



2012

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Greenholt, Kevin L. (2012) "Girl Abducted by Indians," *Adams County History*: Vol. 18 , Article 4.
Available at: <https://cupola.gettysburg.edu/ach/vol18/iss1/4>

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Abstract

Who was this girl? Why was this account not known to others who had researched Indian abductions in the Adams County area? A former volunteer at the Adams County Historical Society suggested that I look into these matters. Using the collections of the historical society, the Pennsylvania State Archives, and the Daughters of the American Revolution Library in Washington, D.C., my search began.

It should be noted before going any further that the 1765 date, which is repeated in various accounts of this abduction, is incorrect and will be examined later. Also incorrect is the fact that the Zimmerman/Carpenter family lived in the area of what is now Adams County in 1765 and that the abducted girl had the Zimmerman surname. [*excerpt*]

Keywords

Adams County Historical Society, ACHS, Adams County, Pennsylvania History, Frontier, Indian Attacks, Native American, Shamakin

Girl Abducted by Indians

by Kevin L. Greenholt

In 1886, Samuel P. Bates published in his *History of Adams County* a short account appearing in the section devoted to Liberty Township. It reads:

On Flat Run near the Maryland line, on what is known as the old Reed farm, the Zimmermans, a Swiss family (who subsequently Anglicized their name into Carpenter), settled in 1765. In [t]his family was a little girl nine years old; this child was carried off by two Indians. A neighbor heard the Indians coming, and, hiding near the trail, recognized the little girl, but could not rescue her. Pursuit followed but resulted in nothing. Ten years after[,] the whites fought a tribe at Shamakin, and captured from them a young white woman and her half-breed boy; she was brought to her parents and subsequently married one of the Loman boys. Her half-breed son died in 1826, at Adam Rader's house, on the Overholtzer farm, near where his mother was made captive. She died at ninety years of age on her husband's farm, sold to James Wilson, and by him to the Bollingers. Two of her daughters married into the Zimmerman family; one married John Clark, who owned McDevitt's mill, and a fourth married John Light, from Falling Waters, Va.¹

Who was this girl? Why was this account not known to others who had researched Indian abductions in the Adams County area? A former volunteer at the Adams County Historical Society suggested that I look into these matters. Using the collections of the historical society, the Pennsylvania

State Archives, and the Daughters of the American Revolution Library in Washington, D.C., my search began.

It should be noted before going any further that the 1765 date, which is repeated in various accounts of this abduction, is incorrect and will be examined later. Also incorrect is the fact that the Zimmerman/Carpenter family lived in the area of what is now Adams County in 1765 and that the abducted girl had the Zimmerman surname.

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Remember that game in which you told someone a story, after which he or she retold the same story to another person, who then passed it on yet another person? At the end, after the last person recited the story, everyone would laugh at how the story had been “edited” from the first to the last person. What follows is another version of that game, although it occurred in printed form over a period of 105 years.

During the 1870–1880 period Henry J. Stahle, editor of the *Gettysburg Compiler*, printed various historical columns, mostly involving Adams County or that part of York County which became Adams County in 1800. Among those columns were accounts of the known attacks by Indians on settlers in the county area, such as those on the Bard and Jemison families. The August 5, 1880, edition of the newspaper carried a previously unknown incident involving Indians, purporting to have occurred within what is now Adams County. Editor Stahle received a letter from a 29-year-old former Adams Countian, Lizzie I. Carpenter, dated July 16, 1880, and sent from Martinsburg, Berkeley County, West Virginia.²

Stahle printed the letter as written. This is the first known printed version.

**More Indian History –
Abduction of a Little Girl in Liberty Township,
Adams County, Pa.**

Martinsburg, W. Va., July, 16, 1880.

Mr. Henry J. Stahle – Dear Sir: In the year 1765 my great-great-grandfather and family resided in Liberty township, near the Maryland line, in a settlement along the banks of what is now known as “Flat Run,” and in the immediate locality of what was known years ago as the “old Reed farm,” now owned by the Hunter heirs.

Although there does not seem to have been any tribe of Indians encamped in the neighborhood of the settlement, they often passed through it, and were not unfrequently found lurking around, begging or stealing, I presume, much as they are apt to do now-a-days. Among other members of his family was a little daughter about nine years of age, who during the berry season went out alone one morning, into a wood bordering on the stream, in search of berries and presumably wandered out of sight and hearing of the settlement. It so happened that one of their neighbors was coming through this wood, and hearing excited voices, hid behind the underbrush in order to learn, unobserved, what was transpiring; this was what he saw, two Indians were leading this little girl, or rather half dragging the reluctant little girl away from home; the child was crying bitterly, and he noticed as they passed by that she attempted to call out, when one of them put his hand over her face, and in doing so pushed her bonnet back and he recognized her. Doubtless the watcher’s first impulse was to attempt the rescue of the

child then and there, but a second thought must have convinced him of the hopelessness of such a course. As soon as possible he gave the alarm; friends and neighbors searched far and wide, but in vain, captors and captive having vanished as effectually as though the earth had opened and hid them away. Days multiplied into weeks and the search was abandoned, weeks fled into months, months vanished into years, until Time had transferred ten of them into the Ledger of the Past, and all hope of ever recovering the captive must have ended. When the whites in an engagement with a tribe of Indians up at Shamokin captured from them a young white woman and her half-breed child, a boy, they were taken to the settlement of their captors, and in course of time the woman was recognized as the child who had been stolen, and was returned to her family and friends, along with her child. When the incidents concerning her capture were related to her she admitted to having an indistinct recollection of them, but had grown taciturn and morose and does not seem to have manifested any great pleasure on being restored to her parents. She described the Indians as having been extremely kind to her, and when she arrived at a suitable age was married to one of the chiefs, with all the rites and forms by which the tribe signalized their marriages in "high lodge-life." She had never known any other home while with them than that of Shamokin, and told what a vast amount of silver and lead used to be brought into camp by the Indians, and asserted that there was "plenty of it around there." It occurs to me it has never been discovered there by whites, save the silver, as a return for coal. As time passed away, she took more kindly to civilization, and was woed and won in the "good

old time” manner by a young man named Loman, and reared a family of four girls, and one boy named George, and of course the half-breed son who was known as “John Loman.” My father remembers this half-breed as a handsome, athletic, strong man. He is said to have been of a roving disposition, with the nomadic habits of his race; he never married, and died in 1826 at the residence of Adam Rader, on the “Overholtzer farm,” near where his mother had been taken captive. His mother lived to be ninety some years of age. The farm in Liberty township owned by her husband, and upon which the greater part of her life was spent, was afterward purchased by the Hon. James Wilson, and sold by him to the Bollingers. The land joined the Krise and McKee farms. Two of Mrs. Loman’s daughters married Zimmermans (brothers), and one of these, John, was my grandfather; another daughter married John Clark, who owned the mill on Tom’s creek, known for many years as “McDivit’s Mill”; the other daughter married a man named Light, from Falling Waters, Va. Her offspring inclined to theology. Peter Light Wilson, her grandson, was one of the brightest theologians in the Maryland Conference of the Methodist Protestant church.

It seems rather singular that my grandfather’s name was Zimmerman, and my father is called Carpenter, yet it is simple enough when explained. The Zimmerman family was originally from Switzerland. A part of them went to England, part to France, and three brothers came to the American colonies. This was before the Wm. Penn treaty. When he came he changed the German and Swiss names to English, and among the others Zimmerman was changed to Carpenter. Some of them were satisfied with this, and

others were indignant and clung to the old name, and both names are used down to the present time.

By what name the tribe was known that stole my ancient relative, I do not know, being unacquainted with the history of Pennsylvania at that time. You will probably know, and if you can throw any light upon that part of the history, I shall consider it a very great favor. I am sorry not to be able to learn more of the stolen child's parents, but without important family records – and I have not been able to find any pertaining to that branch – it is not worth while trying.

Yours truly, Lizzie L. Carpenter, Martinsburg, W. Va.

The second retelling was printed in the *History of Adams County*, as noted at the beginning of this study.

In 1890, the third account appeared in the *Portrait and Biographical Album of Sumner County, Kansas*. Lizzie returned to tell her version a second time. She had married James W. Beller in 1887 in Martinsburg, West Virginia, and they moved to Perth, Sumner County, Kansas. In a section of her husband's biography, Lizzie and her father, who had moved to Kansas to live with Lizzie, are discussed. It reads:

Dr. Carpenter has in his possession title deeds to lands in Adams County, Pa., a part of which was then called the "Manor of Maske," that date back to Penn's residence and were given under his hand and seal. Dr. Carpenter's grandmother, who in her maidenhood was Miss Lamon, was captured by the Indians in what is now Adams County, Pa., about the year 1765, when she was a child. Subsequently, after she had grown to be a young lady, she was recaptured by the Provincial Army and returned to her family. ³

The fourth account occurred on March 5, 1953.⁴ Lizzie's letter was reprinted, without change, in the *York Dispatch*, York, Pennsylvania, as part of a column recounting a talk by Henry W. Shoemaker, president of the Pennsylvania Folklore Society, Pennsylvania State Museum, Harrisburg. Regarding Lizzie's question as to which Indian tribe took the girl captive, Mr. Shoemaker said, "There was no answer able to be made to the above, which remains one of the absorbing Indian mysteries of Pennsylvania folklore and history."

The fifth printing occurred in the March 29, 1958, edition of *The Gettysburg Times*. Beryl F. M. MacPerson's county history column on the Zimmerman-Loman Family included the following:

In the spring of 1765 a little daughter of the family (Carpenter), aged about nine years, went into the woods bordering Flat Run to pick berries.... [the account continues fairly close to the original]. About the year 1775 a brief but decisive battle between the Indians and whites took place near Shamokin, Pennsylvania. The Indians were defeated and forced to give up all captives taken by the living with them. Among the latter was a young white woman and her half-Indian son. They were taken to the nearest settlement (probably Fort Augusta) and there, in some way or other, the woman was identified as the child who had been taken from the settlement along Flat Run. She was returned to her family and friends, along with her child....

The sixth retelling occurred in 1975 when *The Gettysburg Times*, in its January 21 edition, printed the following in a piece on Indian raids in the county during and after the French and Indian War:

1765, two years after the conclusion of the French and Indian War, a little five-year-old white girl was abducted from a farm on Flat Run in Adams County in Liberty Township. Her immediate rescue failed and the girl remained with the Indians for 15 years. She was finally rescued at Shamokin. She had married an Indian brave and was the mother of a half-breed son. Both returned to Adams County and lived in this section until their deaths.

C. E. Schildknecht, *Monocacy and Catoclin* (1985), provides the seventh and last retelling. In discussing Mennonites, he writes:

The capture and recovery of Mary Carpenter from Indians has been recorded in the Warner, Beers' History of Cumberland and Adams Counties. In 1765, when she was 9 years old, Mary was picking berries along Flat Run near her home, when she was carried off by a band of roving Indians. Hope of recovery of the girl had been given up when 10 years later Indians were defeated near Shamokin, PA, far up the Susquehanna River, and Mary was recovered as the wife of a warrior, along with a young son. It is said that she was reluctant to return, but was brought to her former home and parents on Carroll's tract and gradually adjusted to a new life. Mary Zimmerman married George Lowman (Lohman) and had 7 children in addition to her Indian son, who was known as John Lowman.⁵

True to the game, the various retellings stuck to the basic story. However, it is interesting to read the above and note the subtle changes and embellishments to the original accounting.

The 1975 *Gettysburg Times* recollection changes her age from nine years to five years and the length of her captivity from ten to fifteen years. The last version, Schildknecht's, is the only one which provides a full, though incorrect, name, Mary Carpenter, to the child. Lizzie Carpenter Beller's second account names her as Miss Lamon. This is most likely a memory slip on Lizzie's part; the Lowman name was probably in her mind when relating the account.

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What is known of this young woman? Her given name was Mary. She was married in what was then Virginia to George Lowman in 1763/64. Their first child, a son named Ephraim, was born in 1764 in Virginia. They became the parents of seven more children, George, Elizabeth, Mary, Rebecca, Sarah, Catherine, and Susan. The last was born in 1782. These children were all born in Berkeley County, Virginia (now West Virginia).

A fourth-great grandson of the captive woman, Charles J. Beckman, now living in Denver, Colorado, conducted an extensive research of George and Mary Lowman's life in Berkeley County. He presented his findings to the Adams County Historical Society, where they can be found in the Lowman family file.

Sometime after the birth of their last child in 1782, George and Mary Lowman, her half-Indian son, John, their son, George and his family, and their younger daughters moved to Liberty Township in Adams County. On January 4, 1798, George bought over 524 acres of land from William Porter. George wrote his will October 28, 1800, and it was presented for probate on November 25, 1800. The location of his grave is unknown. There are several documents on file at the Adams County Historical Society which verify these transactions.

Approximately ten years after his father's death, son George and his family moved to Champaign (now Clark) County, Ohio. Accompanying George and his family was his mother, Mary.

Mary's half-Indian son, John, remained in Adams County, where his name is often found associated with Adam Rader/Rider. Adam's wife was Susan, most likely John Lowman's half-sister. John served in several legal capacities for his half-siblings, based on Adams County Orphans' Court documents. He died April 24, 1822, and his body was buried in the Lutheran Cemetery, Emmitsburg, Maryland, per Jacob Holdcroft's transcription of Frederick County, Maryland, tombstones entitled *Names in Stone*.

This researcher was unable to find John's tombstone on several trips to the cemetery. But even when Mr. Holdcroft recorded the stone, he could not read the age at death. This is unfortunate as it might have provided a more solid date of Mary's abduction or release.

Mary passed the remainder of her life in Clark County and died on August 3, 1826, in her 93rd year. According to Mr. Beckman, her remains are buried in the Heck-Funderburg Cemetery, Bethel Township, Clark County, Ohio. Based on the age inscribed on her tombstone, Mary was born about 1733/34. Since Mary was a married woman and rearing her family in Virginia during the period she was supposedly abducted from Adams County, she must have been taken captive around the early 1740s.

Learning these facts from Mr. Beckman's research, I used an online genealogical site known as Random Acts of Genealogical Kindness to locate someone familiar with the cemetery. A person who traveled past the cemetery each day offered to take pictures of her tombstone, for which I am grateful. This person wishes anonymity.

The accounts of Mary's captivity above start with the



*Tombstone for Mary Lowman, located in the
Funderburg Cemetery, New Carlisle,
Clark County, Ohio.*

initial, printed recitation by Mary’s great granddaughter, Lizzie Carpenter. Lizzie’s father was Dr. John Carpenter, son of John and Rebecca (Lowman) Carpenter. Rebecca, in turn, was the daughter of Mary, the captive. Dr. John was about 5 years of age when his grandmother moved to Ohio. It is undoubtedly through him that Lizzie learned of her ancestress’s captivity. Here we have the first verbal version of the printed “game,” with the story subsequently passing down through the generations.

Lizzie’s account, however, is not the only one which has been passed along. Mr. Beckman’s research uncovered two more versions. Mary’s granddaughter, Susannah, daughter of Mary’s son, George, recalled the following: “Grandmother was made a captive by the Indians during the French and Indian War, at the age of fourteen years. She was held a captive for five years; was married to an Indian chief and to them was born one son, whom she called John. The chief’s name not known. After her release they gave her the child and she returned to Pennsylvania.” A great-grandson, Joseph Lowman, grandson

of George (the son), related the following: “During the French and Indian War a group of Indians surprised and attacked the homestead of Mary and her parents, killing them, her parents. Mary ran, frightened, off into near-by bushes to hide, but one of the Indians saw her and found her, dragging her off into captivity. While she was in captivity the Chief married her and they had one son. She was released after a long time with her son when the war was over.”

With the variation in age and length of captivity it is difficult to pinpoint the dates of events involved. If her tombstone’s record of age is correct, she would have been about 20 years old when the French and Indian War (1754-1763) began. If, however, Mary was a young girl (aged 5 to 14 years; in Lizzie Carpenter’s telling 9 years old), she was captured prior to the French and Indian War. She may have been abducted, then, sometime during King George’s War, 1744-48.

It is also unlikely that Mary’s maiden name was Zimmerman, as suggested by some who have reported this event. Peter and Mary Zimmerman were the first of that surname to appear in the York/Adams County area, coming from Lancaster County between 1795 and 1799. They arrived in the Adams County area at about the same time as the Lowmans. Their oldest son married Catherine Lowman, daughter of George and Mary Lowman. This connection with the Zimmerman family probably caused some of the confusion with Mary’s maiden name.

It is indeed possible, then, that Mary may have been from northern Virginia (today’s West Virginia). Keith Hammersla, reference librarian for the Martinsburg-Berkeley County Public Library, attempted to assist in this research. Although he noted that several females were taken by the Indians from the Berkeley County area, none was named Mary.

Contact was made with Jack Hetrick, president emeritus of the Northumberland County Historical Society (Pennsylvania), concerning Lizzie Carpenter's claims that Mary was released at Shamokin. Considered an authority on the Indians of the Northumberland area, he disagreed with claims made by Lizzie, including her marriage to an Indian chief. Mr. Hetrick exclaimed, "they were all married to chiefs!" Research into the Colonial Records of Pennsylvania concerning the Indian village Shamokin also turned up nothing.

Could Mary have been taken from the southern Adams County area, as stated by Lizzie Carpenter in her original account of the abduction? Research by Mr. Beckman and myself failed to determine that fact.

One can only theorize how George Lowman, a Virginian, and Mary met. In addition, and as learned from Mr. Beckman's research of Virginia records, George was a wagon driver,. They may have met during his travels, and he may have taken her to Virginia, where they reared their family. If she were originally from Adams County, it may explain why she and her family moved from Berkeley County to Adams County in the late 1790's. George appears for the first time in the Hamiltonban Township, Adams County, tax list in the fall of 1798 for the 1799 tax year. In August of 1801, part of Hamiltonban Township, where the Lowman family resided, became Liberty Township.

Mr. Beckman's research has helped to determine a timeline of Mary's life, but her maiden name remains unknown.

Notes

1. Samuel P. Bates, *History of Adams County, Pennsylvania* (Chicago, Warner, Beers & Co, 1886), 303
2. Elizabeth Isabelle Carpenter, who apparently preferred to be known as Lizzie based upon my research of her life, was born in 1850 near Gettysburg, daughter of Dr. John Carpenter and Mary Ann Elderdice. Lizzie worked in Martinsburg, West Virginia, as an associate editor of the *Martinsburg Herald*. Possessed of considerable literary skills, she contributed to various newspapers and magazines. Possibly through her position with the *Herald* she became aware of Mr. Stahle's columns.
3. Author unknown, *Portrait and Biographical Album of Sumner County, Kansas* (Chicago: Chapman Bros., 1890), 380
4. York Heritage Trust Library/Archives, York, Pennsylvania
5. C. E. Schildknecht, *Monocacy and Catoclin* (Shippensburg, Pennsylvania: Beidel Printing House, Inc., 1985), 1:195