

Chapter XII

CAPTAIN THOMAS McKEE OF McKEE'S HALF FALLS

ASSISTANT FOR INDIAN AFFAIRS ON THE SUSQUEHANNA

FOUNDER OF McKEE'S FORT AT McKEE'S HALF FALLS

BORN IN ANTRIM, NORTH IRELAND, CIRCA 1695, DIED 1769

AS HAS already been noted, this pioneer arrived in America sometime between *circa* 1711 and possibly as late as 1734, accompanying his father Alexander McKee. The latter is stated in an earlier genealogical account to have been a veteran of the battle of the Boyne, fought near Drogheda in Ireland on July 1, 1690, between the forces of James II of England and those of William, Prince of Orange, who had as a matter of fact already succeeded to England's throne. The genealogical article to this effect was quoted earlier in this volume.

We have noted from the Boyne veteran's will dated May 27, 1735, which was probated May 26, 1740, that he deliberately disavowed previous wills and heirs, naming his son Thomas as his sole heir. Reason blends with fact to cause us to reject the innocent bit of apocrypha that asserted that he and his son Thomas brought with them from Ireland Thomas McKee's son Alexander, who in later life became successively ensign, lieutenant, captain, and finally colonel in the British army. This Alexander McKee was, according to every historian I have encountered, the son of an Indian mother. However, it should constantly be borne in mind that early historians uniformly sought to villify him, including among their tarradubs an irresponsible charge of illegitimacy and Indian parentage. The chances are better than excellent that neither representation was true. An entry in Bishop Cammerhoff's diary that bears directly on this is examined later.

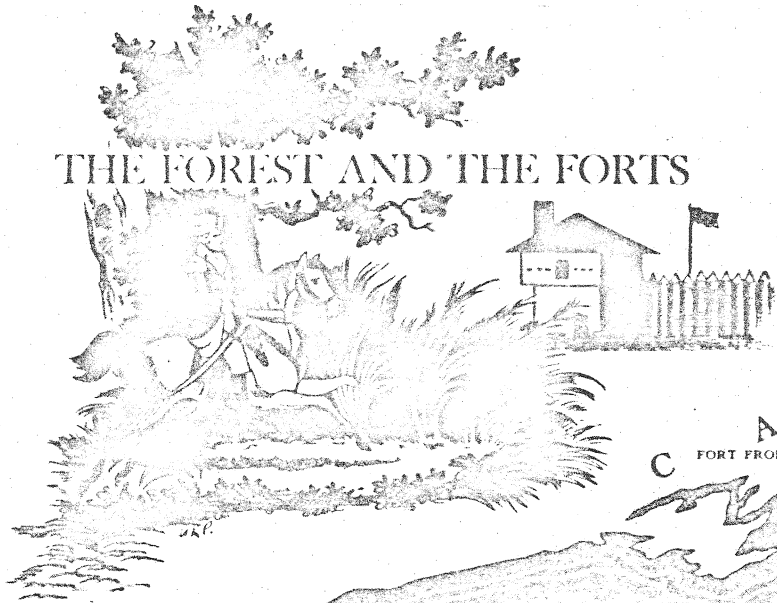
Many early records make copious comment concerning Thomas McKee of McKee's Half Falls. The author has excerpted several items from *Frontier Forts of Pennsylvania*, Harrisburg, 1916. Thomas and his father established a trading post, and possibly a fort of sorts in the same log structure, shortly after they arrived in America. Trading with the Indians and farming constituted the principal activities of the earliest pioneer families, embodying of course the clearing of land, construction of habitations, manufacture of implements, carding, spinning, weaving, tanning and similar fundamental activities of bringing the blessings of nature into a form in which humanity may enjoy them.

No one knows precisely when the fort and trading post, doubtless combining a residence, was constructed. It was in Snyder County on the Susquehanna River, at what is now McKee's Half Falls. This village uses the Port Treverton post office, but is clearly shown on Rand-McNally maps of the district. *Frontier Forts of Pennsylvania*, p. 475, states that it was erected in 1756. This was on the verge of the French-Indian War, and early records state that Captain Thomas McKee served in the Colonial Wars across the Susquehanna River from Cumberland in 1747-48. A decade earlier a man named Thomas McKee, almost certainly the same person, had exercised a Blunston License dated September 18, 1734, which entitled him to settle on 200 acres of Penn lands on the north side of Conodoguinet Creek. The above

¹ The author has been unable to discover in the War Office in London any record of his being commissioned either ensign, captain, or colonel, so that we are led to conclude that the commissions were uttered by some such personage as the then current Governor of Canada. The War Office did, in its reply to my letter of inquiry, make reference to his appointment as a lieutenant in 1757, and remarked that it is confirmed in Pennsylvania Archives.

The *Simcoe Papers*, containing in five volumes the correspondence of Lieutenant-Governor J. Graves Simcoe (Ontario Historical Society, 1923) contain hundreds of references to *Colonel* McKee; and letters passing between the lieutenant-governor and Lord Dorchester uniformly denominate him *Colonel* McKee. Any reader who doubts the high esteem in which he was held by his superiors, equals, and subordinates has but to consult the volumes named to become convinced of the man's probity, wisdom, and unwavering loyalty to his chosen cause.

THE FOREST AND THE FORTS



mentioned work, on page 621 of volume 1, states that Thomas McKee 'located at the falls, now called McKee's one-half falls, in 1744'. It continues that upon the opening of the land office in 1755 he took out a warrant on March 5, 1755, for a large tract of land beginning below the mouth of Mahontonga Creek and extending along the Susquehanna to include McKee's Half Falls. An Indian path known as McKee's Path ran across the plantation, continuing from Shamokin, now called Sunbury, to the Juniata River, touching the Susquehanna at the mouth of Mahontonga Creek and then crossed westerly to the mouth of Delaware Run, near Thompsettown, on the Juniata River. Some investigators have concluded that McKee's Fort was on the west side of the Susquehanna.

Early family records in Pennsylvania place the year of Thomas McKee's birth as about 1695, and the year of his death is accurately fixed as 1769, since an administration of his estate by his son Alexander McKee was already under way on December 6, 1769, when he filed a petition in Orphans' Court, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania (Vol. 1768-1772, p. 163), stating among other things that Thomas McKee died seized of a plantation and tract of Patented Land on the *Eastward of the River Susquehanna* in Upper Paxtang Township, commonly called New Providence, and containing 469 acres. Thus, it would seem that if his fortified trading post was on the *west side* of the river earlier, he must have sold that portion of his property. As a matter of fact, he did sell what was later known as the Sechrist meadows on July 26, 1767, to Jacob Sechrist. The sale included three Susquehanna River islands, one known as Shuman's Island containing about one hundred acres, another called Hays' Island of about seventy acres, and a third formerly called Kline's Island, but later changed to Yeager's Island, that has an extent of perhaps eighty acres.

Early Pennsylvania records disclose that Thomas McKee held a Pennsylvania Trader's License in 1744 and 1747, and that he was a Trader at Big Island in the mouth of the Juniata, on the south branch of the Susquehanna, in 1742. His upper trading-post was on the site of what is now the small community of Georgetown, opposite the mouth of West Mahontonga Creek.

He was in a group including George Croghan, Col. Hugh Mercer, Capt. William Trent, and the notorious Henry Montour, at a conference at Fort Pitt with chiefs from the Six Nations, Shawnees, Delawares, and Wyandots, that lasted from July 4th to July 16th, 1759. Again, from August 12th to 17th, 1760, Thomas McKee was with General Monckton, George Croghan, Thomas Hutchins, and Andrew Montour, in another conference at Fort Pitt with fifteen Indian chiefs and three hundred and sixty-seven warriors of the Six Nations, Shawnees, Delawares, Twightwees, Wyandots, Ottawas, and Pottawatomies.

It was in a letter dated October 24, 1762, to George Croghan, then Deputy Agent for Indian Affairs at Fort Pitt, that Sir William Johnson instructed Croghan to pay Thomas McKee, to whom he referred as 'the old gentleman', perhaps to distinguish him from his son Alexander, a sum of fifth pounds Sterling per annum 'to act as an assistant in that Quarter, *viz.*, along the Susquehanna River and its branches'.

Thomas McKee's son and administrator Alexander McKee also filed another petition in Orphans' Court dated August 27, 1773 (Vol. 1772-1776, p. 134) in which he averred that his father left six children, one of whom was then a minor. This could possibly have had reference to Alexander's brother James McKee, who is stated to have been born in 1755; notwithstanding he would have been eighteen when the petition was filed, he was of course legally a minor.

In the winter of 1748 Bishop Cammerhoff journeyed along the eastern bank of the Susquehanna from Bethlehem to Shamokin, now called Sunbury. His journal of the trip

mentions stops at Tulpehocken and Harris' Ferry, now Harrisburg, as well as Thomas McKee's place three miles north of Benigna's Creek, later called Mahantonga Creek. The following observation is of unusual interest to us :

"January 12, 1748. At three o'clock in the afternoon we reached Benigna's Creek, near its outlet, which we found as wide as the Lehigh at Bethlehem. Being now three miles from Captain Thomas McKee's, we determined to press on.

January 13th, during the night it froze, and the high water somewhat subsides. We have before us twenty long miles to Shamokin, also two bad creeks, and the narrowest passes along the river to pass. At nine o'clock we reached Thomas McKee's, the last white settlement on the river below Shamokin. McKee holds a captain's commission under the Government, bears a good name among them, and drives a brisk trade with the Allegheny country. His wife, who was ¹brought up among the Indians, speaks but little English. They received us with much kindness and hospitality. We took the opportunity to converse with them concerning our visit to Shamokin and of our mission among the Indians.

He is recovering from a serious sickness and is still feeble he also asked Powell to request me to baptize his child on my return. At parting he cordially invited us and our ²brethren to always make his house their house, and that he was willing and ready to serve them as circumstances required".

Conrad Weiser, an Indian interpreter of great note during Pennsylvania's colonial days reported :

"On April 18th, 1749, I happened to meet the eldest and youngest sons of Shikellamy at the trading house of Thomas McKee, about twenty miles this side of Shamokin".

Then we find Captain McKee working with Colonel Croghan of Fort Pitt on a new agreement with the Six Nations :

"Some dissatisfaction having arisen among the Indians in regard to the Treaty of Lancaster, a conference was held at Logstown, on the Ohio, in 1752, between chiefs of the Six Nations and Joshua Fry, Lunsford Lomax and James Patton, Commissioners of Virginia ; and another deed was executed by six chiefs, consenting to the deed of July 2, 1744, and promising to assist and protect British subjects settled ' on the southern or eastern part of the river called Alleghany '. This deed was dated June 13, 1752, and was witnessed by George Croghan, Thomas McKee, William Preston and others". *Annals of Augusta County, Virginia*, by Jos. A. Waddell, 1902.

Later, in the summer of 1754, the Shawanoe chief Kishacoquillas died at Thomas McKee's place. The historian Godcharles mentions it :

¹This mode of expression might well mean she was a captive white girl reared among Indians, and the choice of words seems deliberate. I have discussed this curious observation with the Right Reverend Dr. Jesse Hays Baird, who is descended from Thomas Baird and Martha McKee, she being a daughter of James McKee, Jr. The latter is stated by one genealogical writer quoted herein to have been a son of Captain Thomas McKee, but he was in my opinion his grandson or nephew ; it seems self-evident that James, Jr., would need to be the son of a James, Sr., rather than of a Thomas. However, James, Sr., could have been either a *brother* of Captain Thomas McKee, or one of his sons. If he were a son, it would mean that Thomas named two of his boys, probably from different mothers, James. It did positively seem to Rev. Dr. Baird and me that Bishop Cammerhoff's description was almost unequivocally that of a white girl captured as a child or infant and fostered by an Indian family. Charles A. Hanna in his *The Wilderness Trail* surmises Thomas McKee's wife to have been white.

Captain Thomas McKee's regiment, the 60th Rifles, The King's Royal Rifle Corps, was formed on Christmas Day in 1755 in North America. It was the first Rifle Regiment in the British Army, with the longest list of honors. Badge : The Maltese Cross with Crown. Motto : *Celer et Audax*—Swift and Bold, conferred by General Wolff. The regiment's pet name is "The Loyal Americans" or "The Loyal American Provincials".

²These were members of the Moravian Church, of which Cammerhoff was a bishop. The Moravian, or United Brethren sect, was founded in Bohemia by followers of John Huss, and like the Quakers had a profound effect on the Christianization of the Indian tribes.

"The old chief died at the home of Thomas McKee in the summer of 1754. His sons notified Gov. Morris of his death through John Shikellamy".

In 1755, Captain Thomas McKee, John Harris after whom Harrisburg was named, and some others, scouted a part of the west branch of the Susquehanna, and in doing so found and buried the mutilated bodies of an Indian massacre on Penn's Creek at George Gabriel's place. On their return along the west bank of the Susquehanna, and just as they were starting to cross Penn's Creek, their party was attacked by a band of Indians. Captain McKee was wounded in the hand during this engagement, as a Shawanoe chief named Paxinosa found his bloody glove.

It will be recalled that it was on July 9, 1755, that General Braddock suffered his ignominious defeat at the hands of an Indian force on the banks of the Monongahela near Turtle Creek, about seven miles from Fort Du Quesne, which he had expected to take that day. His utter contempt for his Indian opponents is best disclosed by his tart reply to Dr. Franklin's apprehensive warning of ambushes, when he said :

"These savages may indeed be a formidable enemy to your raw American militia ; but upon the King's regular and disciplined troops, Sir, it is impossible they should make any impression".

They had just finished crossing the river at about one o'clock in the afternoon when the firing upon them commenced from cover. Colonel Washington, just up from several days in bed with fever, had two horses killed under him and four bullets through his uniform. He vainly besought General Braddock to deploy his red-coated regulars Indian fashion, but the general not only stormily refused but struck some of his officers and men with his sword, then ordered his troops into platoons. The Virginia Provincials and other backwoodsmen troops present fought Indian fashion, coolly and tellingly, but panic seized the regulars who started loading and firing at random. Of the seven hundred and fourteen killed, it was estimated that two-thirds of them died thus by the fire of their own frightened comrades. General Braddock was mortally wounded, having had three horses killed under him ; he died July 13th. Colonel ¹William McKee of Virginia and his father Robert McKee the pioneer are believed to have been with the Virginia Provincials at Braddock's Defeat.

¹ Colonel William McKee, b. 1732 married Miriam McKee, daughter of John McKee the pioneer, she being his first cousin ; issue :

John	b. 1767	m. Polly Patton.
Nancy Agnes	b. 1768	m. James Wilson.
Robert	b. 1770	d. 1775.
William	b. 1771	m. Mrs. — Davis.
James	b. 1773	d. 1773.
Samuel	b. 1774	m. Martha Robertson.
Mary (Polly?)		m. John Lapsley.
Robert	b. 1776	d. 1778.
Hugh Ware		
David		m. Betsy Letcher (Fletcher?).
James	b. 1790	m. Mary Lapsley.
Jane		

Colonel William McKee was a son of the pioneer Robert McKee and his wife Agnes. Robert was born in Ireland in 1692 and died in Virginia in 1774. His wife Agnes was born in Ireland in 1696 and died in Virginia Jan. 29, 1780.

Colonel William and Miriam were married when he was 31 and she 19, on May 20, 1766. He was born in Pennsylvania in 1732. He is said to have been with his father at Braddock's Defeat in 1755, when he was 23 and his father Robert was 63. Colonel William, while yet a captain, commanded a company at the Battle of Point Pleasant. His son Samuel was born while that battle was in progress. Colonel William McKee was later a member of the legislature, and the Constitutional Convention, and in many other ways elsewhere enumerated in the present work was distinguished and honored by his fellow Virginians.

One legend relates that General Braddock's force marched through what is now McKeesport in 1756, on the way to the engagement history calls 'Braddock's Defeat', which as noted occurred near the mouth of Turtle Creek on the Monongahela, some three miles below McKeesport. Their flashing weapons and colorful uniforms struck wonder in the hearts of Queen Alliquippa and her braves, who watched the brilliant columns from the hilltop above Riverton as they marched down Crooked Run Hollow to the Monongahela and commenced the fatal fording of that stream. The queen was offended that the passing soldiers in their red-and-gold uniforms had failed to stop and pay her homage, and sent messengers to say so. Fortunately, Colonel George Washington was in that entourage, and is reputed to have smoothed the affronted queen's feathers some weeks later by personally presenting her with a bottle of rum.

The Shawonoes, otherwise Shawnees, took sides with the French in the hostilities between the French and English, which commenced in 1755 and were terminated by the peace of February 10, 1763, under which Canada was ceded to Great Britain. This cession greatly displeased the Indian tribes, as did the action of the English in commencing to build forts on the Susquehanna, and to repair or erect those at Bedford, Ligonier, Pittsburg, Detroit, Presque Isle, St. Joseph, and Michilimakinac. The Indians found themselves thus surrounded on two sides by a cordon of forts, with the menace of their extension into the interior of their country. The several chiefs had to decide on a course, and chose to intensify hostilities. Many of the traders living among them were murdered, the forts of Presque Isle, St. Joseph, and Mackinac were overwhelmed and their garrisons slaughtered and scalped, and the forts of Bedford, Ligonier, Niagara, Detroit, and Pitt were held only after bitter fighting.

On January 26, 1756, Governor Morris wrote to Adam Read of Hanover Township, Lancaster County, as follows :

" I have also appointed Thomas McKee to take post at or near Hunter's Mills with thirty men and you are to deliver to Cap't. McKee such Provincial arms, accoutrim'ts, blankets, tools and stores and to take McKee's receipt for them, which you are also to transmit to me ". *Pennsylvania Archives*, Vol. 2, p. 551.

On the same day, he wrote to Captain Thomas McKee the letter that follows :

Jan'y 26, 1756

" T. McKee :

You are to receive from the officer now commanding the detachment of Cap't. Read's Company at Hunter's Mill, and who are to relieve, such Arms, Accoutrements, Blankets, Tools and Stores, as he may have in his hands belonging to the Province, with which you are to furnish your Company, but if that be not sufficient you are to apply to Cap't Frederick Smith for a further supply out of what he will receive from Cap't Read and Cap't Hedericks. But as the Province is at present in want of Arms and Blankets, if any of the men you shall enlist, will find themselves with those articles, they shall receive half a dollar for the use of their gun, and half a dollar for the use of a Blanket ". *Pennsylvania Archives*, Vol. 2, p. 553.

In a letter dated February 13, 1756, Conrad Weiser mentions that " there is thirty men at Samuel Hunter Mill under Captain McKee ". It is plain that the settlers were apprehensive of a general uprising, and on October 29, 1755, John Harris wrote Edward Shippen of Lancaster to say :

" We expect the enemy on us every day, and the inhabitants is abandoning their plantations, being greatly discouraged at the approach of such a number of cruel savages, and no sign

of assistance. The Indians is cutting us off every day and I had a certain account of about 1500 Indians beside French being on their march against us and Virginia, and now close on our borders, their scouts scalping our families on our frontiers daily”.

Edward Shippen on April 19, 1756, wrote to Governor Morris :

“ John Harris has built an excellent stockade round his house which is ye only place of security that way for the provisions of ye army, he having much good cellar room, and as he has but six or seven men to guard it, if the Government would order six more men there to strengthen it, it would in my opinion be of great use to the cause, even were no provisions to be stored there at all ; tho' there is no room for any scarce in Captain McKee's Fort the enemy can come over the hills at five miles distance from McKee's Fort ”.

Then from Lancaster, Edwin Shippen wrote Governor Morris the following intelligence of a visit he made to his friend Thomas McKee's place :

“ April 19, 1756. I have been at Cap't. McKee's Fort, where I found about ten Indians, men, women, and children ; three of the women lying very ill in bed. The Captain tells me that John Shekellamy is greatly dissatisfied with being there, and has several times been out of temper, which he would hope was owing to nothing but the sickness of the Indians, and to their being often insulted by the fearful ignorant people who have sometimes told Shekallamy to his face, that they had a good mind to scalp him. Shekallamy informed me that he wished the Indians *would be moved down where Cap't. McKee's women and children were* and afterwards, if the Governor thought proper he would go to Wyoming and endeavour to bring down a Shawanese captain, who would have come with him, but the Delawares would not permit it. At the council at Wyoming, whither your Honor sent Silver Heels and The Belt to know why the Indians struck their brethren, the English ”.

The foregoing excerpt of Mr. Shippen's letter is included at this point so that we may examine the portion where I have added emphasis. This language surely tells us two things. First, it discloses that Captain McKee had his family at some location south of the fort, since 'up' and 'down' state were customary expressions for north or south. Second, the words 'Cap't. McKee's women and children' shows that at least two women of his family were living in the home in 1756. Captain Thomas McKee, born in 1695 it is said, was 61 years of age in 1756. His son James is by all accounts supposed to have been but one year of age then, and we are left to conjecture whether one of the women may have been a grown daughter, else a wife of Alexander McKee who was then an Ensign, having been commissioned a lieutenant in 1757. This enigma must remain for later solution, because I surely have not found the answer among either the state annals, early histories, or the scant documents descendants have shared with me.

The French were circulating all manner of half-truths, mingled with facts to add verisimilitude, among the Indian tribes, in an effort to incite them against the English settlers. That they were in some measure succeeding is attested by Captain Thomas McKee's letter to Edward Shippen :

Ap'l 5th, 1756

“ Sir :

I desire to let you No that John ¹Secalemy, Indian, is Come here ye Day before yesterday, about 4 o'clock in ye afternoon, and Gives me an account that there is a Great Confusion amongst ye Indians up ye North branch of Susquehanna ; the Delawares are a moving all from thence to Ohio, and wants to Persuade ye Shanoes along with them, but they Decline Goeing with them that course, and as They still incline to join with us, the Shanoes are Goeing up to a Town Called Teoga, where there is a body of ye Six Nations, and there they Intend to Remain. He has brought two more men, som women and som children along with him, and Sayeth that

¹ Undoubtedly the Shawanoe John Shekellamy, who was a good friend of Captain Thomas McKee.

he Intends to live and Die with us, and Insists upon my Conducting him down to where his Sister and children is, at Conistoga, and I'm Loath to leave my Post, as his Honor was offended at ye last time I did, but can't help it, he Desires to acquaint you that his sister's son was kill'd at Penn's Creek, in ye scimege w'th Cap't. Patterson. This with Due Respect from

Sir, your Hum'l Scr't,

THOMAS MCKEE

On June 11, 1756, Col. Clapham reported to the governor that he had stationed twenty-four men at Hunter's Fort, under the command of Mr. Johnson, with orders to defend that place and the area, but to escort any provisions that arrived up to McKee's Store, which lay about twenty-five miles north of Hunter's Fort, on the Susquehanna.

Many other scraps of information are to be found here and there about Captain Thomas McKee, but what I have set down in these pages will serve to give a rushlight view of this virile pioneer. The reader will have already remarked that although Alexander the Boyne veteran, Captain Thomas, and Colonel Alexander, all lived their lives out among the Indian tribes, there is scant record of friction or conflict with them. Instead, they seem to have treated these children of the forest with consideration and fairness sufficient to gain and keep their friendship, a token of Christian principles put into practice.

Captain Thomas McKee's descendants, as far as I have been able to identify them, are included on the accompanying Family Tree, rather than by listing them.

Let us now have a look at the possible foundation for the family legend that his Shawanoc wife was 'of Tecumseh's family'; even though Bishop Cammerhoff's January 13, 1748, entry in his diary rather definitely implies that his wife at that time was a white woman who had been 'captured and reared by Indians. This kind of event happened hundreds of times in frontier history. Simon Girty married such a girl.

¹ The following excerpt from a letter from Mrs. Eleanor P. Reed, a descendant of Captain Thomas McKee, illuminates our knotty little problem by a fascinating legend that is very possibly grounded on historical fact:

"Oct. 19, 1957. My dear Mr. McKee: I have all the papers to which you refer and you have evidently been in communication with Mr. McDonald (this reference is to Mr. George F. McDonald of Windsor, Ontario), because the letter from Lt. Selby (Lt. Prideaux Selby wrote James McKee the Intelligence of his brother's (Col. Alexander McKee's) death in a letter dated January 10, 1799, stating that he died January 5, 1799.—R.W.M.) is one I sent him. You will note that Lt. Selby distinctly says that Alexander McKee was the brother of James McKee. I made a mistake at first and told Mr. McDonald that Alexander being so much older than James might have come over with his father from Ireland and when I found out my mistake I asked him to disregard that entirely. I have the entire account of how Thomas McKee was captured by Indians in the Western part of Pennsylvania supposed to be from Virginia. They had with them a white woman who had been captured in Virginia. She understood their language and heard them plotting to kill Thomas. She went to him and told him she would help him to escape if he would take her with him and marry her. Thomas McKee with her rode 48 hours without stopping and as we know in the family he married a white woman we presume this was she.

Thomas McKee evidently did not regard his connections with Indian women as legal marriages.

I have a number of family letters never published in which Alexander addresses James as brother.

Also the Authorities of the day acknowledged James as the legal son of Thomas and gave him all the land Thomas had owned. Some near Harrisburg was sold only a few years ago.

The transaction of James taking over the property at McKee's Rocks granted by General Bouquet to Alexander is from brother to brother. I have that copy too.

My mother knew very well her grandfather Alexander McKee who was the son of James McKee (Col. Alexander McKee's brother.—R.W.M.) and he told her this family history and also said that James had said his mother was a white woman.

Mary McKee (wife of Captain Thomas McKee of McKee's Half Falls.—R.W.M.) could only make a mark for her name. If Thomas McKee was married to a white woman in 1748 (this refers to the entry in Bishop Cammerhoff's diary.—R.W.M.) James McKee was born 7 years later and I told you in another letter that there were at least 6 children by Indian women.

TECUMAPEASE, SISTER OF TECUMSEH

Tecumseh was born in the year 1768, the son of a brave called Puckenshinwa, who was of the Kiscopoke tribe of the Shawanoes (Shawnees), and Methoataske of the Turtle tribe of that same restless and warrior nation. The father rose to the rank of chief, and fell in the battle of Kanawha, known to history as the battle of Point Pleasant, in 1774. He left six sons and one daughter. These were Cheeseekan the eldest, who reared Tecumseh in the ways of truth, courage and a contempt for anything mean or sordid. Tecumapease, the girl, was known also by the name of Menewaulakoosee. She was united in marriage to a *brave* called Wasegoboah (stand firm), who died in the battle of the Thames in the early 1800's. Another brother was Sauwaseekan, and there were also Nehascemo, Laulewasikaw afterward called the Prophet and thenceforward known as Tenskautawa, and the latter's twin Kumskaukau. Tecumseh himself was born in a Shawanoe town called Piqua on the northwest side of the Mad River about six miles below Springfield, Ohio. From these facts, it seems quite impossible for Tecumapease to have been married to Captain Thomas McKee, unless indeed the circumstances just related are untrue. Naturally, they are wholly hearsay, resting on the account of a man named Stephen Ruddell, who was for twenty years a captive of the Shawanoe tribe, and an early local historian Anthony Shane; their recollections were collated and published in a small volume titled *Tecumseh* by Benjamin Drake; Applegate & Co., Cincinnati, 1852.

The letter that follows transmitted the oil portrait, the canvas cut from its frame and folded into an envelope, of Colonel Alexander McKee. It was apparently painted while he was still a lieutenant in George III's forces. Colonel Rankin's letter definitely discloses the existence of a legend that the mother of Colonel Alexander McKee was a member of Tecumseh's family, possibly an aunt. The original of this letter is in the author's possession:

Thornfield

19th of February, 1875

My dear Attie

Herewith I send you by express from Detroit, the picture of your mother's grandfather, Colonel McKee who served under the orders of Sir William Johnson in 1762, and subsequently. From the rank he held it is probable he must have been born from 30 to 40 years before that at least. His name figures conspicuously in connection of the history of the Indian wars of that period, and it is evident he must have been an important personage. His father had been a captain in the 60th Rifles and he—the original of the picture—was the first McKee who had any Indian blood in his veins, his mother having been one of Tecumseh's family. As to the picture itself the probability is it must have been painted by some house or sign painter and it is most likely rather a caricature than a likeness. The tradition is that this likeness was painted when he was a young man and before he attained the rank he afterwards reached, hence the single epaulet, for in those days, only field officers, that is, from major upwards wore two. I think it will be difficult to do anything with it and if I were you in your place I should prefer to have a copy of it painted. His hair of course is supposed to have been powdered.

Yours always,

A. RANKIN

A. MCKEE RANKIN, Esq.

New York

P.S. Should you have a copy painted I would suggest the opinion of the museum to instrument. As it is now, it is more like the portrait of a bandsman than that of a distinguished officer.—A R

The only positive allusions to white blood in Tecumseh's family are made by Mr. Drake in the following language (p. 61) :

"There are not wanting authorities for the assertion that both the Anglo-Saxon and Creek blood ran in the veins of Tecumseh. It has been stated that his paternal grandfather was a white man, and that his mother was a Creek".

However, Tecumseh's brother the Prophet understood his ancestry differently, or else stated it in another vein for esoteric purposes connected with his efforts to sway the Indian tribes. He related to Stephen Ruddell, who set it down at the time, as follows :

"My paternal grandfather was a Creek, who went to one of the southern cities, either Savannah or Charleston, to hold a council with the English governor, whose daughter was present at some of the interviews. This young lady had conceived a violent admiration for the Indian character ; and having determined to bestow herself on some warlike lord of the forest, she took this occasion to communicate her partiality to her father. The next morning, in the council, the father enquired of the Indians which of them was the most expert hunter ; and the grandfather of Tecumseh, then a young and handsome man, who sat modestly in a retired part of the room, was pointed out to him. When the council broke up for the day, the governor asked his daughter if she was really so partial to the Indians, as to prefer selecting a husband from them, and finding that she persisted in this singular predilection, he directed her attention to the young Creek warrior, for whom, at first sight, she avowed a decided attachment. On the following morning the governor announced to the Creeks that his daughter was disposed to marry one of their number ; and having pointed out the individual, added, that his own consent would be given. The chiefs at first very naturally doubted whether the governor was in earnest ; but upon assuring them that he was sincere, they advised the young man to embrace the lady and her offer. He was not so ungallant as to refuse ; and having consented to the fortune that was thus buckled on him, was immediately taken to another apartment, where he was disrobed of his Indian costume by a train of black servants, washed, and clad in a new suit, and the marriage ceremony was immediately performed".

"At the close of the council the Creeks returned home, but the young hunter remained with his wife. He amused himself in hunting, in which he was very successful, and was accustomed to take a couple of black servants with him, who seldom failed to bring in large quantities of game. He lived among the whites until his wife had borne him two daughters and a son. Upon the birth of the latter, the governor went to see his grandson, and was so well pleased, that he called his friends together, and caused thirty guns to be fired. When the boy was seven or eight years old his father died, and the governor took charge of the child, who was often visited by the Creeks. At the age of ten or twelve, he was permitted to accompany the Indians to their nation, where he spent some time ; and two years after, he again made a long visit to the Creeks, who then, with a few Shawanoes, lived on a river called Pauseekoalaakee, and began to adopt their dress and customs. They gave him an Indian name Puckeshinwau, which means *something that drinks* ; and after learning their language, he became so much attached to the Indian life, that when the governor sent for him he refused to return".

If we suppose that these stories contain a modicum of truth, then we have reason to believe both Tecumseh and his sister Tecumapease were quarter-bloods. Both adversions to an admixture of white blood make a grandparent white. Alloting twenty years to each generation before reproduction, though Indian girls are nubile by thirteen or fourteen, and recalling that Tecumseh was born in 1768, his half-white father would have been born *circa* 1748, and his white grandparent *circa* 1728. If we stretch the generations to thirty-year spans, as is customary, we would postulate a date of birth for the white grandparent of 1708. It thus is apparent that Captain Thomas McKee *could* have been the father of Tecumseh

and Tecumapease, but not the husband of the latter, since she was born later than 1768, in which year Captain Thomas was 73.

It will be recalled that a very early account of Captain Thomas McKee's narrow escape from raiding Shawnees attributes the warning that reached him to a Shawnee girl who then accompanied him on his flight. The snows had been heavy since late November of 1742, so that six and eight foot drifts were against all of the buildings and fences. He had built a cabin at *Big Island*, a Shawanose village east of the present Lock Haven, as a residence and trading post. Late one night early in January, 1743, he was stealthily awakened by the Shawanose girl and warned that a plot was afoot to kill him and take all of his trading goods. They escaped together with only guns, knives, a hatchet, and some food and blankets. The warning came none too soon, because legend says the predating Indians that night stole everything in the cabin, including some rum which they drank. If the rum was there to sell to the Indians it violated a principle first laid down by William Penn, then mentioned repeatedly in treaties *by the Indians themselves*. Time and again the chiefs who made and signed the treaties pleaded that traders be forbidden to sell rum or brandy to their people; in one instance at least Colonel Alexander McKee echoes the plea in one of his able letters to a superior officer.

Captain Thomas McKee and his Shawanoe girl companion apparently went to the Half Falls vicinity, for he had soon engaged the interest of his friend Conrad Weiser, an interpreter and trader of great note in Pennsylvania's early annals, and himself an adopted member of the Mohawk tribe. Together they laid a complaint before Chief Shikellamy at Shamokin, now Sunbury, as a result of which Thomas McKee's goods were returned to him.

The impression has crossed the mind of the present author several times that there did seem to be a possible thread of attachment between several important figures along the Susquehanna in the middle 1700's.

First was Alexander McKee the Boyne veteran, who came and brought his son Thomas from Antrim, whence they settled in Donegal Township. The date of their arrival could have been as early as 1707, but possibly occurred between 1720 and 1734. He almost certainly married, by ceremony or handfast, an Indian girl, as he died in 1740 and by his will dated May 27, 1735, made Thomas his sole heir; he specifically disinherited *implied* children by revoking 'all and every other former Testaments wills, legacies and Executors'. This will is reproduced herein. The probabilities hence weigh *very* heavily that his marriage in America was to an Indian woman; yet again he may have found a white girl on the frontier.

Second, we have Captain Thomas McKee, who came with his father Alexander from Ireland, is thought to have been born *circa* 1695, and died in 1769. He is said by some to have taken an Indian wife, and by the traditions of the family handed down orally to a presently living generation, she is supposed to have been of *Tecumseh's family*. We have seen that she could not have been Tecumapease, Tecumseh's younger sister, for that girl was born after 1768. Neither could these two have been sister and brother of Captain Thomas, as they were born *circa* 1768, while Captain Thomas' father Alexander died in 1740. Captain Thomas, however, *could have been their father*.

Third, we note Logan who was one of the Shikallimys, but who by some early writers was alleged to have been a son of Tecumapease. This statement is made by M'Affee in his *History of the Late War* and by Butler in his *History of Kentucky*.

Fourth, our attention is drawn to Cornstalk's sister, known to the Americans as *the Grenadier Squaw*. She remained their loyal friend even after they had detained her noble brother as a hostage, notwithstanding that he had at considerable personal risk journeyed a long distance to warn them of an impending uprising he was unable to prevent; not only was he detained, along with his warrior son, but through the sheer carelessness of his captors, both of them were murdered in cold blood by drunken whites.

It was she who informed General Hand that Captain Alexander McKee was in communication with the British, but General Hand found reason to attribute the information to jealousy by the Grenadier Squaw of Captain Alexander's squaw, who we learned became his wife before he died. This period would have been near 1776-78. His son Thomas had been born in 1770, and most probably was the natural son of this Indian woman and Alexander, especially since a 1799 letter that mentions his death makes reference to his marriage to Thomas' mother about ten years before.

Fifth, we recollect briefly Simon Girty, a member of a family that resided for many years on the Susquehanna near where the McKees and the Indians mentioned were reared. He and Matthew Elliot, who was born in Ireland, were companions of Captain Alexander McKee when he departed for Detroit; they served the British faithfully and well from there and Canada in the Indian campaigns they led against the American troops. In fact, the name of Simon Girty became *anathema maran atha* to the colonists and frontier families, who as a mark of their loathing, not wholly justified certainly, took to naming the 'ornriest hound in the litter' *Simon Girty*. There is nothing to cause us to believe Girty had Indian blood, although in his youth he was several years a prisoner of the Senecas.

Sixth, we are constantly haunted by a sense of brothers and sisters, both legitimate and illegitimate, in the shadows just beyond the light's edge.

Alexander McKee, the Boyne veteran, we noted, left a will that annulled previous wills and revoked former legacies, a step wholly unnecessary if an earlier will did not exist. His son Thomas was made the sole heir, but the text of the will itself supplies sound reason for supposing other progeny, all probably born in America, but *not necessarily*.

Captain Thomas McKee died intestate in 1769, leaving *at least* six children, including Alexander and James. Alexander acted as administrator of his father's estate, with his mother's assent. He was the sole heir. Later, if we give full credence to the Eleanor Guthrie Reed papers in the State Library at Harrisburg, James was able to convince the authorities that he James was legitimate by his 1755 birth, while Alexander was illegitimate, and is alleged to have obtained properties Alexander inherited from their father Thomas on this pleading. At this writing I have been unable to verify or disprove this by Pennsylvania records.

No one can state positively the identity of all of the other four children, but I have concluded that they probably were Hugh, Nancy, Catherine, and Elizabeth.

¹ To Edward Shippen, Esquire, Deputy Register in and for the County of Lancaster.

I, Mary McKee, Widow and Relict of Thomas McKee late of Paxton Township in the County of Lancaster Yeoman Deceased do hereby Relinquish all my Right of Administration on the Estate of my said Late Husband and do agree, as far as in me lies that letters of Administration be granted on the said Estate to my son Alexander McGee.

Witness my Hand and Seal this Third Day of August Anno Domini 1769.

Witnesses present

John Chambers
C. Graydon

her
Mary McKee
mark

To Edward Shippen Esquire Deputy Register
in and For the County of Lancaster

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in me lies that letters of Administration be gran-
ted on the said Estate to my Alexander McKee

Witness my Hand & Seal this Third Day of
August Anno Domini 1769

Witnesses present

Mary McKee
m.k.

John Chambers
Craydon
m.k.

MARY McKEE'S CONSENT TO ALEX. McKEE'S
ADMINISTRATION OF CAPTAIN THOMAS McKEE'S ESTATE

Chapter XIII

COLONEL ALEXANDER MCKEE

DEPUTY SUPERINTENDENT AND DEPUTY INSPECTOR GENERAL
FOR THE PROVINCES OF UPPER AND LOWER CANADA
AND THE FRONTIERS THEREOF, OF INDIANS
AND THEIR ALLIES ;
FORMERLY CROWN DEPUTY AGENT FOR INDIAN AFFAIRS
AT FORT PITT, AND SUBSEQUENTLY DETROIT.
BORN 1720-38. DIED JANUARY 5, 1799.

THERE IS some intimation that this distinguished member of our clan was christened Alexander Thomas McKee, or Thomas Alexander McKee. Descendants persistently refer to him so, but for traditional reasons alone. No documents he signed that the author has seen bear other than the name Alexander or the initial "A" preceding his surname, nor did any documents that name him refer to him so.

He was born sometime between 1720 and 1738, apparently, as he held the rank of ensign in 1756, and was promoted to a lieutenancy in 1757 while yet in his 'teens. If he were, say, 19 in 1757, he would have been born in 1738, and only about 61 when he died in 1799. One account states positively that he died of lockjaw January 13, 1799, but a letter from Lieutenant Prideaux Selby to James McKee at Chartiers, Pennsylvania, under date of January 10, 1799, says that he died January 5, 1799. This is so positive that I had accepted it, particularly since it was to this man that Colonel Alexander entrusted his will. However, even this is not conclusive. On October 17, 1957, G. W. Spragge, Archivist of Ontario, wrote to me as follows :

"The exact date of Colonel McKee's death is probably of little importance except that one likes to get such details correct if possible. I spent just a minute or two on the matter when I received your letter and I am confirmed in my belief that the date was the 15th"

"In the *Russell Papers* (the Correspondence of the Honourable Peter Russell, edited by E. A. Cruikshank and A. F. Hunter) published by the Ontario Historical Society 1936, volume 3, pp. 56-7, there is printed a letter from Prideaux Selby to Russell, dated 18th January, 1799, in which is the following :

'On the 10th and 12th instant Col. McKee, sent me written directions (a copy of which is herewith inclosed) to engage a confidential person to go to the Mississippi, in consequence of your Honor's last letter of the 21st of December, with further orders to send another also to the Poutawatamie Country, as soon as the person pointed out, returned from the Indian Country, from whence he is hourly expected. While I was in the act of delivering the instructions to the person going to the Mississippi, the melancholly information of his Death reached me. Considering however the great importance of obtaining, in time the desired intelligence, and after consulting Capt. McKee, the Superintendent of the Post, whose present misfortune and distress, renders him incapable of any business, I have taken upon me to carry the orders of the late Deputy Superintendent General into execution by sending off the messenger to the Mississippi, and which step I hope will receive your Honor's approbation and indemnity.'

¹ *The Diaries of George Washington*, John C. Fitzpatrick, Houghton Mifflin, 1925.

² Prideaux Selby, lieutenant in the 5th Regiment and assistant secretary for Indian Affairs at Detroit ; Receiver General and a member of the Executive Council for Upper Canada, 1809-13 ; died at York, Upper Canada, in 1813.

³ Now McKee's Rocks, and earlier known as Written Rocks.

“As Colonel McKee was apparently issuing instructions on the 12th, it is obvious that the 5th is an incorrect date for his death. There is also a letter (p. 93 of the above volume) from Russell to the Duke of Portland dated 3rd February, 1799 :

“I have the Honor to inform your Grace that I received an Express from Sandwich on the 30th Ult. with despatches announcing to me the death of Mr. McKee the Deputy Superintendent of Indian Affairs on the 15th preceding And I am sorry to observe to your Grace that I am inclined to apprehend the loss of this Gentleman may be a very great Injury to His Majesty's Interests among the Indian Nations in that Quarter at the present important moment, as I know of no one now in the Department there who has ability to execute the Office or influence sufficient with the Indians to keep them steady in their attachment to His Majesty'.

Yours sincerely

G. W. SPRAGGE

Archivist of Ontario”.

In view of the uncertainties that various accounts introduce about the date of his birth, it seems reasonable to suppose he was born a few years earlier than 1738, perhaps between 1720 and 1734. Later in this chapter it will be noted that in Peter Audrain's letter dated January 15, 1799, to James May, Colonel Alexander is described as ‘*the old virtuous Colonel McKee*’, which mode of expression mildly buttresses our supposition that he was possibly as much as 70 or 80 years of age when he died. This would connote his birth *circa* 1729 or 1719, which assorts better with his eventful life and attainments than a mere 61 years.

The oil portrait of him painted in 1757 which the author owns, and which is reproduced in the present volume, shows him in the red coat of a British officer, but wearing a single epaulet. In a letter dated February 19, 1875, Colonel Arthur Rankin, husband of a descendant, ascribes this to the circumstance that, according to his account, only field officers of a rank of major or something superior were entitled to two epaulets. The portrait is certainly of a very young man. Its ¹former owners believed the instrument in his hands to be a clarinet, and to some extent this is supported by the fact that there are two black spots on it that might have depicted finger holes, as well as some musical notes included on the place just below it. The fact that a later artist of inferior skill has altered the nose, however, introduces an element of doubt concerning the instrument also, and the present author mildly suspects it may possibly have been a ²peace-pipe originally, since he devoted much of his life to maintaining peace between the white settlers and the various Indian tribes. The Indians called him *Wapemassawa*.

As has been related in the chapter entitled *The McKees of Rushville, etc.*, Alexander McKee was one of the six children of Captain Thomas McKee of McKee's Half Falls. He was almost certainly the eldest child, and this is rendered the more probable by the fact that he was

¹ Apparently, no copies of the portrait were permitted by earlier owners for more than 150 years. Then a color transparency was made, with their permission, a few years ago, but, only three or four copies of it appear to have been allowed. I have recently supplied color transparencies to The Detroit Public Library, The Historical Society of Pennsylvania, the Ontario Department of Public Records and Archives at Toronto, The Clements Library of the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, and the Public Archives of Canada at Ottawa.

² Capt. H. Malcolm McKee of Bangor, North Ireland, to whom I sent a color transparency of the portrait, is of the tentative opinion that the object is a sword scabbard. He says that it was not an uncommon practice to cradle a sword in the arms when sitting.

Thornfield
19th of February 1875

My dear Alice

Here with I send you by express from
Detroit, the picture of your Mother's Grand
father Colonel McKee, who served under
the orders of Gen. William Johnson in 1762,
and subsequently. From the time he held it is
probable he must have been born from ~~that~~
to forty years before that, at least. His name
figures conspicuously in connection with
the history of the Indian Wars of that period,
and it is evident he must have been an im-
portant personage. His father had been
a Captain in the 65th Rifles, and he the
original of the picture, was the first McKee
who had any Indian blood in his veins, his
mother having been one of Tecumseh's family.
As to the picture itself, the probability is, it
must have been painted by some house-
hold painter, and it is most likely either
a caricature, than a likeness, the tradition
is, that the likeness was painted when he was
a young man, and before he had attained the
rank he afterwards reached, hence the single
epaulettes, for in those days, only field officers,
that is, from Major upward, wore two, I think,
it will be difficult to do anything with it, and if
you in your place should prefer to have a
copy of it painted. His hair, of course, is sup-
posed to have been powdered.
A. McKee Rankin } yours always
New York } A Rankin

P.S. Should you have a copy painted, I would suggest
the Opinion of the Museum, instrument, as it
is more like the portrait of a British
man than that of a distinguished Officer.

THE EVENING TELEGRAM
TORONTO

December 10th, 1910.

Mr. Harry Davenport,
Hotel Bradley,
Cor. Rush & Indiana St.
Chicago,
Ill.

Dear Sir,-

I am editing the Diary of Mrs. Simcoe, the wife of the first Governor of Upper Canada and am anxious to get a picture of Alex. McKee the Superintendent of the Indian Department in 1792.

My friend Mr. McKee of Windsor informs me that Mrs. Davenport has an oil painting of the Superintendent who lived in Detroit in 1792 and suggested my writing to my old college friend Mr. McKee Rankin. I did so but my letters were returned as the address was not correct.

In The Evening Telegram which I publish, I find the following despatch:

BOUGHT HANKIN HOMESTEAD
Harry Davenport, the actor, Acquires Valuable Estate Near Windsor.
Windsor, Dec. 6.—The Thornfield farm, on the dividing line between Windsor and Sandwich, the former residence of the late Gen. Rankin, has become the property of Harry Davenport, the actor, brother of the late Fannie Davenport. The property was part of the tract owned by Dr. Soper, of Toronto, who purchased it several years ago for \$18,000. The consideration for which he sold it was in the neighborhood of \$7,000. The Thornfield farm is regarded as one of the finest residential properties on the Canadian side of the Detroit River. It was purchased by Mr. Davenport partly for sentimental reasons. His wife being a granddaughter of Col. Rankin.

Dr. Soper has been good enough to give me your address and I therefore write asking if you would kindly ask Mrs. Davenport to give me a photo of the McKee portrait.

I want it not only for my edition of Mrs. Simcoe's Diary but also to have the photo enlarged, 12 x 17, and placed in my collection of

THE EVENING TELEGRAM
TORONTO

E.D. - 2.

Canadians which I have presented to the Public Library, Toronto.

I am also giving a short sketch of McKee. He was not only an official but a personal friend of Governor and Mrs. Simcoe and I am very anxious that the Historical Societies should see the face of the man who was so important a character in pioneer Upper Canada history.

I will pay all expense in connection with the taking of the photo and will be glad to send you a copy of my work when issued.

Trusting that you will grant my request.

Believe me,

Yours truly,

JRR/L.

Ross Robinson

P.S. Dr. Soper has sent me a picture of the old house and I am going to try and get from Sandwich something of its history and will publish it in The Telegram.

administrator of his father's estate, Captain Thomas having died intestate. The other children, collating several separate accounts, were James, Catherine, Nancy, Hugh, and Elizabeth. There may have been two boys named James, by different marriages, though this seems improbable.

The Eleanor Guthrie Reed papers in the State Library at Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, state that Alexander McKee was born in Ireland. So do records compiled by Mr. George Fortune McDonald of Windsor, Ontario, Canada. The present author doubts this. As a matter of fact, Colonel Alexander's great-granddaughter Mary McKee, who married Colonel Arthur Rankin and was herself born in 1824, had been told by her father Alexander McKee the Younger that the wife of Captain Thomas McKee of McKee's Half Falls was Tecumsapah, of the family of the noted chief Tecumseh; and that it was she who was Colonel Alexander McKee's mother. This also may be apocryphal, but *some relationship might have existed*.

It was Colonel Arthur Rankin, apparently, who cut the oil portrait of Colonel Alexander McKee from its frame, folded in into a neat package, and sent it by express to his son Arthur McKee Rankin to give to his grand-daughter Phyliss McKee Rankin, who married the distinguished actor of stage and screen Harry Davenport. It still shows faintly the marks left by folding 82 years ago. The letter that follows discloses the interest Canadians have long felt in Colonel McKee's portrait.

THE EVENING TELEGRAM
TORONTO

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¹ This administration was with the consent of Captain Thomas McKee's widow, as evidenced by the document repeated below:

To Edward Shippen, Esquire, Deputy Register in and for the County of Lancaster.

I, Mary McKee, Widow and Relict of Thomas McKee late of Paxton Township in the County of Lancaster Yeoman Deceased do hereby Relinquish all my Right of Administration on the Estate of my said Late Husband and do agree, as far as in me lies that letters of Administration be granted on the said Estate to my son Alexander McGee.

Witness my Hand and Seal this Third Day of August Anno Domini 1769.

Witnesses present
John Chambers
C. Graydon

her
Mary McKee
mark

This is almost certainly the same wife Bishop Cammerhoff mentions in his diary, indicating she was a white woman, and the reader cannot fail to note that she denominates Alexander unequivocally "*my son*".

The enigma of Colonel Alexander McKee's maternity may never be resolved beyond cavil, but the following paragraph from a letter Lieut.-Governor John Graves Simcoe wrote on December 20th, 1794, to the Committee of the Privy Council for Trade and Plantations seems to indicate that its author did not entertain a suspicion that Alexander McKee was, as has been so often alleged, a half-breed. The two men were firm friends for many years, and maintained an intimate social intercourse. Surely, the lieutenant governor would have been constrained to make some oblique observation to the effect that Colonel McKee was peculiarly adapted to his post by reason of sharing tribal blood. Never once, among hundreds of letters, did I find such a comment. The reader should keep in mind, too, that it was not extraordinary in the six or seven decades preceding the Revolution for a white frontiersman to marry an Indian girl, many of whom were quite beautiful by any standards. Quite a number of men of high position and enviable family connections took an Indian girl as a wife, for which reason the fact of Indian maternity would not have produced raised eyebrows or critical comment. Simcoe's comment was:

"When I visited the Shawanese lately, and remarked on the richness of their Dresses and Ornaments (which upon an Average were worth forty or fifty pounds per Man), Colonel McKee assured me that when he first knew those People, the Warriors, the best Hunters, in their grand Dances frequently changed their dresses eight or ten times a night; that they were of equal value with those I saw, and that in this finery consisted their greatest Vanity and Emulation".

THE BOOK OF McKEE

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Believe me,

Yours truly,

Sgd. J. ROSS ROBERTSON

JRR/L

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No early records supply a clue to how the backwoods boy, born in a log trading post and fort on the Susquehanna, acquired the advanced education Alexander McKee very evidently possessed. A few of his letters follow, and from their content his rather facile command of English is evident; this, coupled with a certain occasional elegance of expression that is present in the simplest epistle, suggests that he was tutored by an English scholar. But when? He was a scout, ranger, and interpreter between British officers and the Indian tribes, and an ensign in the English army, in 1757, while still very young. In fact, as noted

¹ On March 19, 1763, George Croghan wrote to Colonel Bouquet, ". You should have at least fifty Indians from hence with you, of ye different nations, and such as is of consequence among these nations; with whom I will send young Mr. McKee, who is a modest young man, and one you can depend on as a good interpreter"

earlier, one author believed he reached that rank and then a lieutenantcy while still in his teens. The question about the source of his semi-classical education must remain unanswered until we learn more about him.

The present author also possesses other memorabilia of Colonel Alexander McKee, including his sequin-spangled silk vest, studs, shoe and knee buckles, silver candlesticks, his wine chest containing four square hand-blown glass-stoppered bottles, a water heater resembling a samovar, his silver chest, and a decorated stoneware soup tureen. The wine chest's lid on its underside, which was formerly its topside, bears the hatchet marks where it was forced open by a slave during the colonel's absence. Tradition does not relate the negro's punishment, if any followed, but the incident suggests he may have been the 'Bill Hannah's boy' who ran away, and concerning whom the colonel wrote his brother James instructions to apprehend and sell him.

Such vital statistics as have been gathered by earlier researchers concerning Colonel Alexander McKee, his father Captain Thomas McKee of McKee's Half Falls, and his grandfather Alexander McKee the Boyne veteran, follow. They should be read and used guardedly, as they are often conflicting and erroneous. Similar data concerning descendants are included, but they too must be critically appraised for error.

McKee Family Records as Assembled by George Fortune Macdonald, Windsor, Ontario, Canada.

1. Alexander McKee, born *circa* 1665, died 1740. Lived in County Antrim, Ireland, where he married. He with his son Thomas and grandson Alexander migrated to America prior to 1735 and settled in Donegal Township, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania.

Children : Thomas, born in Ireland about 1695 ; died in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, about 1770. He came to America prior to 1735 with his father Alexander McKee and settled in Donegal Township, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. He was a farmer and Indian trader.

He married, (1) in ¹Ireland, with issue of Alexander McKee, born in Ireland about 1720, died on River Thames, Ontario in 1799 ; (2) an ²Indian woman, in America, with issue : Catherine b d ; Nancy b d ; James b. 1755, d. 1834. This latter James McKee married (1) an Indian woman, with issue ; (2) Elizabeth Verner (1769-1809), with issue.

2. Thomas McKee (noted above) b. *circa* 1695, d. 1770, came to America with his father and settled in Donegal Township, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania.
3. Alexander McKee (noted above) b. *circa* 1720, d. on the River Thames, Ontario, in 1799. He came to America with his father and settled in Donegal Township, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, prior to 1735. He was a farmer and Indian trader, and became one of the richest men at Fort Pitt where he settled. He held several positions in the Indian Department, and at the time of the Revolution decided to remain loyal to the

¹ The reader cannot help noting that if this be accurate, then a later petition by James McKee, stated to be Alexander McKee's half-brother, dated August 19, 1779, which prepares the ground for an attempt to gain Alexander McKee's properties on an allegation of his illegitimacy, must be fraudulent.

² The marriage records of John Casper Stoeber 1730-79 show that a Thomas McKee was married on August 26, 1760 to Else Whiteside of Yellow Breeches. This sounds like an Indian girl, but nothing is included that would show the groom to be Captain Thomas McKee of McKee's Half Falls.

THE BOOK OF McKEE

British Government. He was imprisoned, but later made his escape and came to Canada, where he was made Deputy Superintendent of Indian Affairs. He died on his farm on the Thames River, Ontario, in 1799. He married an Indian woman and had three children : (See will) :

1. Thames, b. 1770 d. 1814. Married (1) an Indian woman called *White Elk*, with issue ; (2) Theresa Askin, with issue.
2. James b. d.
3. Catherine b. *ca.* 1780 d Married George Ermatinger December 3, 1803. He was an Ensign 2nd Battalion Royal Canadian Volunteers. Settled at Amherstburg, Ontario.
4. Thomas McKee (son of Colonel Alexander McKee), b. 1770, d. 1814 at Ontario, Quebec. Captain in 60th Regiment ; Deputy Superintendent of Indian Affairs ; member of Parliament for Essex County for two terms. Married (1) an Indian woman named Margaret ; (2) Theresa Askin. Issue by Margaret, an Indian woman :
 1. Catherine b. d. Spinster.
 2. James b. 1790 d. 1808 Drowned in Detroit River.
 3. Ann b. 1796 d. Married George Thomas Frederick of Ireland, with issue. He was Clerk of Peace for the Western District.

Issue by Theresa Askin :

1. Alexander b. 1802 d. 1837. Married ¹Phyllis Jacobs in 1825, with issue.
5. Alexander McKee was a farmer. b. 1802 d. 1837. Married Phyllis Jacobs in 1825. She was a daughter of George Jacobs. Issue of this marriage :
 1. Thomas
 2. Alexander
 3. James
 4. Arthur
 5. Ellen
 6. Mary
 7. Arabella
6. Thomas McKee (Eldest son of Alexander McKee, just above) b. 1826 d. 1902.

McKee Family Records as Assembled by Eleanor Guthrie Reed, Haverford, Pennsylvania, and now in State Library, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.

Alexander McKee. B. *circa* 1665 d. 1740. Lived in County Antrim, Ireland. Came to America and settled in Donegal Township, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, prior to 1735.

¹ "Felicity Jacob baptized at the River Thames Feb. 6, 1801 later became the wife of Alexander McKee, son of Thomas McKee and Therese Askin".

On June 8, 1957, Mrs Reed graciously sent the present author the following additional material from her files ; it had resulted from her own three year research :

Alexander McKee, born about 1665 ; fought under William III at the Battle of the Boyne and received lands in County Antrim, Ireland, which were sold upon his coming to America with his son Thomas. Alexander died at McKee's Half Falls on the Susquehanna River, now Dalmatia, Pennsylvania.

Thomas McKee, son of Alexander McKee, born in Ireland about 1695, and came to America with his father about 1735. Farmer and Indian trader. Died in 1769 at McKee's Half Falls. Children of Thomas McKee :

- (a) Alexander McKee, a natural son by an Indian mother, born about 1738. Indian agent and Tory, fled to Detroit in 1778, married an Indian woman and had one son, Thomas. Died on Thames River grant, Ontario, Canada, in 1799.
- (b) Catherine McKee, a daughter by his legal white wife Mary, whose maiden name is unknown. Catherine married William Graydon and by him had one daughter Elizabeth Graydon.
- (c) ¹Nancy, twice married, husbands unknown ; died 1765.
- (d) James, born 1755. Married Elizabeth Verner (1769-1809). Died in Pittsburgh June 10, 1834. Issue of this marriage was nine children, as follows :

			<i>Born</i>	<i>Died</i>
Andrew McKee	..	..	?	?
Maria McKee	..	..	1789	1812
John McKee	..	..	1787	1831
Thomas McKee	..	..	1792	1873
Sarah McKee	..	..	1794	1857
Alexander McKee	..	..	1796	1867
Infant	..	..	1798	1798
Jane McKee	..	..	1800	1866
Catherine McKee	..	..	1803	1828

Thomas McKee. Son of Alexander McKee. Born in Ireland about 1695. Came to America with his father, and with them was ²Alexander, young son of Thomas. Thomas was a farmer and Indian Trader. Died in Harrisburg in 1770. Married (1) in Ireland, with issue of :

Alexander, born of the Irish wife of Thomas, about 1720. Died 1799. Alexander married an Indian woman, with issue.

¹ Concerning the unfortunate Nancy, see Alexander McKee's letter dated at Fort Pitt January 2, 1765, to his father. From its tenor it is evident that Nancy died in 1764 after two unhappy marriages, the last one to a man whom her half-brother characterized as barbarous.

² The reader will note that this account contradicts a statement in the same papers that fixes Alexander's birth-place as America.

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Married (2) in America, to an Indian woman, with issue of :

Catherine. Born . Died . She married Graydon, with issue of Elizabeth Graydon.

Nancy. Unknown.

James. Born ¹1755. Died 1834. Married.

(1) an Indian woman, with issue.

(2) Elizabeth Verner (1769-1809), with issue.

Mrs. Eleanor Guthrie Reed's papers then supply the following information concerning Captain Thomas McKee's son James, who was born in 1755 when his father was sixty years of age, and the descendants of James and his wife Elizabeth Verner :

James McKee was born in 1755, died June 10, 1834.

Elizabeth Verner McKee was born in 1769, died July, 1809.

Their children were as follows (this ²repeats, with some further detail, the information previously given) :

	<i>Born</i>	<i>Died</i>
Andrew McKee	?	?
John McKee	1782	10.16.1831
Maria McKee (m. John Jones)	6.15.1789	12.3.1812
Thomas McKee (m. Nancy Matthews 1.20.1820. She was b. 11.10.1798)	1.10.1792	7.3.1873
Sarah McKee (m. David McGunneple)	1794	2.22.1857
Alexander McKee	12.9.1796	2.3.1867
Infant	1798	1798
Jane Anne McKee (Brooke)	1800	12.28.1866
Catherine McKee (McFaden)	10.15.1803	4.11.1828

The son Thomas McKee and his wife Nancy Matthews McKee had one son Alexander Addison McKee, born 11.24.1828.

Alexander McKee (12.9.1796 2.3.1867) m. Eleanor Jones McKee. Very possibly she was a cousin ; see above. Their children were as follows :

	<i>Born</i>	<i>Died</i>
Andrew McKee	3.6.1825	1.31.1867
Maria Louisa McKee (McGunneple)	5.2.1827	3.12.1905
Catherine McKee (Robert Bruce Guthrie)	8.29.1829	4.8.1866
John A. McKee	1.31.1832	4.30.1901
James Thomas McKee	6.2.1836	6.18.1855
Helen Elizabeth McKee	10.31.1839	2.13.1863

¹ This makes his father 60 when James was born.

² This is included because it bears internal evidence of having been taken from the records kept in a family Bible.

Mrs. Eleanor Guthrie Reed's papers also contain the following information concerning her line, showing the ascendancy of herself and her descendants to Alexander McKee the Boyne veteran, through his son Captain Thomas McKee of McKee's Half Falls :

Alexander McKee

Born about 1665 ; Died 1740

Thomas McKee

Born about 1695 in Ireland ; died in Harrisburg, Pa., 1770.

Name of first wife not known ; issue Alexander McKee ; born 1720, died 1799. Second wife, Indian.

James McKee

Son of Thomas McKee. Born in 1755 ; died June 10, 1834.

Wife, Elizabeth Verner, born in 1769 ; died July 1809.

Alexander McKee

Son of James McKee. Born December 9, 1796 ; died Feb. 3, 1867.

Wife, Eleanor Jones. Married 1824.

Catherine McKee

Daughter of Alexander McKee. Born August 29, 1829 ; died April 8, 1867.

Married Robert Bruce Guthrie. Born Feb. 4, 1822 ; died Oct. 1874.

Ellie Guthrie

Born March 22, 1851 ; died January 30, 1924.

Married Park Painter. Born Oct. 10, 1849 ; died Jan. 24, 1919.

Eleanor Guthrie Painter (REED)

Born December 18, 1881.

Married Harrie Ford Reed. Born July 15, 1876 ; died Aug. 8, 1914.

Park Painter Reed

B. 3.12.1907 D. 9.7.1931

M. Sylvia Van R. Strong, B. 10.11.1904

Jacquelyn Park Reed

B. 3.12.1926

John Ford Reed

B. 6.25.1911

M. Lydonia Beamer

Sylvia Park Reed

B. 4.17.1927

Eleanor Guthrie Reed

B. 7.26.1913

M. James T. Heltzel

It is impossible to segregate the scattered information from many different sources so that the vital data, correspondence, and legends concerning each man are kept in a compact section appertaining to him alone, for the reason that wills, immigrations, and events effecting one so often affect the others. The only manner in which a complete separation of the known facts about Alexander the Boyne veteran, Captain Thomas, and Colonel Alexander could be accomplished would be to extricate everything about each from source material, then reassemble and mingle it. For several reasons this seemed undesirable. Hence, the reader will have to conceive himself as an auditor somewhat like a juror, where he hears the testimony of each witness, collates the information in his own mind, then reaches an independent conclusion all his own. I think this is the best course.

The items which follow are from various collections of letters and documents, deposited with the institutions named, each of which has graciously given permission for them to be reproduced in the present *Book of McKee*. No attempt has been made to eliminate redundan-

cies, since it is only by examining every available facet that we may perhaps glimpse the whole.

The first item which follows is obviously a Canadian aspect, and contains minor inaccuracies that are corrected by other accounts.

"Alexander McKee was a native of Pennsylvania who engaged in the Indian trade and in 1772 was appointed Deputy Agent of Indian Affairs at Fort Pitt. When the Revolution came on McKee sympathized with the British government. In 1777 he was imprisoned by General Hand. Being released on parole, he fled to Detroit in the spring of 1778, in company with Simon Girty and Matthew Elliot. In the same year he was appointed captain in the British Indian Department, and before long was given the rank of deputy agent, and subsequently became superintendent of Indian Affairs at Detroit. In 1789 he was made a member of the Land Board of the District of Hesse. McKee was an inveterate foe of the Americans and had much to do with inciting the Indians to war against them. The Battle of Fallen Timbers in August 1794, was fought in the immediate vicinity of his trading establishment on the Maumee, and at its conclusion Wayne proceeded to raze his property. The day before the battle McKee, intending to participate in it, made his will. A copy of this will is now in the Burton Historical Collection. McKee removed to River Thames upon the American occupation of Detroit, and died there of lockjaw on January 13, 1799". *Burton Historical Records, John Askin Papers, Vol. 1, p. 301 footnote. Detroit Public Library.*

Source : "Pittsburgh paper" (date not available) :

"Alexander McKee and Alexander Ross did a large and lucrative trading business with the Indians between 1768 and 1772.

Alexander McKee was one of the leading and most influential men in the Pittsburgh area, if indeed not the leading Pittsburgher of the Revolutionary period.

In 1778, Alexander McKee, ²Simon Girty, and Matthew Elliot, with five others, fled to the Indian country and thence to Detroit. Among those with them was Robert Surpfit, a cousin of Alexander McKee, a man named Higgins, and two of Captain McKee's negro slaves".

¹ Reproduced herein.

² "Simon Girty was born in Pennsylvania in 1741. At the age of 15 he was captured by the Seneca and lived among them as a prisoner for three years. He subsequently acted as an interpreter, and in this capacity served in Lord Dunmore's campaign. Loyalist in his sympathies, Girty in the spring of 1778 accompanied Alexander McKee and Matthew Elliot on their flight from Pittsburgh to Detroit. Girty, like Elliot and McKee, became a notable leader of the Indians in the Northwest in their warfare with the Americans. For some reason Simon Girty was regarded by the Americans with greater detestation than any other of their foes, and he seems to have returned their feeling in full measure. In the summer of 1784, Girty married Catherine Malott, who had been living for several years as a captive of the Delaware tribe in Ohio, and established a home a short distance below Amherstburg. For a decade longer he continued to lead, or encourage, the western Indians in their warfare with the Americans, but this phase of his career was definitely closed by Wayne's victory at Fallen Timbers and the peace which followed it. Save for a considerable period of exile during the War of 1812, when the Americans were in control of Amherstburg, Girty continued to reside here until his death, Feb. 18, 1818. For an exhaustive account of his career see Consul W. Butterfield, *History of the Girtys* (Cincinnati, 1890)." *Burton Historical Records, John Askin Papers, Vol. 1, p. 308. Detroit Public Library.*

On June 16, 1744, Conrad Weiser, who was an interpreter and guide, stopped on his journey of escorting a band of Indian chiefs to a meeting with the governor, and bought from Simon Girty five shillings worth of bread and milk for their food. This was the elder Simon Girty, whose farm was on the east bank of the Susquehanna, north of where Harrisburg now stands.

Simon Girty had at this time three sons, Thomas who was five, Simon, Jr., who was then but three, and James, just past one year old. His wife had formerly been Mary Newton, and the two of them had braved a frontier life that entailed wrestling fields from the forest, before they could bring the soil under cultivation. Girty was himself an interpreter and Indian trader, and kept constantly close to the frontier that was inching gradually westward even then. It must have been about this time that he and Captain Thomas McKee became associated in their activities. Propinquity fostered this and a similar association between the children of these pioneers, and two of the Girtys were with Alexander McKee when he departed from Fort Pitt in the spring of 1788 to become the Indian agent at Detroit.

Note.—The cousin would have to be a (1) son of a brother of Captain Thomas McKee of McKee's Half Falls, who was Capt. (later Colonel) Alexander McKee's father, or (2) son of a sister of Capt. Thomas, whose father Alexander McKee, Sr., is believed to have had several children. Otherwise, Robert Surpfit would have to be the son of a brother or sister of Capt. Alexander McKee's mother, who by some was believed to be a woman of the Shawanoe tribe, but who by just as weighty proof may have been white.

Source : *History of Allegheny County, Penna.*

Alexander McKee, with Simon Girty and Matthew Elliott, on March 28, 1778, escaped from Pittsburgh to Detroit. Mentions that they were probably influenced by Connolly, who was an active agent of Dunmore. Girty's Run above Allegheny city was named for Simon Girty. Article denounces him as "worse than a savage . . . more cruel and relentless than any of the Indians". Makes no derogatory comment about Alexander McKee. The present author has found nothing to show that Girty was more than a foe who employed Indians to fight the American forces.

An account of Colonel Alexander McKee's ordeal, while he was still a captain and the Deputy Agent for Indian Affairs at Fort Pitt, was included in the chapter about the McKees of Rushville. The reader should recall that the American colonies were thoroughly British until the Revolution severed them from the mother country. Up to that time, and indeed even during the Revolution, a great many people of the old aristocracy remained loyal in thought and deed to the Crown. ¹Captain Alexander McKee was a Crown *commissioned officer*, and in addition held by appointment the office of *Deputy Agent for Indian Affairs for the District of Fort Pitt*. Doubtless he took an oath of fealty in each instance. Whether he should join the colonies in an attempt to break away from England's rule, or should remain faithful to the oaths he had taken, was, it seems to me, between him and his God, and certainly is not a matter for us to judge. He made a deliberate and thoughtful choice, and one that was to cost him his personal fortune. Self-interest certainly dictated throwing in his lot with

Girty's trading license expired in 1745, and he did not renew it until August 10, 1748. Then in 1749 he moved across the Susquehanna to Sherman's Creek, which was in Indian territory, and strictly a forbidden area to white settlers by the latest treaty. The Six Nations, consisting of the Tuscaroras, the Oneidas, the Senecas, the Mohawks, the Cayugas, and the Onandagas, complained to the white authorities, and in 1750 Simon Girty with wife, children, and a few belongings recrossed the Susquehanna, along with ten other pioneers who had followed Girty's lead.

Lancaster, Pennsylvania records mention Simon Girty senior as early as 1736 and as late as November 6, 1750. The *Virginia Gazette* of May 24, 1751, contained the following notice :

"Philadelphia, April 11, 1751—Yesterday, the trial of Samuel Sanders (a bond servant) for the murder of Simon Girty, came on at Supreme Court when the jury returned the verdict of manslaughter".

At the time of his death he was indebted to Captain Thomas McKee of McKee's Half Falls on the Susquehanna, for the trading goods he had with him. Captain McKee filed a formal lien on and claim to a piece of land owned by Girty on Armstrong Run, near Halifax, Dauphin County, Pennsylvania. The famed historian of early Pennsylvania, William Henry Egle, M.D., M.A., noted in his *Notes and Queries* :

"Capt. McKee came into possession of the Girty property through a debt incurred for trading goods furnished the latter by the former".

About two years following the change of ownership the property was in danger of being escheated to the Province, whereupon Captain McKee filed a caveat, of record in the Caveat Books of the Pennsylvania Archives, alleging among other things that, "the property was formerly owned by Simon Girty, Sr., who was killed on the Ohio". The probabilities are strong that the English ex-convict Samuel Sanders murdered Girty in the wilderness and stole his trading goods.—R.W.M.

¹ In 1758 the French were in possession of the strategic Fort Duquesne, at the point where the Allegheny and Monongahela rivers join to compose the mighty Ohio. In that year General Forbes headed an expedition across the mountains, captured this fort, and changed the name of the blockhouse to Fort Pitt. The tiny settlement about it was known as Pittsburgh. Lieutenant Alexander McKee was part of the expeditionary force ; a letter from the War Office in London to the present author states that Pennsylvania records show he was commissioned a lieutenant in 1757, which they do.

the American colonies, and the fact that he chose the British side rather than our own bespeaks a nobility of soul that needs very little argument, whether or not we disagree with the choice he made.

As will be evident from the documents and letters that follow, Alexander McKee labored continuously in the interests of peace between the white settlers and the various Indian tribes, particularly the Shawanoes. It was to this great Indian nation that, according to those who argue she was Indian, his mother is supposed to have belonged. Indeed, he seems to have spoken Shawanee with the fluency of a tribe member, as well as the dialects of the several other nations mentioned in the letters, treaties, and other documents included here. It is true that during the Revolutionary War he participated with other British officers in confederating the Indian tribes as allies, and employing them as warriors against our American troops. The French had used them as allies against us only a quarter of a century earlier, when *we* were British subjects. It is difficult to comprehend why we should be so horrified at the ruthlessness of these savages in their methods of warfare, when our own would hardly scintillate under critical examination. It should be constantly kept in mind that the Indians had suffered the deepest indignities and consistent robbery at the hands of the whites. Treaty after treaty was broken, often within days of its signing. Gradually westward the great tribes moved, knowing each time they erected a town that soon the white settlers would force them to abandon it and move on, for no reason better than that they wanted it. The Indians hated the whites bitterly at times, and it is a wonder they ever once tempered or altered that feeling. The British liaison officers aroused them to fighting fury by reminding them that the colonists had already robbed them of their lands, and meant to rob them of any they obtained, and to overwhelm them with their swelling numbers. This was true.

Sir William Johnson appointed Captain Alexander McKee as Deputy Agent for Indian Affairs at Fort Pitt in 1772, upon the resignation of Colonel George Croghan. Alexander McKee had worked closely with Croghan as an assistant for several years, as some of their correspondence testifies. It will be seen that the Fort was finally abandoned in that year by orders from General Gage, and in spite of Alexander McKee's protest. Lord Dunmore of Virginia immediately seized this opportunity for prosecuting that state's claim to part of Pennsylvania's territory, and sent Captain John Connolly to garrison the abandoned fort, on the pretext that Virginia residents needed it to protect them from the north. Because Connolly aroused local resentment he was replaced in the summer of 1775 by Captain John Neville. Captain Connolly then engaged himself in preparing for Lord Dunmore a ¹list of subjects who could be counted on as loyal to the crown, and it was a copy of this list containing Alexander McKee's name that fell into the hands of American officers.

Connolly was arrested and imprisoned, along with other Tories, at Fredericktown, Maryland. He incautiously wrote from there to Alexander McKee that he had recommended him to General Gage as a dependable loyalist, and would have done more for his 'honour and advantage' had he been successful in escaping to Detroit.

¹ In the Haldimand Papers there is a reproduction of Lord Dunmore's *List of Persons Well-disposed to His Majesty's Government, Living on the Frontiers of Virginia*, which he supplied to his superiors in England in 1775. It was supposed that Major Connolly prepared the list. Among the names that appeared on it were, "At Fort Pitt: Alexander McKee, Deputy Agent of Indian Affairs, (James) McKee, brother to Alexander, Alexander Ross, a Scotchman, John Campbell, Captain George Aston, Lieut. William Christy and Lieut. Jacob Bousman. Indians to be heard from at Fort Pitt: White Eyes, White Mingo, Cornstalk, Kayashuta, John Montour, Major William Crawford, Valentine Crawford, brother of William, John Stephenson (half-brother to the Crawfords), William Harrison (son-in-law of William Crawford), Thomas Gist and his brother".

It will serve no purpose to repeat the pledge exacted by the Commission of Safety that he would in effect sever all communications with Crown officials. Later he was placed under what amounted to house arrest ; at the same time General Hand arrested Colonel George Morgan, Colonel John Campbell, and Simon Girty. There were many unpleasantries from this time forward, and there can be no doubt that Captain Alexander McKee ignored his pledge and continued to communicate in some degree with other British officers.

On the night of March 28, 1778, he left for Detroit, carrying with him only some money and a few personal effects. He took along several of his slaves, and was accompanied in flight by his cousin Robert Surpflit, Matthew Elliot an interpreter, Simon Girty an interpreter, and John Higgins. His wife, alluded to by General Hand as ' McKee's squaw ', and his son Thomas who was then only eight, had preceded him by several months in removing to Detroit. This circumstance must have been known to the Commission of Safety, and most certainly supplied about all the notice reasonable people would need that Captain Alexander McKee, first, was a loyalist, and second, meant to remove to Detroit himself. It pretty clearly shows that he left Fort Pitt with the approbation of General Hand and his superiors. Congress later relieved General Hand of his command, faintly suggesting a suspicion that he was himself a loyalist.

It will be recollected that Captain Thomas McKee of McKee's Half Falls, Alexander McKee's father, was an Indian trader and interpreter before, and later concurrently with, his famous son. One of the early letters written by Sir William Johnson in the fall of 1762 to his resident Deputy Agent for Indian Affairs George Croghan directs him to engage Captain Thomas McKee for £60 per annum to act as an assistant along the Susquehanna and its tributaries. He refers to him as ' Mr. McGee, the old gentleman ', but there can be no doubt about the identity here. Early historical volumes are replete with references to Captain Thomas McKee, his fort and trading post, and his many adventures. Sir William Johnson's letter follows :

Extract from letter
Sir William Johnson
to
George Croghan

October 24, 1762

" Sir :

Sir Jeffrey Amherst has lately thought proper to retrench Indian expenses as much as possible, and settled the officers of your department, as he has also of mine. The former, no doubt, he has sent you ; therefore need not mention it here. Mr. Montour is to have but 50 pounds Sterling per annum, as he has nothing to do in the military way but to act as an Interpreter ; and if Mr. McGee, the old ¹gentleman will accept of 60 pounds Sterling per annum to act as an assistant in that Quarter, *viz.*, along the Susquehanna River and its branches, I will, on his letting me know it's agreeable, appoint him and send him such instructions as I shall judge necessary, and his pay shall commence from 29th of this inst., which day Montour's former pay as an officer ceases, and his 50 pounds Ster. per annum commences ; which you will please to let them both know as soon as possible"

¹This part has been underscored by an earlier editor and a parenthetic comment added, " Captain Thomas McKee.—W.F.W."

Apparently, Sir William had earlier spoken to Captain Thomas about this appointment :

Letter from Thomas McKee to
Sir William Johnson, Bart.

November 1, 1762

“ Sir :

I have made bold to write to you concerning what you mentioned to me at the Treaty at Easton about being an Assistant in the Indian Department upon this river. I would be glad to know your pleasure as soon as it is convenient. You may depend upon it, in case of my being appointed to this station, that my utmost endeavours shall not be wanting for the good of that service ; and such instructions as I may from time to time receive shall be strictly adhered to.

I don't doubt but Mr. Croghan has, before this, made you acquainted with the transactions at the Lancaster Treaty. I was there present and heard all the conferences ; but must beg liberty in my own opinion to condemn the conduct of our Government in the management of this Treaty.

The Indians went away much dissatisfied, especially the Six Nations ; the Shawanese and Delawares left the most of their presents upon the road to the Ohio, and sent word to the Governor (that) ‘ he might send for them to give to the Indians the next Treaty ’. The Indians promised to deliver up all their Captives the first of October, but they have not as yet brought one. I have an account that Alexander McKee is gone to their towns to demand them agreeable to their promise.

The Indians behave but very indifferently upon this River. If you think proper to write, please direct for me, at Paxton near Harris' Ferry, Susquehanna.

I am, Sir, with greatest respect,

Your most obedient humble servant,

THOMAS MCKEE.”

The foregoing letter does imply that Captain Thomas McKee's son Alexander, who was assistant to Croghan at that time, was on a journey into the Ohio country to temporize with the chiefs of the disgruntled tribes. It shows too that George Croghan had not complied immediately with Sir William Johnson's instruction of October 24th to offer Captain Thomas McKee the post of Assistant on the Susquehanna, even though his pay was to begin October 29th if he accepted. Possibly the distances the letters needed to travel were greater than the time allowed.

It is quite evident from the letter following that Captain Thomas was disturbed by another piece of information that had reached him. At first he withheld it, in the first letter, scarcely knowing in what language to couch its accusatory nature. On reflection, however, he decided to impart it, and so wrote the second note. Other specimens of Captain Thomas McKee's letters that I have seen convince me that he had help composing the present ones. If it were not for the implication that Alexander is away in the Indian country at the moment, the language of the letters suggests his easy composition and style.

Letter from Thomas McKee to
Sir William Johnson, Bart.

Paxton, Nov. 2, 1762

“ Sir :

After I had sealed the one that accompanies this, I thought of several things I forgot to mention, which occasions this postscript.

After the Treaty was over at Lancaster, a Seneca Capt. called the Garr (an early editor has amplified this by ‘ Kindaremy or Blue Checks ’) having had great esteem and respect paid him there by several of note, especially the Quaker party, and in particular Israel Pemberton, from whom he received some considerable presents, on which a jealousy commenced between him and his own Tribe, one of whom struck him with a tomahawk in such a manner that his life has been despaired of these six weeks. He lays at Fort Augusta, where Mr. Pemberton, through his tender concern for his favourite, has sent up his own son, a doctor and another Quaker, at his own expense.

Mr. Pemberton told a gentleman of my acquaintance, on whom I can depend, that he could not help thinking but you were in some way concerned with the New Englanders in their claim at Wyoming, as they must certainly have some encouragement from you in their approaches here.

Capt. Montour lives about six miles from Fort Augusta ; he has been ailing, but is recovered. I beg leave to conclude myself once more, with the greatest respect,

Your most obedient humble servant,

THOMAS McKEE

Pray make my compliments
to Mr. Mass & Master Johnny.

It seems fairly evident from the letter that follows, that the Mr. McKee mentioned is Alexander McKee. We thus observe that he has no hesitancy in going to a Shawanoe village and living with that tribe, which may have been his mother’s. There could hardly be a better method for sensing the true temper of these fierce but simple people ; nor a surer way of being the guest of honor at a burning-stake if they suspected treachery.

Letter from George Croghan

to

Sir William Johnson, Bart.

Bedford, Nov. 10, 1762

Sir :

Yesterday I received from Coll. Bouquet the Regulation you made last August for paying ye people employd under yr. Honour this way fer ye futer which I will conform to. I have wrote to every person employd to acquaint them therewith. I have no assistant now but Mr. McKee who is residing amongst ye Shawnas, &c.

I am, etc.

GEO. CROGHAN

Mr. Croghan's next letter makes it amply clear that the recent economy wave in the department is making it difficult to retain experienced men or hire new ones. For some reason Alexander McKee seems to have expressed a willingness to remain in the service, even though his superior officer candidly believes his pay to be niggardly and wholly inadequate :

Letter from Geo. Croghan
to (apparently)
Sir William Johnson, Bart.

Fort Pitt
December 10, 1762

Honrd. Sir :

This fall when I sent Mr. McKee to reside amongst the Shawnas, I enclosed you a copy of his instructions, and now on his return I inclose you a copy of his hornal by which your Honour will see that the Sinecas, Dellaways and Shawnas has been plotting against his Majesty's Subys. (His Majesty's Subjects) this Sumer &c.

On receiving ye Regulation for paying ye peple imploy'd in the department, I sent a copy to Detroit, but received no answer, but as ye Smiths there has apply'd for more pay than they formerly had, I don't expect they will continue in the service, nor can I get anybody here wh. will go to that post for ye pay, as everything is too dear there, nor will the Smith here continue any longer than Spring in ye service for ye pay. Mr. McKee will continue in ye service, tho I assure you his pay will scarce purchase him horses to travel from nation to nation and pay for the provisions he must purchase when amongst ye Indians.

Mr. McKee sets off in two days again to ye Lower Shawnas &c.

GEO. CROGHAN

P.S. Silver Heels with a party of Mohocks past by heer a few days ago 'c.

Near the close of 1762 Sir William Johnson, who seems to have been in direct communication with Captain Thomas McKee, but to have received Alexander McKee's reports through George Croghan, is apprised of a general discontent among the Indians concerning the shoddy presents they have recently received. Other correspondence suggests that they were quite often dissatisfied with their presents, and frequently behaved much like pampered children in this particular respect. As noted earlier, the present author spent two years among the Osages, and has observed a young buck, who had wrecked a Rolls-Royce the previous evening and had not bothered to have it towed in, become very indignant and hurt when his guardian refused to buy him a new one the following day, and suggested instead that they wait until they learned if the wreck could be restored.

Letter to George Croghan
from
Sir William Johnson, Bart.

Johnson Hall
December 30, 1762

Sir :

I have likewise received Mr. ¹McKee's instructions and the Minutes (?) took at the Treaty

¹Alexander McKee, son of Capt. Thomas McKee.

of Lancaster, as also a letter from his ¹father who informs me that the Indians went away much discontented from (?) and threw away their presents, and that the Indians about the Susquehanna appear in general much dissatisfied &c.

I find by Mr. McKee's letter that he has not as yet been made acquainted with the paragraph in my last to you, wherein I offered him 60 pd. ster. per ann. as an assistant on the Susquehanna River, in case he chose to accept of it. You will therefore please (in case you have not done so already) to acquaint him therewith that I may have his answer thereon . . .

On August 5, 1763, Colonel Henry Bouquet relieved a siege of Fort Pitt that had been under way for some three months by warriors of Pontiac's forces under the immediate leadership of a chief named Guyasuta. Alexander McKee was under Bouquet's command, and very probably participated in this battle, either as a lieutenant or captain.

Philadelphia June 2, 1764

Please your Excellency

I have the Honour To Inclose To your Excellency Cott Gladwin Certificate for Abraham Ione's Service at D'Troit with all those vouchers Wanting in the Indian Department this way ; excepting Meaner the Interpreter who is now at Fort Pitt which I shall likewise Transmitt your Excellency immediately on my arrival at that Place.

I beg leave to acquaint your Excellency that it is out of my Power to procure any other Voucher for the People employed at D'Troit than Cott Gladwin's Certificate, as it was a Transaction before the Commencement of my Accounts. And Therefore would Beg Cott Gladwin on His arrival at New York to Certify the Services done by Those people and Till such Certificates are obtained The inclosed Account for the last six Months Expences. This way from 1st Novr. 1763 To the 30th April 1764 could be detained should your Excellency Think proper to Grant a Warrant for my former Accounts.

I have the Honour to be

Your Excellency's most obedient

& most Humble Servant

ALEXANDER MCKEE

To His Excellency

The Honourable General Gage

New York July 6, 1764

Sir :

The General (General Gage.—R.W.M.) received your letter of the 2^d Inst. with an Abstract of Money due by the Crown to you for your Pay & the Interpreter's etc. & Vouchers (He supposes) wanting in some former Accts. He has directed me to inform you that your Abstract, Vouchers, etc. Should all be transmitted to Sir Wm. Johnson as heretofore, who has ever charged the persons employed at Fort Pitt & Communication half yearly, with the rest of his Officers, and from whom alone he can receive any Accts. against the Crown, relative to the Indian Department. Sir William gives in Vouchers only for the pay of his Officers, which are lodged

¹ Capt. Thomas McKee of McKee's Half Falls ; the reference is to his letter of Nov. 1, 1762, to Sir William Johnson.

The present author has not obtained copies of the correspondence between the first of 1763 and May, 1764, but from the letter to General Gage which follows it seems Alexander McKee was encountering the same kind of expense account trouble that devils people today.

THE BOOK OF MCKEE

in the Office. His Contingent Expences are accounted for by him to the Treasury. The General desires you'll be pleased therefore to settle with him, all such Expenses as may have been incurred at Fort Pitt etc., And for the future should anything be found necessary that can't so properly be charged to Sir Wm. Johnson, You'll be pleased to address yourself to the Command^r Officer to whom the General will send directions on this head and who will be provided with Money to answer such contingencies.

I return you the Abstract & Vouchers in order to your transmitting them to Sir William, etc.

am

Sir

&ca

Mr. McKee

Assistant for Indian Affairs

Philadelphia

The short and simple document that follows is apparently the only title Colonel Alexander McKee ever had to his 1,400 acres of land at the mouth of Chartier's Creek, on which McKee's Rocks now stands. It will be seen later that his brother, if indeed he was a brother and not a son, James McKee, had this property in mind when he filed a petition to delay its sale so that he might prove the legitimacy of his own birth and the illegitimacy of Alexander's. An odd proceeding.

By Colonel Henry Bouquet Commanding His Majesty's Forces in the Southern district. Permission is hereby granted to Alexander McKee Assistant Agent for Indian Affairs to occupy and Builde upon Land at the Mouth of ¹Shirties Creek on the south side of the Ohio (In Consideration of which he is to pay Five Shillings Yearly if demanded and also to be Subject to such Regulations as His Excellency the Commander in Chief may order for the good of His Majesty's Service.

Given under my Hand at

Fort Pitt this 25th November 1764

HENRY BOUQUET, Col. Comt.

From the letter to his father that follows it is evident that Nancy was a half-sister by a marriage subsequent to the one from which Alexander was born. No clue has been discovered to the identity of either of her husbands, but the terminal conduct of the last one is pretty obviously that of taking another woman openly while his dying wife was still alive. Moreover, Alexander's mode of expression, 'he never showed the least respect for any of the Family', suggests that the man may have been highly placed, and the kind of person from whom reasonable civility might ordinarily be expected.

To Thomas McKee, Harrisburg

Ft. Pitt, Jan. 2nd 1765

Hon. Father,

Your melancholy letter came to my hands a few days ago containing the very afflicting account of the death of my poor and unfortunate sister Nancy whom I sincerely regarded as my dear sister, and have often pitied from the many misfortunes she has been subjected to in both her marriages.

¹ recté Chartier's Creek.