

WALKED 100 MILES TO SAFETY

CARPENTER FAMILY HEROINE ESCAPED INDIANS WHO KILLED HER HUSBAND AND SON

(Epistle Item #1690 in the January, 1984 issue contained separate queries on the family of Christina/Christianna (Carpenter) Finch Wood, submitted by James L. Emerson, 3162 Madeira Ave., Costa Mesa, CA 92626, and by James H. Gordon, N 2504 Stevens St., Spokane, WA 99205. In commenting in print, your editor suggested the two contact each other. They have since done so. The following biographical sketch was forwarded by James Gordon, who reports much of the information was furnished by James Emerson. Mr. Emerson descends from Christianna/Christian/Christina (Carpenter) Finch Wood through her son, Isaac Finch, and his wife, Eunice (Rosecrans) Finch. Mr. Gordon descends from Rev. Gilbert Carpenter, #355 in Amos Carpenter's 1898 genealogy of the Rehoboth, Mass. branch of the family.)

Christianna Carpenter was born ca. 1737 at Jamaica, Queens County, Long Island, New York, a daughter of Benjamin Carpenter and his wife, Mary. She married, about 1753, John Finch, who was born 1735/36 at Waywanda (later called Goshen), Orange County, New York.

Just prior to the start of the Revolutionary War, John, Christianna and their children migrated to the Wyoming Valley (today's Luzerne County in northeastern Pennsylvania), where John engaged in milling and farming. They probably resided near Kingston where, it is believed, Christianna's brother, Benjamin Carpenter, and his wife, the former "Polly" Ferrier, resided at that time.

In the early part of July, 1778, the Wyoming Valley was attacked by a combined force of English troops, Tories and Indians, and the settlers were defeated in what is known in history as the battle and massacre of the Wyoming Valley. After the battle, the Tories and Indians engaged in a massacre that almost de-peopled the entire valley. During this terrible and bloody series of events, John Finch, husband of Christianna, was slain. Their 15-year-old son, Benjamin Finch, was scalped and killed near Shoemaker's Mill. Most of these atrocities were committed by "Queen Esther" and her Seneca Indians as revenge for the death of her son. She personally engaged in the carnage and gave no quarter. Isaac Finch, a mere boy and son of Christianna, was taken captive and held for six years before being released. There may have been another son who was taken captive, but this has not been verified.

The names John Finch, Benjamin Finch and Daniel Finch, along with many others, are inscribed on a Wyoming, Pa. monument dedicated to those slain on 3 July 1778 at the battle of Wyoming Valley. This Daniel Finch may have been a brother of John.

Three others closely associated with the Carpenter/Finch families who were killed at Wyoming Valley were:

- 1) According to Williams T. Blair's *The Michael Shoemaker Book*, Lieut. Elijah Shoemaker was killed and mutilated by the infamous Tory, Windecker. This killing was witnessed by Benjamin Carpenter and his brother-in-law, Anning Owen, while they were hiding in brush on the river bank. Later, Benjamin Carpenter became legal guardian of Elijah Shoemaker Jr.
- 2) Henry Pensel, father of Catherine (Pensel) Carpenter, was shot and killed by his brother, John Pensel, who was a Tory, while on his knees pleading for his life. He was unarmed. This killing was witnessed by Giles Slocum, who was in hiding. Slocum later reported this to General Zebulon Butler, commander of the defeated patriotic forces. Catherine Pensel was the wife of Gilbert Carpenter Jr. This account is from *The Fate of a Nation* by William P. Cummings and Hugh F. Rankin.
- 3) Captain Dethick Hewitt was killed or murdered during the massacre that followed the battle of Wyoming Valley. He was the father of Elizabeth Hewitt, who married James Carpenter.

Christianna (Carpenter) Finch narrowly escaped with her life. She managed to assemble a group of small children and, in a group of about fifty people, they made their way on foot back to safety in Orange County, N.Y.

This escape is best described in the pension application of Harmon Coykendall, a Revolutionary soldier and, later, father-in-law of Christianna's grandson, Isaac Finch. (Continued on page 20.)

"The Epistle" Vol X #6 Sept 1984

## CARPENTER FAMILY HEROINE ESCAPED INDIANS WHO KILLED HER HUSBAND & SON (cont'd)

Here is his account:

The next spring I went to Wilksburg (Wilkes-Barre) in Wyoming, and during the summer did not leave arms. In April 1778, I was enrolled and called into active service, and remained in a company under the command of Captain Samuel Gore, and was stationed at a fort called Fort Rosencranse, the headquarters of General Butler. Was employed as a guard on the fort, until a day or two before the battle of Wyoming, they abandoned Fort Rosencranse and went to Forty Fort. On the day of the battle (Wyoming) I was placed as sentry on the bank of the river, about 400 yards below the fort. Saw the troops march out to battle, of whom only about 72 or 73 returned. The residue were either killed or taken prisoners. The next day, before the fort capitulated, I, with a company of four or five men, women and children, making a company of about fifty persons, made our way through settlements in New York. Almost in a state of starvation we traveled through the woods 33 miles to the first house. With great suffering and hardship we made our way to the Delaware River and to Orange County, New York.

The total distance they traveled was about one hundred miles.

On 10 Jan. 1779 Christianna married secondly--as his second wife--Richard Wood. He was born in 1733 and died in 1810. Apparently Christianna did not again marry as a letter written 24 Feb. 1822 by Charles Carpenter, son of Benjamin and Mary (Ferrier) Carpenter, says he visited "your affectionate sister Christian Wood, then blind but enjoying good health and in possession of the Pearl of Great Price."

Christianna died 5 July 1825 at Goshen, Orange County, N.Y. It is presumed that she is buried there. Christianna was a great-great-granddaughter of immigrants William and Abigail (Bennet) Carpenter of Rehoboth, Mass.

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James Gordon also has the ancestry of Christianna Carpenter's husband, John<sup>5</sup> Finch (Isaac<sup>4</sup>, Abraham<sup>3</sup>, Isaac<sup>2</sup>, John<sup>1</sup>. John<sup>1</sup> Finch came to America with the "Winthrop Fleet" in 1630 and settled at Watertown, Mass.

SOURCES: From the records (1949) of Ralph D. Finch of Pompey, N.Y., who died in 1984; they are located in the Los Angeles Public Library. *History of Orange Co., N.Y.*, by E. M. Rutenber & L. H. Clark, published 1881 by Everts & Peck, Philadelphia. *The Michael Shoemaker Book*, by William T. Blair. Amos B. Carpenter's 1898 *Carpenter Memorial*. *Finch-Ashley American Frontiersmen*, 1978, Gateway Press, Baltimore, Md.

