



Winter 2014 Issue

Sandy Flash

From Ann Hagerty's book "Once Upon A Time In New Garden Township"

The fictional character, "Sandy" Flash, immortalized by Bayard Taylor, supposedly left his mark on Chandlerville* about this time (1860). Together with his "wife," Debbie, he waylaid wagons and robbed drivers and passengers as they travelled Penn Green Road. His hideout was a house that stood on the high bank at Penn Green and Laurel Woods Roads, later known as the residence of Dr. Pearson. He could enter a cave that was under his cellar and travel under the road to the edge of the Creek or to the edge of the road where he did his dirty work! There really was such a cave, but it was filled with stone when Laurel Bridge was built, and the passageway was sealed. The house burned later and collapsed walls have filled the cellar. Honeysuckle and brambles hide any remains from all but the most perceptive eyes.

According to Futhey and Cope in their "History of Chester County," the characters of "Sandy" Flash and Debbie may have been based on the lives of James Fitzpatrick and Mordecai Dougherty who roamed throughout Chester County in 1777-1778, supposedly the terror of Whig citizens of the County. James Fitzpatrick, known as Captain Fitch or Fitz served his apprenticeship with John Passmore of Doe Run as a "bound boy." He went to work at his trade, blacksmithing. After several years passed, he joined a militia company and served in the Revolutionary War, but deserted and returned to Chester County. Arrested and taken to Philadelphia for imprisonment, he was freed when he agreed to return to the militia. He used this only as a means to obtain freedom and soon deserted again, once more reappearing in Chester County where he chased off would-be captors with a gun, and continued mowing a field he had begun earlier.

Fitzpatrick joined General Howe when he landed at Head of Elk, either to get revenge for being arrested, or because he was a Tory at heart. He continued with the Army to Philadelphia and, sometimes, captured Whigs and took them within British lines. Mordecai Dougherty, probably a boyhood friend, for he had also been brought up near Doe Run, assisted him. "Cap'n Fitz" stayed behind when the British left Philadelphia and carried on his own war with Chester County - Whigs being his prey. Stories of his escapades are many. Supposedly not a covetous man, he never wronged the weak or helpless, and frequently gave to the poor what he removed from the rich. He was eventually captured and imprisoned in Chester, but filed off his irons and escaped. He

had been due to hang. Caught once more, he was taken to Philadelphia where he broke his handcuffs twice in one night. He is described as an "uncommonly fine-looking man, of tall and commanding appearance, very strong and athletic and swift of foot. His hair was red; his complexion florid." His escape attempts in Philadelphia were thwarted and he was duly hung. Mordecai Dougherty disappeared, his fate unknown.

* Chandlerville was later renamed Landenberg.

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