

Frances Slocum

1773-1847

HISTORICAL ERA: AMERICAN COLONIAL



Portrait of Frances Slocum, aged 67 years

In November 1778, just a little over three months after the Battle of Wyoming (July, 1778), a raiding party of Delaware Indians (called Lenape) came back into the valley.

They were looking for a replacement child; that is, a child from a white family would be taken to replace a Native American child who had died due to disease, accident, or war. When the Indians came upon the Slocum cabin (at the present-day site of Pennsylvania Avenue in Wilkes-Barre) they saw two boys outside sharpening a knife on a grinding stone. One of the boys, Nathan Kingsley, was shot. His brother, Wareham, ran into the cabin. (The Kingsley brothers and their mother were staying with the Slocums while their father was away.) Inside the cabin, the Slocum children and their mother heard the shot and the yelling. Mrs. Slocum immediately sent some of the children out the back door into the woods behind their home. Upon entering the cabin, the Indians grabbed Ebenezer, who was lame. When his mother pointed that fact out to the abductors, they dropped him and took Frances. Hoisting her over their shoulder, they also took Wareham. He was released a short time later.

Legend has it that the Indians stopped for the first night at a rock overhang in what is now Frances Slocum State Park. They then traveled to Fort Niagara where Frances was given to an Indian family. Eventually she ended up near Peru, Indiana. While a teenager, she and her family helped an Indian they found wounded in the woods after the Battle of Fallen Timbers. As he was nursed back to health, Frances, now known as Ma-con-a-quah (Little Bear Woman) and Shepoconah, a Miami warrior, fell in love. They later married. He became a Miami Indian chief and took

Historical Significance:

Students will become familiar with the story of a local white girl of Quaker faith who was abducted by Indians at age five and reunited with her family nearly sixty years later.

Related Vocabulary:

Native American
abducted
Miami
Lenape

his bride to his village on the Mississinewa River. They had four children, two sons and two daughters.

As she grew up with her Indian family, she forgot many of the English words she knew as well as her hometown of Wilkes-Barre. Nonetheless, Frances was quite happy with her life. In 1833, her husband died. Frances would live for another fourteen years. Near the end of her life, a friend of hers, Col. Ewing, visited her. While they conversed, she told Ewing a secret that not many knew—she was not Indian but White. As her story unfolded, Col. Ewing decided to write her story and send it to *Lancaster Intelligencer*, the only town he knew on the Susquehanna River. His letter was put into the desk of the editor until one day a new editor found it and had it printed. A minister who had worked in Wilkes-Barre and who knew the Slocums saw the article. He sent it to Joseph Slocum, brother of Frances. He immediately sent word to his brother and sister. Together they made plans to visit Frances.

There was a tearful reunion of the brothers and sisters after nearly sixty years of separation. Frances was asked to return to Pennsylvania but she declined, saying that an old tree cannot be replanted. Frances was buried next to her husband in 1847.

She is commemorated in the Frances Slocum State Park in the Carverton area of the Back Mountain, and the town of Mocanaquah, Pennsylvania, is named for her.

Our
History

Suggested Activity:

1. Using a map, follow Francis Slocum's trail from Wilkes-Barre to Fort Niagara to near Peru, Indiana. The village where she lived was on the Mississinewa River seven miles upstream before it empties into the Wabash River in the state of Indiana. This became known as Deaf Man's Village named for Shepoconah's loss of hearing.
2. Estimate how many miles the party traveled. If they could travel fifteen miles per day, how many days would it take to travel the route they took? Note the present day cities located on the route.
3. Have students decide what provisions one would need to travel that far in 1778.
4. Since the abduction happened right after the Battle of Wyoming, the teacher may want to include information about that event.



Frances' grave on the banks of the Mississinewa River.

CD/DVD References:

1. PA Academic Standards
2. Available materials in print compiled for GPHS.

Related Themes:

- Native Americans
- Geography
- Battle of Wyoming
- State Parks
- Family Relationships
- Name Origins



O-saw-she-quah, Yellow Leaf, the second daughter of Francis Slocum, married five times. She had twelve children

Sources:

Secondary Sources:

The Story of Mocanoquah by Kitty Dye

DVD - Francis Slocum: A Child Caught Between Two Worlds

Additional Online Sources:

www.franceslocum.org