

26. George Washington, *Journal*, published in Lowdermilk, p. 70.

27. Mary Carson Darlington, *History of Col. Henry Bouquet and Western Frontiers of Pennsylvania*, p. 63.

28. Major General Edward Braddock's *Orderly Books from February 26 to June 17, 1755*.

29. James R. Albach, *Annals of the West*, p. 133.

30. All known eyewitness accounts in both English and French have been published in Paul E. Klopferman, *Braddock at the Monongahela*, 1977. None contain any reference to Captain Jack.

Carlisle, May 27th, 1753

To James Hamilton, Esquire, Governor of the Province of Pennsylvania.

Dear Sir. . . . I reached this place a few days since, without accident; having previously embraced an opportunity which presented itself of learning the Indian character by attending the great Indian Talk in Path Valley . . . the particulars of which you will receive from Le Tort. The garrison here consists only of twelve men. The stockade originally occupied two acres of ground square, with a block house in each corner . . . these buildings are now in ruin. As Carlisle has been recently laid out, and is the established seat of justice, it is the general opinion that a number of Log Buildings will be erected during the ensuing summer of speculation, in which some accommodation can be had for the new levees. The number of dwelling houses is five. The Court is at present held in a temporary log building on the north east corner of the center square. . . . I gave Captain Joel the commission; it was well bestowed, his band may be of vast use hereafter in checking the incursions of the Indians. Davis Scott is entitled to much praise for the liberal offer he has made of paying the expenses incurred by them. . . .

Very respectfully yours,

John O'Neal³¹

This letter gives the appearance of authenticity in that it is signed and dated. However, there are problems. First, it mentions a fort at Carlisle as being in ruins, even though there appears to have been no fort before 1756. It states that there were five dwellings. However, Pennsylvania Secretary Peters writes only two months later, reporting six stone houses, several good frame houses and a large number of log houses—sixty-five in all.³²

Since this letter speaks of “Captain Joel” and not “Captain Jack” it is not certain as to whom the letter actually refers. Finally, most of this letter is unaccountably omitted in the *Pennsylvania Archives* although the few lines referring to the garrison and the stockade are included in the Appendix.³³ This is discussed in some detail below.

31. Hazard, 4: 389.

32. Secretary of the Commonwealth Richard Peters quoted by Hunter, p. 437 fn. Hunter gives Penn Manuscripts, Official Correspondence, 6: 73 as his source.

33. *Pennsylvania Archives*, 12: 348.

Although a number of references to this "roving commission" may be located, they are either not documented or give the letter in Hazard as the source.³⁴ No other printed source located supports this claim.

THE HALF INDIAN

Still another question is in regard to the references to Captain Jack as the "Half Indian." In the *Register*, the letter purportedly written by George Croghan about Captain Jack is followed by this material, apparently from the same correspondent who contributed the letter:

I now forward to you some "extracts," which I hope will prove worthy of insertion. . . . The notice of the "Black Rifle," will, I trust, elicit from some person in the interior some interesting anecdotes. From the name it would appear as if he was regarded as a Robber, but from all the information I can obtain, it was foreign from his character. He acted as a spy upon the Indians, and constantly followed their steps, and gave notice of any approach towards the settlements of danger. ***In some of the records he is called "a half Indian." See an account of an Indian force being compelled to retreat from Juniata by a number of the white inhabitants under the command of "a noted half Indian." In the office of the Secretary of the Commonwealth. It will also appear that he sometimes commanded Captain Jack's company:

"The company under the command of the "half Indian," having left Great Cove, the Indians took advantage and fell upon the inhabitants and murdered many." The above is an extract from a letter to the Governor from Colonel Armstrong.

Again—"The half Indian or Black Hunter, by the terror of his name, gives security to the settlers on the Conococheague." Extract from a letter in 1756, signed John Butler, to the Governor of the Province.

The above may throw some additional light on the characters of men now involved in some degree in obscurity. Any person who has in his possession the means of information, could not do a better thing than give a sketch of the Life of Captain Jack, or the adventures of the "Half Indian," as

34. Hazard, 4: 389.

35. Hazard, 4: 416

they were intimately connected with the most interesting events which took place in our Province.³⁵

First there seems some confusion here as to whether the Half Indian was Captain Jack himself or was some other person associated with him. First he is called "a half Indian" and in the same sentence "he sometimes commanded Captain Jack's company." In another paragraph, "The half Indian or Black Hunter" seem to refer to one person. In the next, Captain Jack and the "Half Indian" are referred to as "they."

Captain Jack, regardless of this confusion in Hazard's account, is repeatedly referred to in secondary sources as the "Half Indian." However, C. Hale Sipe, an authority on Indians in Pennsylvania definitely identifies the "half Indian" as Andrew Montour whose mother was French Margaret and whose father was an Indian.³⁶ According to Sipe, Governor Dinwiddie gave Montour a captain's commission "to head a select company of friendly Indians, as scouts for our small army," when Virginia was raising forces for the occupation of the Forks of the Ohio, early in 1754.³⁷

Montour, however, instead of raising a company of Indians, formed a company of traders and woodsmen and with eighteen men, he and Croghan joined Washington at Great Meadows prior to the battle of Fort Necessity.³⁸ Montour does not seem to have raised a similar force for Braddock's campaign, but did accompany Croghan and his friendly Indians from Aughwick to help Braddock.³⁹

In short, there is definite evidence to identify Andrew Montour as the "Half Indian" on the Pennsylvania frontier at that time, and only the confusing and confused account in Hazard to name Captain Jack as the "Half Indian." Unfortunately, this mistaken identification has persisted and has been repeated in many later secondary sources.

One can even speculate that Montour's receipt of a captain's commission and his forming a company of traders and woodsmen at least supported the confusion between the two figures and was possibly the basis for the belief that Captain Jack did offer his services to General Braddock even though no other historical evidence can be found to support this belief.

36. Chester Hale Sipe, *The Indian Wars of Pennsylvania*, p. 312.

37. Sipe, p. 171.

38. Sipe, p. 316.

39. Sipe, pp. 316-317.

THE *Pennsylvania Archives* OMISSIONS

Samuel Hazard, publisher of the *Register of Pennsylvania* and gatherer of historical material, later undertook the task of publishing the *Pennsylvania Archives*.⁴⁰ From 1852 to 1856 he published many volumes of letters, reports, and other original source materials. His task was later taken over by others and continued as the *Colonial Records*.⁴¹

However, his quest for information about such already obscure characters as Captain Jack and the Half Indian seems to have been unsuccessful, with regard to Captain Jack at least. In fact, he himself seems to have been less than convinced as to the authenticity of these accounts and references to Captain Jack or Captain Joel. In any event, he does not include any of the parts of letters referring to Captain Jack or Captain Joel in the *Archives*. Significantly, nowhere in the *Archives* does he include any reference to Captain Joel or Captain Jack, even though Captain Joel was mentioned in an omitted part of the letter having to do with the fort at Carlisle.

The part of the letter which describes the fort at Carlisle, together with another letter dated 1754, are included in an appendix, entitled "Fort at Carlisle—Lowther."⁴² In this article, he reviews the various contradictory information available about the early fortification at Carlisle without evaluation or conclusion.

It must be concluded that Hazard, the chief source of material about Captain Jack, was not himself convinced that Jack was authentic or he would have included him in the *Archives*. Even the letter purported to have been written by Croghan was omitted.

A CASE OF CONCEALED IDENTITY?

There remains perhaps another possibility. Possibly "Captain Jack" was merely a convenient pseudonym designed to conceal someone's real identity. Before the formal outbreak of war in 1755 it was against colonial law to either live in Indian territory or to kill any of the natives. One whose life was dedicated to such killing would not wish to be apprehended. If this concealment were actually the intent, it was very successful.

What about the name of Captain Joel? Does the trail lead in this direction? The only reference outside of Hazard to a Captain

40. *Pennsylvania Archives*.

41. *Colonial Records*.

42. *Pennsylvania Archives*, 12: 348-349.

Joel is in James Oliver Curwood's novel the *Black Hunter*. In this book, the title refers to a mysterious frontiersman identified as Peter Joel. As Albert Rung relates in a *Daily News* article, Curwood has based some of his story on Jones' account of Captain Jack.⁴³ It is not clear if he was familiar with Hazard's account or if he got the name "Joel" from some other source. The book is not intended to be more than historical fiction and if he had access to another source for the name Joel, there is no indication of it. The name or character of Joel does not appear in any other work located and seems to be a dead end.

In the southern part of Huntingdon County there exists a strong oral tradition linking Captain Jack with the name of Culbertson or Culberson. In 1909, Charles Welch wrote that some "associate Captain Jack with Jack Culberson."⁴⁴ I have heard claims of descent from Captain Jack from two widely disparate sources—in both cases through the name of Culberson or Culbertson. It is difficult to credit a purely oral tradition which seems to have nothing to substantiate it, although perhaps in the investigation of family records, something might come to light. Since Welch's account of Captain Jack confuses several elements of the story of the Indian trader Jack Armstrong with the story of Captain Jack, it is particularly difficult to give credence to his suggestion.

In 1873, a Mt. Union minister named Cyrus Jeffries published in the *Altoona Tribune* a continued story about Captain Jack entitled the *Legends of the Juniata or Jackson and Ketorah Culberson*. In this story, Captain Jack is identified as Jackson Culberson who comes to the Juniata from the Shippensburg area and builds his cabin by a spring at Tyrone. George Croghan, Jacob Hare, the Westons and Jack's encounter with Braddock are all woven into the story. While the geography seems well informed, many of the happenings seem implausible, even fanciful. Furthermore, George Croghan's activities in this book do not fit well with the activities that he is known to have engaged in during that period. The story thus appears to be no more than an interesting but amateurish piece of historical fiction providing no leads or real information on Captain Jack but rather utilizing historical persons and happenings in order to make the tale more credible.

43. Albert M. Rung, *Rung's Chronicles of Pennsylvania History*, p. 102; Jones, pp. 134-139.

44. Welch, p. 16.

It does seem possible that the publication of this book stirred local imaginations and encouraged fancies about family traditions, particularly in families having the name of Culberson in their ancestry. It would be interesting to learn, if possible, where Jeffries came up with the name Culberson. Unfortunately, the newspaper story gives no clues.

In the same year of 1873, another historian and novelist, Charles McKnight, also published a historical novel in which he must have woven all the available legendary material about Captain Jack.⁴⁵ He identifies Captain Jack as an Edward Percy of Philadelphia. Two years later, however, McKnight published a history of the frontier of Pennsylvania.⁴⁶ By then he had apparently changed his mind as to Captain Jack's identity and identified him as Colonel Patrick Jack of Chambersburg. Patrick Jack's monument can be seen at the Falling Spring Presbyterian Church in Chambersburg, according to Albert Rung, a Huntingdon County historian.⁴⁷ On it is inscribed: "Colonel Patrick Jack, an officer of the Colonial and Revolutionary wars—died January 25, 1821, aged ninety-one years." That would make him age 20 in 1750, which is barely plausible, especially if Captain Jack's exploits are dated in the 1750s and during the Indian wars rather than earlier. However, it does contradict other traditions of Captain Jack's death in 1772.

It would seem that if Patrick Jack, who grew up at his father's mill on Back Creek in Franklin County, were the legendary Captain Jack, some clues would have found their way into the records. Had his wife and children been massacred by Indians, this should have been noted somewhere. What is known about Patrick Jack does not correspond very closely to the Captain Jack tradition. Patrick Jack is known to have gone to North Carolina and Tennessee in 1756 and to have acquired a vast tract of land from the Cherokees. When the Cherokees besieged Fort Loudon in Tennessee, Patrick Jack was among the prisoners but was spared by his friend Atta-Kulla-Kulla, a Cherokee chief. He later fought under Colonel Bouquet in 1764.⁴⁸ These activities sound unlike those of a mythical Indian fighter who would not accept military discipline under Braddock.

According to Sipes, it has been claimed that, at Benjamin Frank-

45. McKnight, *Old Fort Dusquesne*.

46. McKnight, *Our Western Border*.

47. Rung, p. 101.

48. Rung, p. 102.

lin's suggestion, Captain Patrick Jack offered Braddock the services of his band of foresters as guides, but they were turned down.⁴⁹ This is only an oral family tradition, handed down to Colonel Jack's descendants. No documentary evidence confirms this. This could be the origin of the mythical connection between Captain Jack of the Juniata and General Braddock. It also might point toward Patrick Jack as the Captain Jack, although there is little else to support this supposition besides his name.

The name of Jack was not an uncommon one on the frontier in those days. There was, for example, a Captain Matthew Jack, a sheriff at Hannastown near Ligonier. However, the stories told about him are later, 1782 and thereabouts.⁵⁰ While he had some exciting escapes and rescues, in no way do these stories compare with those of our Captain Jack.

Another Jack of the frontier was John Jack, a professional scout.⁵¹ Again, the time is too late—the early 1780s—for him to have been Captain Jack.

Other Jacks are mentioned in the records from the 1750s on, more frequently in the late 1700s and 1800s. Usually they appear in a tax or property record and little or nothing is known about each one. None appear to fit the criteria to have been Hazard's Captain.

The name of Culberson or Culbertson is also found among the early records, perhaps more frequently than that of Jack. However, the connection between seems tenuous. No positive evidence has been found which might connect the Culbersons of the frontier with Captain Jack. Both Jacks and Culbersons were in the appropriate areas at this time but we hear of no massacres of these families nor exploits or adventures which would constitute a real link to the story of Captain Jack.

WAS CAPTAIN JACK AN INDIAN?

A very few sources suggest that he might actually have been an Indian. These do not seem to confuse him with the "Half-Indian," Andrew Montour. Rather a separate identity is suggested.

In *Olden Times*, Neville Craig published an early account by a Mr. Atkinson, an engineer in the Pittsburgh area, who apparently

49. Sipe, p. 181.

50. Chester Hale Sipe, *Fort Ligonier and its Time*, pp. 568-9, 573, 574.

51. Sipe, *Fort Ligonier*, p. 527, 1181-2.

52. *Colonial Records*, 5: 210.

spent much time gathering information about Braddock's march. The account includes a great deal of detailed information. When Atkinson tells about the Indians who accompanied Braddock he makes the following statement: "George Croghan, the Indian Agent of Pennsylvania, and a friendly Indian of great value, called Susquehanna Jack, were also with him."⁵³ Lowdermilk believes that Atkinson was in error and asserts that "Susquehanna Jack' is doubtless the celebrated 'Captain Jack' . . ."⁵⁴

Since the name of "Susquehanna Jack" appears nowhere else, Lowdermilk's conclusion that "Captain Jack" was intended is probably correct.

Dale Van Every in *Forth to the Wilderness* suggests that Captain Jack might be the name of an Indian, but he does not actually refer to any story or events. In fact this suggestion is the extent of his reference to the Captain Jack story although he deals extensively with this period.⁵⁵

WAS CAPTAIN JACK A LEGEND?

Some have suggested that the story of Captain Jack is a legend based upon the life of a real person. Charles Hanna comments,

Captain William Patterson, who lived on Tuscarora Creek, was a bold resourceful frontiersman and Indian fighter, whose exploits, with those of his father furnished much of the material for the legendary history of the fictitious "Captain Jack," the Wild Hunter of the Juniata.⁵⁶

Patterson did live on the Juniata as early as 1750. There were certain similarities in his life to the legend of Captain Jack. For example, "Captain Patterson probably commanded a company of rangers during the Braddock Campaign," and after the defeat he "Hastened with his brave followers to his fort and prepared to defend the settlers."⁵⁷ After Pontiac's war broke out in 1763, Patterson "followed them [Indians] to their places of concealment, and gave them many hard blows."⁵⁸

53. T. C. Atkinson, in *Olden Times*, 2: 547.

54. Lowdermilk, p. 143 fn.

55. Dale Van Every, *Forth to the Wilderness: The First American Frontier 1754-1774*, p. xi.

56. Charles Hanna, *The Wilderness Trail*, p. 57.

57. Jones, p. 358.

58. Jones, p. 363.

Albert Rung repeated Redmond Conyngham's recounting of events in the life of Captain William Neilson of the Provincial Rangers whose career seems to parallel that of Captain Jack. Conyngham wrote:

PROVINCIAL RANGERS—In 1760 their number was 162 under the command of Captain William Neilson, a native of Ireland; the men were stationed in the forts of Juniata, Bedford, Littleton and Loudon; they were paid weekly; they acted as scouts to watch the motions of the Indians and kept up a constant communication with the Rangers of the several frontier settlements. In 1758 he was requested to guard Northampton County and to support his Rangers while on that duty. He petitioned the Assembly for relief in 1761, but it was rejected. Captain Neilson's family and friends had fallen victims to an incursion of Indians in Conococheague in 1755 and as his settlement was destroyed he raised a company of Rangers, and offered their services to the Proprietary Government. Captain Neilson was acquainted with the habits of the Indians, having been a captive in 1755 and living with them for some months. Governor Hamilton speaks of him as a desperate character but "as one whose desperation may be turned to account." He was an active and useful Indian agent.⁵⁹

J. F. McGinness provided a long account of a well-known Captain Brady, called the "Indian Hunter of the Susquehanna." His exploits extended from Huntingdon to Clearfield, Centre, Lycoming, Clinton, and Union counties.⁶⁰ Merely substitute the name "Jack" for "Brady" and it would be hard to tell the difference between some of Brady's adventures and those related by McKnight in his book about Captain Jack.

Despite the numerous references in historical literature and fiction Captain Jack cannot be verified as a historical figure. The earliest source—the collection of letters and extracts published in Hazard's *Register*—has proven to be too unreliable to depend upon. Some of the discrepancies are admittedly minor but there are too many to ignore. The decisive factor is Hazard's omission of all material having to do with Captain Jack or Captain Joel from his historical source books, the *Pennsylvania Archives*.

59. Rung, p. 102.

60. J. F. McGinness, *OTZINACHSON, or a History of the West Branch of the Susquehanna*, pp. 488 ff.

Other historical sources rely heavily either on Hazard's *Register* as a source or on the same material from some source now lost. Once the *Register* is discredited, all other sources become suspect as well. While some other traditions of Jack and his exploits do exist, including adventures not printed by Hazard, they tend to be highly imaginative, dealing with such fiction as buried treasure, or deal with heroic episodes which may or may not be based on real happenings.⁶¹

Perhaps there was a real Captain Jack whose family was massacred and who swore revenge. Perhaps the rest of the story is completely legendary with various exploits and adventures attaching themselves over the years to a single figure who seemed to embody the spirit of the early frontier.

Or perhaps he never did exist. Perhaps the times called for a hero, and the myth developed to fit the need for such a heroic figure. All that can be said for certain is that his existence cannot be proven and a skeptical look should be taken at the claims of those who assert his existence as a historical figure.

61. See Brumbaugh and Walton, *Stories of Pennsylvania*, pp. 103-107; Washington Irving, *Life of Washington*, p. 164; Milton Scott Lytle, *History of Huntingdon County*, p. 303; and Henry W. Shoemaker, *Juniata Memories*, pp. 273-285.

PROGRESSIVE EDUCATION

Attempted Assassination—A school teacher in Morris township, Greene county, recently engaged to teach writing school, giving notice that there was no room in the school house for any except his class. For this reason he was annoyed by some young fellows, who became angry at him, and at his class meeting for last week (Wednesday night) a pistol shot was fired near the window, the ball hitting the putty on the outer edge of the glass, and glancing off from a straight line fell harmless to the floor. It is supposed to have been aimed at the teacher.

Washington Reporter, 28 January 1874

Springfield— . . . A spelling on the 8th ult., at the McClellan school-house in Saltlick township, ended in a general fisticuff.

Genius of Liberty (Uniontown, Pa.), 5 February 1874

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