

## MURDER OF FELIX DONNELLY – HIS SON FRANCIS, &C.\*

The only massacre by Indians in the immediate vicinity of Standing Stone occurred on the 19<sup>th</sup> of June, 1777, at what was then known as the "Big Spring," two miles west of the fort. In consequence of hostile bands of Indians having been seen at a number of places in the neighborhood, and the general alarm which followed, people commenced flocking to the fort from every direction.

On the day above named, Felix Donnelly and his son Francis, and Bartholomew Maguire and his daughter, residing a short distance from the mouth of *Shaver's* creel, placed a number of their movable effects upon horses, and with a cow, went down the river for the purpose of forting at Standing Stone. Jane Maguire was in advance, driving the cow, and the Donnellys and Maguire in the rear, on the horses. When nearly opposite Big Spring, an Indian fired from ambuscade and killed young Donnelly. His father, who was close to him, caught him, for the purpose of keeping him upon the horse, Maguire urged the old man to fly, but he refused to leave his son. Maguire rode to his side, and the two held the dead body of Francis. While in this position, three Indians rushed from their ambuscade with terrific yells, and fired a volley, one bullet striking Felix Donnelly, and the other grazing Maguire's ear, carrying away a portion of his hair. The bodies of both the Donnellys fell to the ground, and Maguire rode forward, passing (probably without noticing her) his daughter. The Indians, after scalping the murdered men, followed Jane, evidently overtook her, and grasped her by the dress, and with uplifted tomahawk, demanded her to surrender, but she struggled heroically. The strings of her short gowns gave way, and by an extraordinary effort, she freed herself, leaving the garment in the hand of the savage; then, seizing the cow's tail, she gave it a twist, which started the animal running, and gave her an impetus which soon enabled her to pass her father.

The savage still followed, but in the meantime Maguire had recovered from the consternation caused by the massacre, and immediately aimed his rifle at the Indian, when the latter took refuge behind a tree. At this juncture, a number of men who were pitching quoits at Cryder's mill, on the opposite side of the river, who had heard the firing and the whoops of the savages, put off in a canoe to engage the Indians, but they were soon discovered, and the Indian shaking Jane Maguire's short gown derisively at them disappeared. The men, doubtful as to the number of the enemy, returned to the mill, to await the arrival of a greater force.

Maguire and his daughter reached the fort in a state better imagined than described. The garrison was soon alarmed, and a number of armed men started in pursuit of the savages. At the mill they were joined by the men previously mentioned, and, although every exertion was made in their power, they could not get upon their trail, and the pursuit was abandoned.

The dead bodies of the Donnellys were taken to Standing Stone, and buried upon what was then vacant ground, but the spot where they now rest is pointed out in a garden in the heart of the borough of Huntingdon.

Jane Maguire, who certainly exhibited a very fair share of the heroism of the day in her escape from the savage, afterward married a man named Dowling, and moved to Raystown Branch, where she reared a family of children, some of whom are still living.

## COLONEL FEE.

Opposite the mouth of Raystown Branch lived Colonel Fee, an active and energetic man during the Revolution. He was in Captain Blair's expedition against the Tories, and for a while served as private in the army. His widow (a sister of the late Thomas Jackson, of Gaysport,) was still living in 1855 at the advanced age of eighty-seven years, and to her the historian is indebted for much valuable information in the construction of these pages.

## THE CRYDERS.

The Cryders, too, are worthy of a special notice. They consisted of a father, mother and seven sons. They built a mill at the Big Spring, which served for the people of Standing Stone and the surrounding country. They were all men suitable for the times, rugged and daring. A majority of them were constantly in service during the war of the Revolution, either as frontier-men, scouts or fort guards. Michael Cryder, the father, used to spend his days at his mill and his nights at the fort during the troublesome times, and it

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\* U. J. Jones in History of the Juniata Valley.

was himself and five of his sons who accomplished the then extraordinary achievement of running the first ark-load of flour down the Juniata river.

The standing Stone is frequently mentioned in the archives, but its name is mostly coupled with rumors, grossly exaggerated, of attacks by tories, &c. There is no doubt whatever but that great distress, principally arising from a want of provisions, prevailed there during the war.

When the alarms were most frequent, and the council has been importuned time and time again to send provisions to Standing Stone, as well as men for its defence and munitions, a circular was issued to the county lieutenants, dated July 16, 1778, from which we extract the following:

“It is proper to acquaint you that Colonel Broadhead’s regiment, now on a march to Pittsburgh, is ordered by the Board of War to the Standing Stone, and we have ordered three hundred militia from Cumberland and two hundred from York to join them.”

The promise to the ear of the affrighted settlers was broken to the hope. Only seventy of the Cumberland militia were taken to the Standing Stone, and thirty of them soon after removed to garrison the Lead Mine fort.

Huntingdon was laid out previous to the commencement of hostilities – probably in 1775, but it retained the name of Stone-Town Fort for many years. On the formation of the country, in 1787, it received the same name. The country during the war of 1812, with Great Britain, furnished three companies, and although it once was the stronghold of the tories, we can now safely say that it stands among the most patriotic in the State.