

Mrs. Frazer's

Philadelphia Campaign

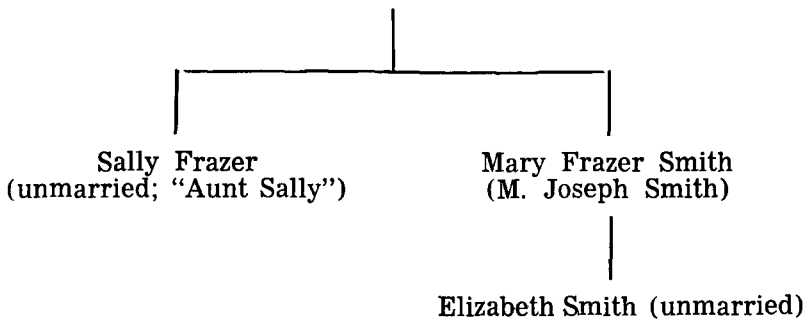
Samuel R. Slaymaker II

FOREWORD

I am indebted to distant relatives, Mr. and Mrs. R. R. Slaymaker of Cleveland, Ohio for sending me the original manuscript that made this piece possible. The manuscript was written by one Elizabeth Smith of Chester County, Pennsylvania (unmarried, died 1885). She was a granddaughter of Gen. and Mrs. Persifer Frazer who played an active part of the Philadelphia Campaign of 1777-78. Mrs. Frazer recounted her story to granddaughter, Elizabeth Smith on August 17, 1822. It probably was not written until September 11, 1840 (the 63rd anniversary of the battle) when Elizabeth's Aunt Sally wrote or dictated an account which is included with Elizabeth's.

Mary Frazer had a large family but the only offspring bearing on the story are as follows:

Colonel and Mrs. Persifer Frazer



Parenthetically, another daughter, Mary Ann Frazer, married Joseph Smith's brother, Jonathan. Their daughter, Anna Maria Smith married Samuel Robert Slaymaker, son of Samuel Slaymaker, Amos Slaymaker's brother. Amos was my great, great, great grandfather. Mr. R. R. Slaymaker of Cleveland is a direct descendant of Amos Slaymaker's brother, Samuel. This memoir descended to him from Anna Maria Smith Slaymaker who in turn had received it from her mother, Mary Ann Frazer.

My sincere thanks are tendered to Clyde C. Groff and F. C. Markert of Lancaster, Pa. for helping me to locate the site of the Thornbury farm, to Jim Kinter of the Lancaster Intelligencer Journal for his columns about my article and to Hugh Bonner, Esq., present owner of Thornbury, for his permitting me to visit the property together with his helpfulness throughout this project.

A debt of gratitude is owed Mr. and Mrs. Minturn E. Wright, III of Chester Springs and Mrs. Wright's mother and father, Mr. and Mrs. Richard K. Stevens of Philadelphia for their assistance in photographing the Frazer sugar caster now owned by Mrs. Stevens, a descendant of General Frazer. Also to Mrs. Mary Cox Muir of Philadelphia for preparing the map. As always, thanks to my wife, Sally, for her dedicated work at our typewriter.

S. R. Slaymaker, II
"White Chimneys"
Gap, Penna.

June 24, 1970

MRS. FRAZER'S PHILADELPHIA CAMPAIGN

In the summer of 1777 Pennsylvania's rough-hewn Presbyterian pulpits echoed anglophobic thunderings. Ministers drilled with militia companies, drawn largely from their own congregations. Typical was John Woodhull of Leacock Church in Lancaster County who raised his own battalion, the Leacock VII, and marched with it to Brandywine. Later, at Monmouth Court House, he served a cannon when its gunner was wounded.

Given the maltreatment visited on their ancestors in Ireland by the Anglican Church, along with their conviction that the Penns granted them mostly undesirable and unprotected (from Indians) western land, Pennsylvania's Scots-Irish came by their anti-crown bias naturally.

In the picture-neat red brick city of Philadelphia respectable burghers came by their pro-crown bias just as naturally. With stakes economic, social and political in the largest metropolis in the British Empire, many—perhaps most—saw the Revolution as a potential leveling movement. Pietistic Quakers and proper Anglicans hated and feared the quarrelsome, whiskey drinking Scots-Irish to the west. This long simmering conflict had brought Pennsylvania to the brink of civil war a decade before Concord and Lexington.

Prosperous Quaker and Anglican farmers on the western environs of Philadelphia were generally of like mind; so much so that General Washington is reported to have believed that all Chester countians were Tories. Indeed, his preoccupation with area Tories contributed to his defeat at Brandywine. But, ironically, at one point in the battle, advice from a native who was one of his officers, might have saved the day for the Americans.

Lt. Colonel Persifer Frazer's father, John, emigrated from Scotland to Chester County in 1735. He founded a shipping firm in Philadelphia and grew prosperous from West Indian trading. Persifer, born in 1736, entered the business at an early age. He had substantial means when he married dowry-laden Mary Worrall Taylor in 1766.

On the death of Mary Taylor's Quaker father, a rich land owner and iron master, her mother married John Pierce, a strict Quaker. Pierce bitterly opposed his step-daughter's marrying "out of meeting". But strong willed Mary married Persifer and turned Presbyterian.

Persifer Frazer succeeded to the ownership of the Worrall Forges, invested in one of his own, and built "Thornbury", naming it after the township in which the handsome fieldstone manor house was located. Much of his wide acreage was in timbered high ground while Quaker neighbors' farms encompassed richer bottom land.

This, together with his breach with Quaker inlaws, was probably responsible for a reportedly anti-Quaker bias which rendered Persifer archtypical of his breed. But in other respects he was untypical of Pennsylvania's Scots-Irish. Persifer had wealth, and being a born leader, the respect of his Tory neighbors. And his rebel sympathies probably sprang less from religious convictions than from economic considerations. Colonial maritime traders were continually at odds with the London government's protectionist navigation laws. So it was natural for Frazer to be a signer of the Non-Importation Resolutions of the merchants of Philadelphia in 1756.



"Thornbury" in the 1890's. Courtesy of Mrs. Richard K. Stevens of Philadelphia.

Persifer's early association with the American cause was manifest in his being named in 1774 to carry Chester County's revolutionary resolutions to the Continental Congress. He heeded the call of his good friend, Anthony Wayne, for officers, was commissioned a captain on January 4, 1776, and was put in charge of Company A of the 4th Pennsylvania Battalion. Captain Frazer served in the Long Island campaign and saw action at Three Rivers and around Crown Point. In the spring of 1777 he was elevated to Major. After more action at New Brunswick, he was put in command of troops at Chester, Pennsylvania.



The remains of Thornbury, Glen Mills, Pa. Now the property of Hugh Bonner, Esq., Media, Pa.

In spring, 1777, the British set in motion their master plan to split New England from the middle and southern colonies. General John Burgoyne's army set off from Canada towards Albany via Lake Champlain and the Hudson Valley. General Sir William Howe, in firm control of New York, was expected by Washington to move north to link up with Burgoyne. But the Americans could not be

certain. For Howe loaded 18,000 troops and horses on the 320 ships of his brother, Admiral Lord Howe and sailed from Sandy Hook on July 23. The Howe brothers' armada was sighted off the Delaware Capes a week later. A curious position this from which to aid Burgoyne. Perhaps Charleston would be invested; or was an attack on Philadelphia imminent? If so, would it come from the Delaware Bay or the Chesapeake?

Howe had orders from London to take Philadelphia. He meant to come up the Delaware but was dissuaded by reports of navigational impediments. New orders from London instructed him to go to Burgoyne's aid. But he received these at sea, when effective re-directing of his forces was no longer possible. Not knowing where the blow would fall, Washington deployed and redeployed troops as first one threat seemed paramount and then another. The American command had settled on Charleston shortly before Lord Howe's sails were sighted in Chesapeake Bay late in August.

The British army disembarked at Head of Elk, 50 miles southwest of Philadelphia on August 25 and began its march north on September 8. On the ninth, the American army of 15,000 took positions along the eastern banks of the Brandywine creek, the logical barrier to the British advance on Philadelphia roughly twenty miles to the east.

The Chester Road (the main route to Philadelphia) met the Brandywine at Chadds Ford. Washington, convinced that the van of the British army would attack here, placed his center at the ford and manned it with his best troops. Frazer, now a Colonel serving under Wayne, was stationed there. Since it was only five miles southwest of "Thornbury", he was afforded the unusual luxury of his own bed and board before going into battle.

During Tuesday, September 9, when earth-work fortifications were built at Chadd's, Colonel Frazer probably was with his troops; and on Wednesday, too. For the British were reported in Kennett Square on Wednesday morning. Kennett was only eight miles to the west. An attack seemed probable on Thursday. Colonel Frazer did not want to forego what well might have been his last night with his family. So he stayed at "Thornbury" Wednesday night.

On Thursday morning, September 11, 1777, in a dense fog, Colonel Frazer left to join his troops. His children went to school. But about 9:30 rifle fire clattered in the Chadd's area and the teachers were alarmed enough to send them home. Mary Frazer, anxious to determine the course of battle, mounted her horse and was off. She stayed out all day.

Howe's march from Kennett Square had begun in the small hours of Thursday morning. Advance American calvary scouts met their British counterparts at Welch's Tavern, near Kennett Square on the Chester Road. Shots were exchanged. An American detachment was sent across the Brandywine to harrass advance British

elements. It was the resulting musketry that broke up her children's classes and caused Mary Frazer to sally forth.

Mary Frazer rode in the direction of Chadds Ford. What with the well-timbered terrain on both banks and the fog it was unlikely that she saw the American advance detachment's withdrawal to their eastern bank. But by mid-morning the fog had burned off. Had Mrs. Frazer found an open promintory on either side of the Ford, she would have seen the meandering green valley's primordial splendor bespattered with color. Gray homespuns worn by eastern militia troops blended with the buckskins of western riflemen into a tawny mass flecked by bright blues, whites, yellows and reds of Continental Regulars. Opposite the Americans, she could have glimpsed a vividly colored tableau as kilted Scots, scarlet coated English and Hessians in blue and gold formed, their burnished arms glistening through foliage.

In his headquarters house a mile and a half behind the American center General Washington had a better grasp of the situation than neighborhood spectators. But not much better. For while he knew that General Van Knyphusen had about 5,000 men opposite his center, Washington had conflicting reports about the disposition of Howe's remaining forces, the approximately 8,000 troops under Lord Cornwallis. Word from observers upstream was that Howe had split his army. Washington thought this so foolish as to be unbelievable. He remained preoccupied with his keystone defenses at Chadd's Ford. Had Mary Frazer scouted the west bank, upstream, she might have detected Howe's massive flanking movement. One of her good friends did just that. As Mary later put it:

"Thomas Cheney Esquire, a good staunch whig, but withal a plain blunt country farmer, when he heard the firing that morning, thrust his saddle on his horse and rode off towards Birmingham without dressing himself at all. Had neither coat nor stockings on. He knew the country well and rode about the hills until he saw the main body of the enemy marching up on the west side of the river, when he rode full speed to where General Washington was stationed and told him. He also informed him that they could not cross until they passed the forks in which time Washington could have a party up; two hundred would he said be sufficient to stop them in the narrow defile they must pass through in coming down on this side. The General did not seem to give evidence to the information, as his aids had been out and brought in no such report—moreover, Washington could not tell whether Cheney was friend or foe, as his appearance was the same as the great body of Tories in the country. The dear old Whig's feelings were wrought up to a great pitch so that he fairly trembled when he said, 'If Anthony Wayne or Persi Frazer were here you would know whether to believe me or not,' and as the people about the General seemed to look rather sneeringly at him he thought, he clenched his hands and said, 'I have this day's work so much at heart e'er a *Blood* of you.' . . ."



Hugh Bonner, Esq. examines interior of remains of Frazer home.

If Washington had ordered Colonel Frazer back to headquarters to face Farmer Cheyney, the British might well have suffered a major defeat. But he was obviously as obsessed with local Tories as he was immersed in the details of communicating with upstream outposts. So this priceless opportunity went unseized. American forces at Chadd's Ford waited into a hot afternoon for Von Knyphusen's attack.

All the while Sir William Howe and Lord Cornwallis, who had started earlier than Von Knyphusen, were moving their 8,000 men northwards, along the west bank. By mid-afternoon they had reached the forks of the Brandywine three miles above Chadd's Ford. After crossing both branches the red and white hoard rested on rolling meadows on the American east side. But word soon filtered downstream. The American northern wing of three divisions was swung from the stream, hastily, into blocking positions in the vicinity of Birmingham Meeting House.

The British flanking attack began at four-fifteen, to the tune of band music and a fearsome cannon barrage directed at the assembling Americans. Von Knyphusen took his cue from the north and unleashed a brisk cannonade, signalling his long awaited attack at Chadd's.

If Mary Frazer confined her scouting to the American side, as

mortal danger for the rest of the afternoon, Yet her recollections reveal no apprehension. Possibly she was unaware of the implications of the bloody engagement that swirled around Birmingham; that this battle on two collapsing fronts could have engulfed her and her husband.

Thanks to a determined holding action by Generals Sterling and Stephen the Americans were spared a complete rout. But haste in redeployment resulted in sloppily drawn lines. British bayonets, wielded against both American wings carried the day.

Down at Chadd's Ford Colonel Frazer faced a frightening sight as Von Knyphusen unleashed his infantry. Highlanders and redcoats pushed into the water. A blue and gold mass of Hessians followed. American General Proctor's artillery bellowed at them. From behind their earth works riflemen poured volleys into the red mass of screaming, cursing Britishers. As shots sucked whistling water spouts around them, some struggled and plunged into the stream. But most pressed forward, holding weapons overhead to keep them dry. In minutes the van was in the east bank, plunging bayonets into hapless canoneers and riflemen as sounds of rumbling artillery and crackling muskets grew ominously louder in the north and to the rear.

The retreat from Chadd's Ford was not so rapid as to prevent Colonel Frazer's lending a helping hand to a wounded Britisher. The soldier had taken shot in his back, a fact that was to bemuse Colonel Frazer in his later recollections. He got the man on his horse and walked by his side to the Seven Stars Tavern. There he put the soldier in a wagon bound for Chester, where the retreating American army was to bivouac.

Colonel Frazer did not go to Chester immediately. So anxious was he to join his family that he rode directly for six miles from the Seven Stars to "Thornbury". He left his coat hanging on the stair railing. His eight year old daughter, Sally, later recalled getting up early the next morning and "seeing my father's regimental coat all stained and dubbed with blood; I set up the murder shout as I thought he must be dead. Oh, my daddy's killed, my poor daddy's killed," she cried. Turning, she found her awakened father behind her.

"Thornbury" was anything but a safe place for Colonel Frazer. For British troops and the now emboldened Tories were in control of the neighborhood. American militiamen reported that the British were looking for him. So he left to reconnoiter early on Friday, September 12. Later two well-dressed gentlemen arrived at "Thornbury" and asked if they could spend the night. Mary Frazer put them up.

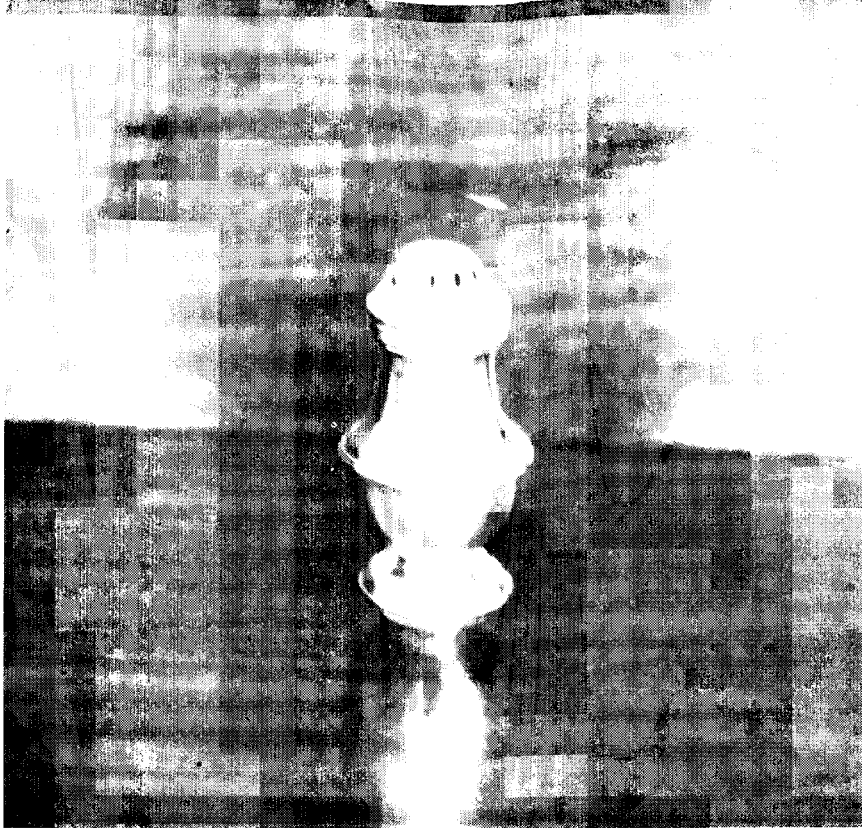
On August 29, when the area was being prepared for battle, baggage for two regiments were stored at "Thornbury". Arms were removed before the battle, but boxes and uniforms remained. Col-

onel Frazer returned Friday evening. Mary, relating the events to her granddaughter, Elizabeth Smith in 1822 said . . . "It was late and the strangers had gone to bed. Harvey, an Irishman, your grandfather's body servant, in carrying the saddles upstairs struck the stirrups and girths as he stepped and the noise awakened the strangers who called asking who had come. The servant said his master had come home, and they rose immediately, went out, saddled their horses and before anyone knew of it they were off. Your grandfather thought they must have been some dreadful good-for-nothing Tories."

Obviously, they were. For on Saturday morning, September 13, a large British force in quest of the baggage invested Thornbury. Luckily, Colonel Frazer was reconnoitering in the Chester area. Mary Frazer's account continues:

"I had been afraid of the British coming to the house, and had sent many things I had of his among some vines in the garden, and in some bushes in the woods. In the morning, after Col. Frazer had gone, as I sat carding and spinning wool, we heard wagons coming down the road over yonder hill. It was covered with woods and we could not see on the top of it as we do now. I thought that they might be American wagons coming to take the baggage away, what was here, belonging to the Regiments. Major Christy watched for them to come out of the woods, and seeing that the drivers wore rifle shirts still thought they were our people. At length they approached nearer, he discovered that they were British, just in time to give the alarm, send one of the colored boys to Uncle Iac Vernons, (Cheyneys now), and escape with the children, Aunt Nancy Frazer and Polly follows into the woods, where they hid among the branches of a large tree that had been felled. The boy was sent for a party of Riflemen, who had been at the place the night before, but unfortunately had left early in the morning. I was in the house alone except for the black girl, who took the large cheeses and threw them over the fence among some weeds and briars. I sat carding my rolls to pieces when a British officer, though not the commander of the party, entered accosted me in broad Scotch with 'Where are the damned rebels?' In those days when I was frightened, I always became angry. Since then I have often thought I did wrong to exasperate them. I did however always say everything against them I could. So I said to him that I knew no Rebels — there was not a Scotchman about the place. At this the fellow flew into a great rage, and used very abusive language.

"Many of the soldiers were now in the house ransacking all the lower part of it. One had gone into the cellar and brought up a barrel of salt; (both armies were at this time much in need of it and it was very scarce and valuable). He thought he had brought up all, but he missed a bushel that was in a barrel hidden under some old beer bottles. What they got the soldiers tied up in bags and put in their pockets, and a great deal they gave to their horses.



Silver sugar caster, the property of Mrs. Richard K. Stevens, 7613 Huron St., Philadelphia, Pa., a descendant of Gen. Frazer. Mary Frazer is said to have hidden the caster in the well during the British occupation of Thornbury.

“The Commander of the party (which consisted of 200 foot and 50 horses) now came up. He divided the horses into two companies standing at considerable distance from the house, but so as to surround it completely. They were in great fear lest the American riflemen who they heard were in the neighborhood should surprise them. They had seen Major Christy as they came up the hill, go into the woods, knew the American uniform, and the thought that he might be one of a party not very far off did not tend to lessen their fear. They had also a line of sentinels placed within their line of horses. The alarm that had been given by the black boy brought a number of my friends and neighbors to the spot. When I saw them with my servants, for my other black had joined them, I thought it the hardest things that not one of them in my great difficulty and distress came near to say a word to me, for I did not know then what prevented them.

"After these arrangements had been completed Capt. DeWest, the commander, (he was captain of the guards and ranked equal with a Col.) came into the house just as one of the men was going to strike me. They had got at the liquor and were drunk. The officer was obliged to drive them off with his sword. However, as I said, the Captain came in and said he had heard the house was full of arms and ammunition and asked me to open the door leading upstairs. (He was afraid there was someone on the stairs that would shoot him.) I told him that I knew of no ammunition in the house and that if he wanted the door opened he might do it himself. He then opened the case of the clock expecting to find money in it. He found an old musket with the lock broken off. This he jammed up into the works of the clock and broke them all to pieces. He then insisted that I should open the stair door for him and I persisted in refusing to do so, he was obliged to open it himself. He then told me to show him everything that belonged to me and that it should not be touched, which I did. Yet he went to your grandfather's desk, took his flute and music books and a silver handled whip of mine that belonged to my grandmother Taylor, and a large French Bible and several other French books, saying he had just been wanting a new riding whip. I took it out of his hand, told him that he could take it from me if he chose, but that it was an old family piece and that I did not want to part with it, and screwing the handle off I put it in my pocket and handed him the whip. He looked very queer but did not take it. When he saw the baggage that was packed in the chests and ammunition boxes, turning to me he said, 'you told me there was no ammunition in the house,' and breaking them open found only soldier clothes. Now it became a scene of pillage and confusion. They plundered the house, and what they could not carry away they destroyed. They took the beautiful swords worn by the officers on parade, and carried off the clothes. One man put on five shirts. While tearing about upstairs they took a suit of worsted plaid curtains of mine that belonged to a field bedspread. This they threw at poor Rachel, saying 'There nigger is a petticoat for you'. She, poor creature, being frightened nearly to death, thinking she was obliged to put them on, in the efforts got her head through a slit and became completely entangled, to their great amusement. They then went to the barn and took fifty bushels of wheat, that was threshed and in bags. This they took with them, and fed their horses with a great deal that was in sheaf. The next spring it came up thickly upon the bank in front of the house where they strewed it for horse feed. All our horses were taken away to catch a young mare that had never been broken. They turned her into the garden and she ran in among the vines where I had placed my papers—I was afraid they were gone, but the British did not find them and when, after their departure, I went to bring them in, I found them strewed about many yards from where I had put them. At length after doing all the mischief they dared, and taking all they could carry they went away; except a few stayed, for I forget what.

"The Captain as he was going away said, 'I had orders to take

Mr. Frazer prisoner and burn the house and barn, but these I give to you.' I replied 'I cannot thank you for what is my own, and if those were your orders you would not dare to disobey them.'

"After he had gone out a soldier came down stairs with a very handsome double reined bridle of mine. I told him to put it down for the Captain had said nothing of mine should be touched; that it was made for a lady and would be of no use to him if he took it. He very peaceably laid it down and going into the bedroom took from a dressing table, that stood nearby, a dressing box, throwing pin cushions, combs and so forth on the floor. He was walking away with the box. I told him to put it down where he got it, and if he offered to take it, I would call the Captain who was not yet out of sight or hearing. He walked straight back, replaced it all. He turned out and walked away.

"I was sorry to lose two little glass cream buckets with ladles. One of the men took them away. They were the most beautiful little things, I never saw any like them. My grandmother Taylor brought them from England.

"They took a large quantity of liquor, some belonging to us, and some to Aunt Sally Thompson, who had put it there to get it out of Mr. Jem's way.

"After they had all gone the family returned from their hiding place in the woods very hungry, and there was nothing to give them. There was not an individual morsel in the house except some meat that had been put on to boil for dinner and a few ears of corn the children had put in the pot for themselves, and the cheeses that had been thrown into the garden."

Elizabeth Smith noted that before Captain DeWest left Thornbury he told Mary Frazer that his government would offer "very high terms" to some of the American officers to induce them to join the British Army. "They would," he said, "receive commissions, the past would be overlooked, and a reward given besides." Colonel Frazer was one of the designated officers. She could "undoubtedly influence him," Captain DeWest said. The change would be to "her advantage and happiness". Mary replied, "You do not know Colonel Frazer or you would not undertake such a thing, nor would he listen to me if I should propose it; but if it were possible to persuade him, and he should consent to become a traitor to his country, I should never consent to have anything more to do with him."

Colonel Frazer persisted in stretching his luck by conducting scouting forays from the Blue Ball Tavern. On Monday, September 15, it ran out. Granddaughter Elizabeth Smith recounted Mary Frazer's story of the Colonel's capture:

"Four days after the battle of Brandywine my grandfather and Major Harper, being on a reconnoitering party a few miles from home, went into the Blue Ball tavern on the Chester Road where



Jim Kinter of the Lancaster Intelligencer Journal (left) examines a rear window of the home with Mr. Bonner, holding Frazer family history. Well, where sugar caster was hidden, is behind tree.

they were joined by Uncle Jake Nemon. They had not been long in the house when Major Harper, looking out of the window saw a number of horsemen coming up the road. Their uniform led him to think they were a party of Virginia riflemen. They proved to be the front of a considerable body of British coming up from the Seven Stars, commanded by General Grant, to join Cornwallis who was encamped near the South Valley Hill, on some of the fields belonging

ing to our Valley home, extending East nearly to the Three Turns Tavern. (A family named Derboro had a little ink stained table, which they said had been used by Cornwallis to write on, this house being his headquarters.) We will return to the Blue Ball. When the party there discovered their mistake, Uncle Jake Vernon jumped from the window and I think escaped after hiding in some brambles, and bushes among which he came to the ground. The others attempting to escape were fired upon, the house surrounded and they taken prisoners. Being deprived of their swords and horses, they were obliged to proceed with their captors on foot. Gen. Grant riding near my grandfather entered into conversation with him and after a while asked him his name—'Persifer Frazer—that is a Scotch name,' said the General (himself a Scotchman) 'and should not belong to a rebel'. 'England has called other men rebels who have resisted her government, besides those who resist it in America' was the reply. For that answer said the General you shall have your horse, and when it was brought he gave him his sword. Also, in the course of the conversation they made themselves out to be cousins. General Grant said his mother's name was Frazer, and she was cousin to our great-grandfather. This conversation took place as they were passing the Goshen Quaker Meeting House on the Chester Road, and they had not far to go before reaching the main body of the British on the South Valley Hill. Our army lay along the valley. General Washington's headquarters being at Malin's about two miles East of Cornwallis, where they were preparing to encounter the British in the morning. That night a heavy rain fell. Gen. Washington finding his ammunition completely wet, early in the morning moved with his army rapidly down the Swede's road, hoping to put the river between him and Cornwallis, who was in hot pursuit. The Schuylkill was much swollen by the recent rains and was rising fast as our people crossed. They were all over safely just as the advance of the enemy came in sight. When they reached the Ford the river was simply impassable. My own family always spoke of this as a special interposition of Providence for the rescue of our poor drenched pursued people. A battle in their condition would have been certain destruction. I have been told that General Washington looked upon his escape in the same light."

Colonel Frazer was prevented by this rainstorm from witnessing, from the British lines, another battle, possibly a climactic one. A head-on clash was shaping up in the area of the Lancaster Road and Goshen Meeting House. General Grant and his prisoner-relative evidently were in this neighborhood on their way into the British lines while storm clouds were forming. The storm which Elizabeth Smith described was reportedly one of the worst in the memory of its witnesses. Arms and ammunition were drenched. Both armies were rendered completely immobile. The Frazers had every reason to credit Divine intervention with making possible the American withdrawal across the dangerously swollen Schuylkill. And she might well have thanked Providence for her husband's capture.

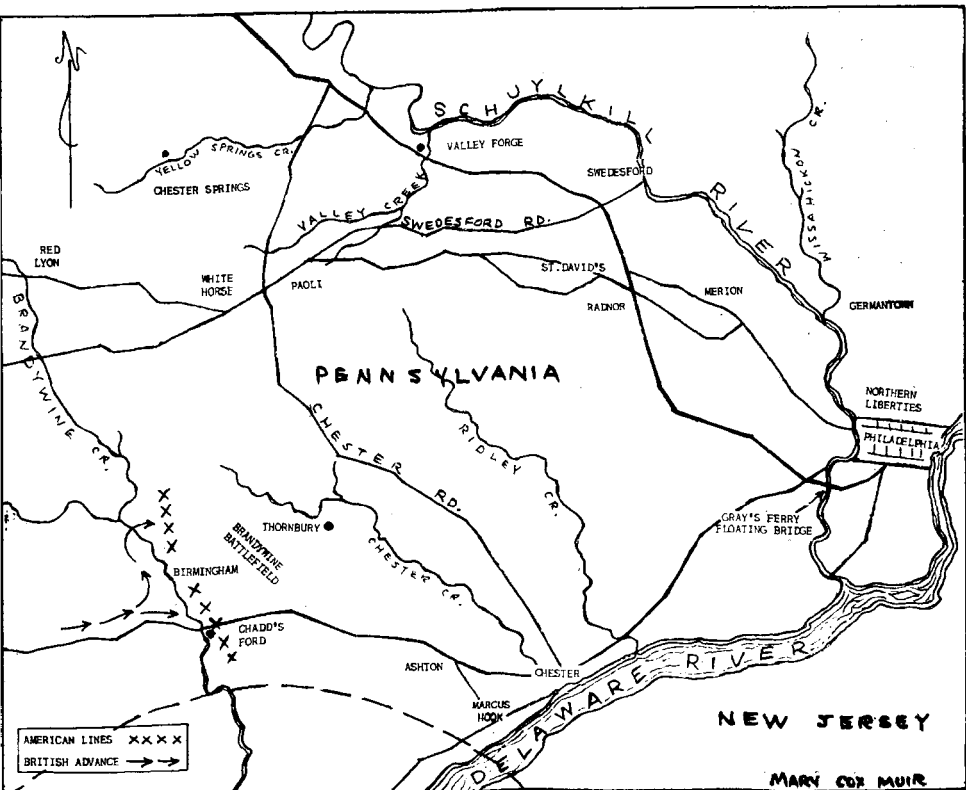
The van of the American Army crossed the Schuylkill on September 19. But Wayne's division was ordered to remain on the west side to harrass the British rear. On the night of the 20th, a large enemy force launched a bayonet attack on Wayne's encampment at Paoli—conveniently, for the British, silhouetted by its campfires. The British claimed 300 killed or wounded and 70 to 80 captured.

After two days of feinting and counter-feinting during which Washington emerged second best, Howe easily slipped his entire Army across the Schuylkill. His advance elements entered Philadelphia amid the cheers of thousands on September 26.

In Chester County that small band of hard pressed "Whigs," which Mary Frazer epitomized had finally seen the face of the enemy. At Brandywine it had seemed commanding; at Paoli, cruel. Undoubtedly, some revolutionaries slipped into neutralism. Others probably changed sides. But like Mary Frazer, a hard core stuck to the cause of Independence, buoyed up, at last, by a joyous wind-fall. On October 19, Burgoyne's large army surrendered at Saratoga. Mary could better bear her husband's captivity, described by granddaughter, Elizabeth Smith:

"During the time of her husband's imprisonment my grandmother having a pass from General Washington, went seven times to the city to see him. Mrs. Jenkins, a good whig and intimate friend of my grandmother, kept tavern at the sign of the Conestoga Wagon in Market Street above 4th Street on the South side. Whatever provision could be spared was brought from the farm in Thornbury to her. She as far as possible supplied my grandfather and his friends in prison with what would promote their comfort. Mrs. Gibbons, sister of Col. Hannum, and neighbor to my grandmother sometimes went to the city with her, making the same arrangement for the comfort of her brother. On one of these visits to the city, Aunt Sally went with her mother. The account she gave of her visit I will relate as nearly as possible in her own words. 'My mother was going to the city and the provision was packed on two horses, one of which I was to ride. I was not quite nine years old, but a good horsewoman. Everything—flour, eggs, chickens, meat, butter, cheese, fruit, was packed in saddle bags, and in large strong home-made towel linen wallets and these thrown across the saddle, the ends projecting far on each side. I rode a large black and you may think I looked pretty queer mounted above all this luggage. It was a warm day and though we left home before noon and our horses were strong and good travelers, it was nearly dark before we began to descend the hill to Darby. There we met an American officer on horseback who said he would not suffer us to pass, accusing your grandmother of carrying supplies into the city to the British, at the same time making complimentary speeches about her beauty. (She was the handsomest woman I ever saw.) She rebuked him for his impertinence which she said was unworthy of the uniform he wore, and insisted upon being allowed to pass, and attempting to do so,—as he caught her bridle rein to prevent it, she cut her horse with her

whip passing him to jump, when she freed the rein and again tried to pass on but finding him determined to detain her, produced her pass. After reading it he asked her pardon, seemed much mortified, and rode off very fast. We never knew who he was. After leaving Darby we soon entered the thick woods which extended from the river for several miles, and on the east side nearly to the corner of Sixth Street and Walnut where the new jail stood. We now began to meet companies of Hessian soldiery commanded by their officers, employed in cutting wood to supply the city with fuel. We had not gone far before daylight quite left us. The light from the torches which some of the Hessians carried showed them as frightful looking creatures. And light gleaming from their huts away off through the trees, made the surrounding darkness seem deeper. I never shall forget the impression the scene made upon me; the longest day I have to live. My mother did not seem afraid, she said the British were always glad to see provision going into the city. That if anyone troubled us, we should be protected by the sentinels stationed along the road. I thought some of the men looked fiercely and wickedly at us. We crossed the river at Grey's Ferry on a floating bridge. We had not spoken to anyone nor been spoken to till



we came here. The sentinels here questioned my mother, and then we passed on to our resting place at Mrs. Jenkins, who at once set herself about procuring a permit from General Howe for your grandmother to see her husband in the prison. This was no easy matter, and the delay caused by this difficulty kept us in Philadelphia till late on the second day after our arrival. It was obtained through an acquaintance of Mrs. Jenkins an American lady who was intimate with Gen. Howe, under a promise that her name should not appear. Your grandmother never knew who did her this great kindness. The morning after we came she was too much worn out to rise early. (It was time before the birth of the Patty that died.) Anxiety on my Father's account, the uncertainty of her being permitted to see him, the fatigue in preparing to leave home, and the ride in the heat and in the night, had been too much for her. I was up pretty soon, looking down the street, I saw a large body of British soldiers on parade. The sun just rising showed their arms, and bright uniforms, and the sight was a very brilliant one. I hated them so, I was so indignant that they should possess Philadelphia, and have my father in prison, that I cried and screamed and stamped with all my might, just with rage.

"After breakfast I went with Mrs. Jenkins to the prison to see my father. Across the wide hall that ran through the house from front to back, about mid-way was a heavy iron grating reaching from floor to ceiling. Back of the grating was a close screen, which did not reach the floor by several feet. In the back part of the hall the prisoners were allowed to walk and exercise, both doors, front and back, being open. Guards were placed at each door. Several gentlemen were walking backward and forward behind the screen. As we entered I instantly distinguished my father's feet and legs and cried out 'Oh! I see my Daddy's legs,' jumping up and down. Mrs. Jenkins and the people about thought I had gone crazy. The screen was removed and I saw and talked with my father through the grating."

During the early weeks of Colonel Frazer's captivity the British strengthened their hold on Philadelphia. Washington's daring attack on the British Army at Germantown proved abortive. American fortifications along the Delaware were steadily reduced by naval units and troops. By November, 1777, the Delaware was safe for British navigation.

Strategically the magnitude of American misfortunes was mitigated by two important factors: Burgoyne's surrender eliminated the threat from the north and signalled possible French intervention. And Washington had been able to keep his army intact.

While the British settled in for a festive winter in Philadelphia, Washington's battered army faced a white hell on the bleak hills around Valley Forge, seventeen miles to the west in a Chester County that was all but picked clean by both ravaging armies. Mary Frazer's Philadelphia campaign had just begun. In addition to the formidable task that was running "Thornbury", she addressed her-

self to the needs of American prisoners in Philadelphia and the wretched plight of soldiers at Valley Forge. Elizabeth Smith quoted her grandmother:

“From neglect and bad food and colds, the sufferings of the American prisoners during the winter the British held the city was severe. On one occasion Mrs. Gibbons and I went to Philadelphia, she to visit her brother, and I to see my husband. When I saw him he asked me if I could take a paper to General Washington (addressed to him and signed by the prisoners, officers and men too, I believe, describing their condition and some of the worm eaten bread upon which they fed,) to be shown to General Washington, who then was with the army at White Marsh. This I understood to do. In the morning after I had seen Col. Frazer, Mrs. Gibbons and myself mounted our horses and turned their heads homeward. At the Ferry there were persons whose business it was to search all who came from the City. Mrs. Gibbons and myself were taken into a room and two women came forward to undress us. Mrs. Gibbons declared they should not touch her and made so much fuss, kicking, slapping and scolding, that they were sure she had something to struggle for, and they undressed her even taking off her shoes and stockings. I had slipped the quilting of my petticoat and put the pieces of bread all around and sewed up the hem. I did not feel at all comfortable at the prospect of being searched, but tired out with the trouble they had had for nothing, the women came to me, (I had kept very still) and saying “This one has nothing worth looking at, or she would not be so quiet,” scarcely examined anything about me. After searching our saddles, we were allowed to go on our way. Though I had preserved my composure, I was far from feeling unconcerned. I thought of my little children at home, without any Father or Mother, if I should be detained. I thought of the business at home, with no one to attend to it; what would become of our living? But most of all I thought of the poor prisoners. If their efforts should be discovered and frustrated, not only would there be nothing done to lessen their sufferings, but the rigor of their confinement would be no doubt greatly increased. I took a very long breath after we were safely over the river. It was afternoon when I got home. I took something to eat, changed my dress and had my saddle put on a fresh horse. It rained hard during the afternoon and when I came to Swedes Ford where I crossed the Schuylkill, it was quite dark. There was a large house not far from the Ford, a tavern or Ferry house. I rode up to it intending to ask for help to guide me over the Ford. Light came from all the windows. The place seemed full of soldiers, drinking, carousing and swearing. I hesitated, was afraid to call, and rode down to the Ford, but was afraid to attempt to cross in the dark a Ford I was not used to. So after sitting on my horse on the bank for a while I determined to return to the house. I found the soldiers were some of our own, and seeing a man at the door, I asked him to request the Commanding Officer of the part to come to me. He did so, and when he came he proved to be a gentlemen that I knew. He ordered his horse saddled and crossed the

river with me, keeping hold of my rein. The river was rising and the current very strong. The water was above my saddle girth. I saw General Washington next morning at headquarters. General Lafayette and some other officers were with him when I was introduced. I gave him the paper with the bread. The statement of the suffering condition of the prisoners moved him very much. He asked me some questions relating to the business, and I came away. He sent a gentleman with me to see me across the river. General Washington immediately communicated with Howe respecting the treatment of American prisoners in Philadelphia and their condition was somewhat improved. They never were treated as they ought to have been."

Elizabeth Smith picked up the narrative:

"During the severe and terrible winter when our army lay at Valley Forge, enduring almost incredible privations and sufferings, my grandma told me she had ridden day after day collecting from neighbors and friends far and near whatever they could spare for the comfort of the destitute soldiers. The blankets and yarn and half worn clothes thus obtained she brought to her own house, where they would be patched and darned and made wearable and comfortable, the stockings newly footed or new ones knit, adding what clothing she could give of her own. She often sat up half the night, sometimes all to get clothing ready. Then with it, and whatever could be obtained for food, she would have packed on her horse and set out on her cold lonely journey to the camp, which she went to repeatedly during the winter on the same errand. More than 300 pairs of stockings were in this way prepared and taken to the camp, besides a great deal of clothing and food. While riding she could trace the way the foraging parties from the camp had taken by the marks of bleeding feet on the snow.

"All the cloth and linen that my grandfather wore during the war were spun at home, most of it by her own hands. All the clothing of the family (and it was not a small one) during this time was made at home except the weaving. All the business of every kind she attended to, farm, Iron Works, and domestic matters.—In summer as soon as it was light, she had her horse saddled, rode over the farm and directed the men about their work. Often rode down to the creek where Sharpless Iron Works are now, and was back at breakfast time to give her attention and toil to the children, servants, and household affairs. I saw her ride on horseback after she was 80 years old and rode well, too.

"My grandfather Smith said on one occasion, when he went to Valley Forge with a load of unthreshed wheat, the soldiers snatched it from the wagon nibbling it from the chaff in their hands devoured the grain. They were nearly famished."

After six months in prison Col. Frazer escaped. Elizabeth Smith continued:



Clyde C. Groff, Lancaster County historian, examines Frazer family history with Mr. Bonner.

“When Philadelphia was occupied by General Howe, the American prisoners of war were confined in the new jail at the corner of 6th and Walnut Streets. During the winter the jail fever broke out and they were lodged in different parts of the city. My grandfather with Major Harper and Col. Harmon were taken to the White Swan Tavern on 3rd Street above Market Street and put on parole. Notwithstanding this, the doors of their sitting room was kept locked and a guard placed over them. Their windows too were barred. I think by this violation of Military Law, they felt themselves re-

leased from the obligation of parole. On St. Patrick's Day, the Irish sentinels got drunk and the prisoners escaped from their rooms and climbing over a stone wall at the back of the house, went to the house of Mr. Frazer, a distant relation of my Grandfather, who lived in Front Street below Pine Street. Here and at Mr. Blackstone's, a friend of Grandpa's who lived in the same neighborhood, they were concealed, though in great danger of being discovered, for some time. On one occasion they were hid in a deep closet behind shelves upon which china was so arranged as to conceal them from persons who were searching the house for them, and who opened and looked into the China Closet. After three days of concealment, Mr. Blackstone secured a boat and in it at night they crossed the Delaware with great difficulty and at great risk, and somehow managed to join our army. It was reported by the British that they had broken their parole and escaped and Howe demanded of General Washington that they should be returned, but upon investigation the circumstances were known and the demand was withdrawn."

After his escape on March 17, 1778, Persifer Frazer reported to Washington and was returned to duty as Lt. Colonel. In June, 1778, the British left Philadelphia for New York. The Americans harrassed Howe's army into a full-scale engagement at Monmouth Court House in New Jersey. But Howe's forces were able to effect a successful withdrawal to New York. Colonel Frazer served with distinction at Monmouth. He continued in service at White Plains during the summer. On October 9, he submitted his resignation from the army.

Probable reasons for Colonel Frazer's resignation were mentioned in a memoir by Joseph S. Harris, included in the Frazer family history:

"There had been much dissatisfaction in the army on account of the action of Congress in promoting junior officers over the heads of those who had suffered imprisonment, who held that their sacrifices entitled them to continue to hold their relative ranks. It was, perhaps, in recognition of this claim, that Congress had confirmed Colonel Frazer as Lieutenant-Colonel of the Fifth Pennsylvania Regiment, but for some reason he was not wholly satisfied. He and his wife had made many pecuniary sacrifices for the army, had sold a considerable part of their property to aid it, and his affairs had fallen into some disorder at home, the iron works were not running satisfactorily, and his wife, whose health had not recovered from the trials and exertions of the fall and winter of 1777, (which were responsible for the loss of the child who was born in May, 1778, and who died before it reached the age of two months), and whose brave spirit was temporarily broken, was greatly mourning his absence. At this time, the appointment of his junior, Walter Stewart to the command of the Regiment, seems to have made his cup overflow, and he resigned from the service on the 9th of October . . ."

After his return to "Thornbury" he was appointed Clothier

General by Congress but the offer was declined. During the fall of 1779, he may have served as a volunteer in Sullivan's campaign against Indians in New York. But sufficient proof of this is not available. In 1779 Frazer was offered the post of Adjutant General of Pennsylvania but turned it down. He accepted an appointment by the Supreme Executive Council of Pennsylvania as Commissioner of Purchases of Chester County. He held the office a short time and resigned.

In 1781 he was elected to the Pennsylvania General Assembly, served two terms and in 1785 was put on a commission to investigate troubles in the Wyoming Area of Pennsylvania, occasioned by the states' disputes over boundaries with Connecticut. In 1786, he was appointed Register of Wills for Chester County. In order to hold this office he removed from "Thornbury" which had been redistricted into Delaware County. His remaining years were spent on another of his farms near Westtown. In 1782, he was appointed Brig. General for the State of Pennsylvania.

Shortly after one of his youngest children fell in a well and drowned, General Frazer suffered a heart attack. He died on April 24, 1792 at 56 and is buried at Middletown Presbyterian Church, Elwyn, Pennsylvania.

Mary Frazer continued to live at Thornbury until 1825 when she moved to Philadelphia, where she stayed with her daughter, Mrs. Joseph Smith, Elizabeth Smith's mother. It was at "Thornbury" on August 17, 1822 that Mary described her adventures to Elizabeth Smith. Elizabeth gave a vivid description of the setting: "On a lovely summer afternoon, August 17, 1822, scarcely a leaf stirring, or a sound heard except at intervals the note of the Blue Jay from the woods, and the far off low of the cattle with no living thing in sight but the chickens in the bunk, where the old Gum tree above the spring silently lengthening its shadow and dropping down now and then its bright red glossy leaves, from among its shining green, with mingled smells of the damask monthly rose, the shrub the sweet herbs and the fox grapes coming from the old fashioned terraced garden, as I sat on the doorstep of the dear solitary sequestered Thornbury home, with grandma beside me just within the door, seated in her accustomed armchair and we looked over the fields and woods and hills and meadows, now lying in such serene repose, but which had been the scene of events so full of painful interest to her and her family, and which were also a part of the history of the country in its great revolutionary struggle . . ."

For her part in the struggle the ultimate in recognition was savored by Mary Frazer at the age of 80 in 1825. Elizabeth Smith noted that "when General Lafayette was visiting this country and was in Philadelphia, grandma was at Uncle Jonathan Smith's; who lived opposite Independence Hall on Walnut Street. Uncle told Mr. Biddle, who was one of the committee in attendance, that it would gratify grandma very much if she could see General Lafayette. Mr.

Biddle mentioned it to the General and he at once consented to call. She told him she had seen him once before under very different circumstances and mentioned these just written. He recollected the scene perfectly and seemed very much gratified to have it recalled and to see her who had taken such a part in it. The gratification and great pleasure (a pleasure not without tears) the interview afforded her ended but where her life ended."

In closing her memoir, Elizabeth Smith noted that forty years after the occupation of Thornbury "an old sleeve button was scratched up by a pet crow belonging to grandma's tenant. A girl coming from the spring house in the meadow saw the crow with something bright, which was the sleeve button. She took it to grandma who knew it to be one of a pair she had hidden among the things in the garden. The place where it was found in the meadow, was one quarter of a mile from the garden."

Mary Frazer died in Philadelphia on November 19, 1830 at the age of 85. She is buried at Middletown Presbyterian Church with her husband. "Thornbury" passed from the Frazer family. In 1927, it was destroyed by fire. The ruins stand on the property of Hugh Bonner, Esquire of Media, Pennsylvania.

The War of the Revolution's Philadelphia Campaign was of little tactical or strategic importance to the war's outcome. True, either side might have destroyed the other, at Brandywine, Goshen or Germantown. Given their paucity of material, popular support and generalship, the Americans stood the best chance of being annihilated. But thanks to General Howe's proclivity for textbook victories which invariably allowed of his adversaries' escape, General Washington was able to keep his army intact. This was the only military significance of the Philadelphia Campaign.

But its effect on the social history of the period was important. It served to "blood" the Scots-Irish militants and to sanctify their cause. The "Balance Wheel of Union" that was Colonial Pennsylvania was tipped markedly towards the cause of Independence. That Mary Frazer represented this Scots-Irish effort in microcosm is understandable. But the intensity with which she waged her private Philadelphia campaign was nothing short of remarkable.



Clyde Groff shows Jim Kinter the road over which British troops travel on their way to home. They are standing in Mary Frazer's garden, amid her ferns, still growing some 200 years after the original bulbs were planted.