

Where the State Treasurer Hid the Public Funds in Revolu- tionary Days—Story of an Old Farm House, Etc.

[Written for the "Sunday Advertiser" by
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There is often treasured up in families much information to furnish a missing link in an interesting chain. In conversation with Richard Hunt recently, I learned of the house where the public funds were secreted by State Treasurer Samuel Tucker in 1776, he having heard his grandmother, who was present when the British raided the house, tell of the event in his boyhood days.

The account of the attempt of State Treasurer Samuel Tucker to hide the public money, and his own also, when the British were advancing on Trenton in the latter part of the year 1776, says that on the 20th of November he took his personal effects and those of estates he was executor of, some Maryland and New Jersey loan-office money, with the unsigned public money, and took them to the house of John Abbott, about five miles from Trenton, with nearly six thousand pounds of unstamped Congress money, which he left under the care of John and Samuel Abbott, and that on the day the British arrived at Trenton, December 23d, he left Trenton and took the signed public money, amounting to more than fifteen hundred pounds, and a thousand pounds he held in trust, and that the public money he paid to Mr. Smith, and managed to place the other where it was not lost.

It seems that a Mrs. Mary Poulthor, of Trenton, led a detachment of British troops, about five hundred strong, to the house of John Abbott, and they raided the house and captured Tucker's black trunk, containing deeds, etc., and lots of unsigned paper money, and took it to the house of Randal Mitchell.

Elizabeth Hunt, who died in the year 1852, aged 94 years, lived in the John Abbott house at the time, and she said that the British did not get the money. She said that the family were or pretended to be getting ready to move, and that they placed the money in the bottom of tubs, and over it placed dishes and broken household utensils of various kinds and carried them to the cellar; that the soldiers ransacked the house from top to bottom, found the tubs, but were heard to say that they were nothing but old trumpery, and did not empty them. We may infer from this that the enemy got Tucker's trunk with his papers and the unsigned "skin plasters," but failed to get the money, although Samuel Abbott said that they seized all the effects at the house of John Abbott, the property of Tucker, with those in trust in his hands, together with the unsigned public money, but that the day before the British raided the house Mr. Tucker left Trenton and placed other money, about a thousand pounds he held in trust, in such secure places as were in his power, none of which was lost.

The house of John Abbott, which the British raided on Monday, the 23d of December, 1776, is still standing and is now the residence of John W. Tindall, a prominent and successful farmer of Hamilton township. The house has been added to at both ends, the middle part being the original. The date of its erection is not known, but the old-time fireplaces show it to be very old. It is on the road that leads to Scooby's Corner and less than a mile from the latter place. Another road that was closed years ago led from points northward, passed this house and led to Pearson's Landing, near the draw bridge. In this house and in the cellar beneath it was secreted the public money. This farm, and much other land, was owned by the Abbotts from the first settlement of that section down to 1839. One John Abbott in 1684 purchased two tracts of land adjoining each other, reaching from Crosswicks creek northward to and beyond the little stream known as Pond Run. The first purchase was of 156 acres and the second 49 acres. This John Abbott died in 1740 and willed this land to his sons, John and Timothy Abbott. In 1768 these brothers caused a resurvey to be made of the plantation, finding it to contain 810 acres. Soon after they divided the tract, Timothy Abbott, the elder brother, getting the south part and John Abbott the north part, the old road leading to Scooby's Corner being the dividing line. Timothy Abbott's house was what is now known as the Pearson Cubberley house, near Asay's Spring, and John Abbott's house is now the John W. Tindall farm house, where the public money was hidden. John Abbott's lands, roughly speaking, included not only the present Tindall farm, but that of Harley Bozarth, William Raab, Rockhill Hart, John Raab, the most of that of George C. Cubberley, that of Thomas Q. Taylor and that of Smith and Norton, the last two properties being set off and assigned to William Abbott. When John Abbott died, his will gave the big farm to Samuel Abbott, his nephew, son of Timothy. Samuel Abbott willed it to his daughter, Ann, who was the wife of John Pancoast, and his heirs sold 190 acres of it, including the historic house, to Daniel Ivens in 1829. From the Ivens family it has passed to the present owners, Mr. Tindall having the largest part and the old homestead house.

Elizabeth Quigley, the young woman who was at the house when the British searched it, afterwards married Richard Hunt. It is likely that her father lived there at the time. No persons in these parts were more patriotic in the days of the Revolution than those who bore the name of Quigley. Robert Quigley raised a company that saw much service, and Joseph and Thomas Quigley were also captains, while David, John, Moses and William served in the ranks. Isaac helped fight the enemy in the encounter at the draw bridge and, no doubt, elsewhere also. It appears that one Philip Quigley was the first of the name in this part. In 1722 he married Mary Pearson, and their children were Isaac, Robert, Daniel, Thomas, John, Moses, Aaron and Mary Quigley. Isaac Quigley was born in 1731 and died in 1817, and was buried at Pearsonville graveyard. He evidently was twice married, the second wife surviving him. He owned about two hundred acres westward of John Abbott's land. So far as it appears, his children were Elizabeth, the young woman spoken of, who married

Richard Hunt; Mary, Rachel, Martha, Theodosia, Jemima, Eliza, Isaac, Robert and Jane. Robert Quigley was a noted hunter, and it was he who captured the highwayman and mail robber, Joseph Thompson Hare, who flourished about a hundred years ago, and was the Jack Sheppard of his day. He said that when he saw a lock on a leather bag (mail pouch) it made his penknife dance in his pocket, and he boasted that he never left a victim penniless. He operated for a long time about Philadelphia and Trenton, and after a fresh exploit near the latter place took refuge in the lowlands along Crosswicks creek. Being compelled to come out of his hiding place for food, Robert Quigley secured him. Hare was eventually hanged at Philadelphia. Elizabeth Quigley was born in 1750 and was 18 years old when the British searched the old house for the hidden treasure. In June, 1778, when the sharp fight took place at the draw bridge and the enemy were driven back with loss, her father was with the militia, and the day before she walked two miles to carry his dinner to him. After the Revolution she married Richard Hunt, and their children were Isaac, James, Solomon, Elijah, Edith, Elizabeth and Susan. Isaac and Elizabeth went to Missouri. Susan became a resident of Philadelphia, marrying a man named Ackley. Edith married a Harmon. She lies buried at Pearsonville. Solomon married Susan Pitman and had a large family, several of whom are still living, and the descendants of this family are very numerous in this county. The sons, Richard and Solomon, of Trenton, helped me to prepare this sketch.

Elizabeth Hunt survived her husband many years, living to be 94 years old. For several years she suffered with a cancer that had eaten away one side of her face and destroyed one eye. In her old age she became a convert to the Baptist faith, and she expressed a desire to be baptized at the place where she had carried the dinner to her father when he was fighting the British seventy-two years before. Before the creek was dredged there was a suitable place on the south side of the creek, to the west of the draw bridge, and there about the year 1850 she was immersed by the Rev. Sering Stites, and after the rite she rode in wet clothes two miles to her son's house. She died in the year 1852, aged 94 years, and was buried in the Pearsonville graveyard, her grave being near that of her father, Isaac Quigley, and that of her daughter, Edith Harmon. A headstone, of the style used at that date, marks her grave, and she lies among the graves of her ancestors for several generations in this ancient burial plot.