

SUBSTITUTE FOR TRUTH: HAZARD'S "PROVINCIAL CORRESPONDENCE"

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ON DECEMBER 19, 1829, Samuel Hazard of Philadelphia published in his *Register of Pennsylvania* a contributed piece consisting of twelve texts and notes identified as "Provincial Correspondence: 1750 to 1765."¹ Were such material to make its first appearance at the present day, it probably would be quickly assessed at its true worth, but since this was not possible in 1829, these texts have had a long if relatively unobtrusive influence in Pennsylvania history.

Hazard published the "Correspondence" more than twenty years before undertaking the work that today is his chief claim to fame, the editing of the first series of *Pennsylvania Archives*, and in 1829 the documents he later edited were still stored, little used and in an "extremely exposed and perishing condition" (as Governor Johnston later described them), in the office of the Secretary of the Commonwealth.² In 1829 Hazard himself had only recently returned to Pennsylvania from Alabama. Forty-five years of age, an amateur historian, enthusiastic if untrained, he had become active in the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, of which he became curator in 1829, and had begun publication of the *Register* in which, near the end of its second year of publication, he printed the "Provincial Correspondence."³

Hazard did not identify his contributor, but prefaced the printed texts with the statement that: "A friend in the interior has furnished us with the following extracts from Provincial Letters, etc. which will be found interesting. We hope he will continue them:

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¹ Volume IV, No. 25, pages 389-391.

² *Pennsylvania Archives*, first series, I, 3. Cited hereafter as *PAI*.

³ For a biographical sketch of Samuel Hazard, see Allen Johnson *et al.*, *Dictionary of American Biography* (New York, 1928-1958), VIII, 472.

as he kindly promises to do." It is clear that, both then and thereafter, Hazard gave full credit to the items he printed; it is reasonable to assume that he knew who the contributor was, and one may guess, though he cannot assume, that he was a fellow member of the Historical Society. Although publication of unsigned contributions of this nature was not usual in the *Register*, it was not unparalleled; so it is not necessarily significant that Hazard or his contributor withheld the name from publication. He lived, Hazard says, "in the interior" of Pennsylvania, and the submitted texts themselves relate especially to early Carlisle and the adjacent frontier. Since the contributor did not claim that the original documents were in his possession—the implication is that they were not—it may be assumed that this geographical emphasis reflected his personal interest and that it offers some clue to his place of residence.

Inability to identify the contributor is tantalizing, however, and the more so since most of the items included in the "Provincial Correspondence" are demonstrable frauds. Not quite all of them, to be sure: There are two authentic texts: Colonel Bouquet's letter of July 3, 1763, reporting the Indians' capture of some of the western posts, and the assembly's message of thanks to Bouquet, dated January 15, 1765;⁴ and two concluding items on the "Correspondence" are presented not as documentary texts but merely as notes. Of the other eight items, however, it may be observed in general that they exhibit a similarity of literary style, that they tend less to present facts than to romanticize over them, that letters close with the phrase "Respectfully yours" or "Very respectfully yours" instead of the "Your obedient humble Servant" usual at that time, and that they contrast in other respects with eighteenth-century practice. A further oddity is the fact that the texts, sometimes vague in themselves, tend to be vaguely identified. Letters are imprecisely dated, and the place of writing, the writer, and the recipient are not always specified; the third item in the group, for example, is identified only as "Extract of a Provincial Letter dated in 1754." These features are suspicious enough in themselves, but conclusive evidence of the spurious character of

⁴ These authentic texts were available in the printed Votes of Assembly (since reprinted in *Pennsylvania Archives, Eighth Series*, VI, 5430, and VII, 5704-05). Comparison shows numerous changes of punctuation and a few of wording in the "Provincial Correspondence" copies.

these texts is to be found in factual errors readily demonstrable at the present time but of course less obvious in 1829. Thus a purported letter of 1754 mentions Forts Augusta and Loudoun, which were not built until two years later; a list of Pennsylvania garrisons dated 1755 includes forts not built until 1756, 1757, and even 1758, and includes two forts, "Franklin, at Shippensburg," and "Louthur, at Carlisle," whose names occur only in these fraudulent texts or in accounts written after 1829.⁵

A further example of this factual inaccuracy appears in what probably is the most popular and most reprinted single item of the "Provincial Correspondence," a letter dated May 27, 1753, at Carlisle, and reputedly written to Governor James Hamilton by one John O'Neal.⁶ This letter contains on the one hand vague and not wholly consistent references to an official errand O'Neal had just carried out and, on the other hand, a quaint description of early Carlisle. This description, which has won the letter its popularity, includes the statement that "The number of dwelling houses is five." Richard Peters, however, wrote on July 5—less than six weeks after O'Neal's purported letter—that Carlisle had "Six very good Stone Houses, several good Frame Houses and a Large Number of Log Houses in all making the number of Sixty Five Houses."⁷

While an itemized description of this "Provincial Correspondence," would be tedious, both the background and the subsequent history of these texts require mention of two personages referred to in them. One of these appears in two of the texts as "Captain Joel"; the O'Neal letter reports delivery of a commission to him in 1753, and a purported letter of 1754 calls him "one of the most remarkable characters in the Province of Pennsylvania" and mentions the services of his company at Forts Augusta and Loudoun, which as has been pointed out, did not exist until two years later than the date of this letter. The second of these personages appears in a text imprecisely dated "*August, 1750,*" which refers to a mysterious person variously identified—or disguised—as the

⁵ Accounts of all these forts may be found in the present writer's *Forts on the Pennsylvania Frontier, 1753-1758* (Harrisburg, 1960).

⁶ The most recent reprinting, apparently, is that in D. W. Thompson *et al.*, eds., *Two Hundred Years in Cumberland County* (Carlisle, 1951), 22-23.

⁷ Penn Manuscripts, Official Correspondence, VI, 73. The Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

"Black Hunter," "Black Rifle," "Wild Hunter of Juniata," "Black Hunter of the Forest," and "Black Protector," who, his family having been massacred, roams the forest and protects white settlers from the hostile Indians. (It may be noted in passing that this recital anticipates by at least five years the beginning of general Indian-white hostilities in Pennsylvania.)

Errors of fact and lapses of style that may be obvious now were not so apparent in 1829, however. The greatest factor, indeed, in gaining acceptance for this "Provincial Correspondence" was the fact that it helped fill a void, that it served in fact as a substitute for history. Earlier, actual participants in the French and Indian War had filled this role, but by 1829 these participants were gone, and their reminiscences, whose reiteration must for years have delighted or wearied numerous listeners, were beyond recall save in the relatively few instances in which the veterans or their acquaintances had recorded the recollections. In 1808 and 1811 Archibald Loudon had published two volumes of such reminiscences at Carlisle.⁸ These centered about the same region celebrated by the later "Provincial Correspondence," and it is possible that Loudon's work inspired the lesser and less admirable contribution. One or two of Loudon's accounts had appeared previously in print, and it is interesting to note that one of these, also, was fraudulent: the "Sufferings of Peter Williamson . . .,"⁹ extracted from that gentleman's embellished autobiography, *French and Indian Cruelty, Exemplified in the Life, and Various Vicissitudes of Fortune, of Peter Williamson . . .*, first printed at York, England, in 1758. Williamson, in order to squeeze all his awesome adventures into the time available, represented himself and other frontier settlers as having been captured by hostile Indians a year before Indians actually attacked the Pennsylvania frontier.¹⁰ Even in 1758 this anachronism might go undetected in England; by 1808 the idea of sustained Indian-white hostility was so familiar

⁸ *A Selection, of Some of the Most Interesting Narratives, of Outrages Committed by the Indians, in Their Wars, with the White People*. 2 vols. This work should not be judged by its lurid title.

⁹ *Ibid.*, I, 91-107. An account of Williamson is included in J. Bennett Nolan, *General Benjamin Franklin* (Philadelphia, 1936), 74-77.

¹⁰ Williamson's alleged captors lived at "Alamingo," a name perhaps suggested by *Allemangel*, a German term applied to the region about the northern corner of present Berks County. This fictitious Indian name has gotten into ethnological literature, where it still appears. See John R. Swanton, *The Indian Tribes of North America* (Washington, D. C., 1952), 50.

that the same error went unnoticed in Pennsylvania; and this same mistake of predating the hostilities is repeated in the "Provincial Correspondence."

In 1829, then, the eyewitnesses were gone, leaving only a few reminiscences behind; and although authentic documents of the period survived in considerable quantity, few of these texts had been published and the originals were not generally known or accessible. Nine years were to pass before the State began publication of the *Minutes of the Provincial Council* (*Provincial Records*),¹¹ and twenty-four years before the first series of *Pennsylvania Archives* printed documents of the same date. In 1829 I. D. Rupp was teaching school at Harrisburg and exploring the State Archives, but his county histories, which cite those then-unpublished sources, were fifteen years in the future.¹² Redmond Conyngham, a former state legislator from northeastern Pennsylvania but since removed to Carlisle, had leafed through old manuscripts in the office of the Secretary of the Commonwealth, and had presented excerpts from them at meetings of the American Philosophical Society and of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, of which he was a member; but Conyngham's transcriptions have proved uncritical and unreliable, and the repute he gained at the time has not lasted.¹³ His success, like that of the "Provincial Correspondence," depended largely on the fact that in the absence of generally available authentic records, even such poor substitutes were for the time acceptable.¹⁴

¹¹ The first three volumes appeared in 1838-1840. After a lapse of eleven years, these volumes were reissued with different paging and the series was extended to sixteen volumes, 1851-1853.

¹² See Oswald Seidensticker, "Memoir of Israel Daniel Rupp, the Historian," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, XIV (1890), 403-413.

¹³ Conyngham (1781-1846) had served as a representative in 1815 and as a senator in 1820-1823. See Alex. Harris, *A Biographical History of Lancaster County* (Lancaster, 1872), 145-146. For his residence at Carlisle about 1826, see *Memoirs of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania*, I, 321; II, 133.

¹⁴ For examples of his transcriptions, compare the Council minutes of July 6, 1694, as published in *Colonial Records*, I, 411-412 (1838 ed.), and in Hazard's *Register*, XV (1835), 181; and those of October 1, 1714, as in *Colonial Records*, II, 600-601, and in William Henry Egle, ed., *Notes and Queries*, 4th Series, II, 36 (where dated October 15). Charles A. Hanna, after extensive study of the sources for Pennsylvania frontier history, characterized Conyngham as "a writer who invented most of his facts, and distorted the rest." Hanna, *The Wilderness Trail* (New York and London, 1911), I, 145.

Although Hazard's unidentified correspondent had promised to continue his contributions, little more of the "Provincial Correspondence" appeared in print. A second installment, it is true, was published in the *Register* for December 26, one week after the original collection, but it was brief—one short letter purportedly by George Croghan and a few even shorter letter excerpts—and it was partly in the nature of a correction.¹⁵ Captain Joel, referred to in the previous "Correspondence" as "one of the most remarkable characters in the Province of Pennsylvania," was a typographic error; the name properly was Captain Jack. According to the Croghan letter now submitted, dated June 6, 1755, at Fort Louthier, Captain Jack and his men would assist in Braddock's campaign, and Croghan would join them. The contrast between the correctly written text of this letter and Croghan's highly original spelling and syntax might be explained by the use of a clerk, but more suspicious details are the dating at "Fort Louthier," a name unknown save in the "Provincial Correspondence" and later written accounts, and the form of the signature, "George" instead of Croghan's habitual "Geo:". The brief excerpts that complete this contribution all deal with the mysterious "Black Rifle" of the previously printed texts; they add the "Half Indian" to his aliases, and report that "he sometimes commanded Captain Jack's Company." One of these excerpts is said to be from a letter "In the office of the Secretary of the Commonwealth": the only identification of source for any of these texts.¹⁶ In conclusion, and seemingly disclaiming access to any further information, the contributor urged that "Any person who has in his possession the means of information, could not do a better thing than give a sketch of the Life of Captain Jack, or the adventures of the 'half Indian,' as they were intimately connected with the most interesting events which took place in our Province."

Now, neither the fraudulent nature of these documents nor the deep historical obscurity of both Captain Jack and the "Black Hunter" would lead one to expect further information about them. Nevertheless such material did appear, in the *Register* for March

¹⁵ *Op. cit.*, Vol. IV, No. 26, p. 416.

¹⁶ *Loc. cit.*: "See an account of an Indian force being compelled to retreat from Juniata by a number of the white inhabitants under the command of 'a noted half Indian,' In the office of the Secretary of the Commonwealth." Neither the document nor the incident has been identified.

20, 1830, in the form of another unsigned contribution entitled "Correspondence Relating to Braddock's Defeat."¹⁷ Of the two items included, the first, an "Extract of a letter dated June 27, 1755"—place of writing, writer, and recipient are not identified—, not only mentions Captain Jack but fortuitously reports the outcome of his meeting with Braddock: Rebuffed by that general, Captain Jack "soon after withdrew into the interior of Pennsylvania." The other item, a "Copy of a letter from Major Leslie to a respectable merchant of Philadelphia," dated July 30, 1755, gives a somewhat vague account of Braddock's defeat, and refers specifically only to the wounding and rescue of "Our friend, Captain John Conyngham."¹⁸ Not only the reappearance of Captain Jack but also the literary style of this offering suggests that this is in effect a third installment of the "Provincial Correspondence." As a detail, one may note that the "most remarkable" but obscure frontier scout has appeared throughout simply as "Captain Jack": no one seems to have known his full name.

For a decade after 1830, the "Provincial Correspondence" and Captain Jack seem to have been ignored.¹⁹ However, if this suggests a hesitancy to accept these texts, it must be noted that Samuel Hazard himself, who published them and must have known the identity of the contributor, seems never to have questioned their authenticity.

In 1841 the "Correspondence" began at last to attract notice. A new edition of the *Charter and Ordinances of the Borough of Carlisle*, published that year, included a historical account that contains clear allusions to portions of the long-neglected "Correspondence."²⁰ In the same year, moreover, Redmond Conyngham appears to have compiled a series of historical notes that were later (in 1894) published in William Henry Eggle's *Notes and*

¹⁷ *Op. cit.*, Vol. V, No. 12, p. 191.

¹⁸ Winthrop Sargent accepted these items as genuine, but could find no Captain John Conyngham at this date. *The History of an Expedition against Fort Du Quesne in 1755* (Philadelphia, 1855), 243 n.

¹⁹ It may be worth noting, however, that another unsigned contribution, printed in the *Register* of February 19, 1831 (Vol. VII, No. 8, p. 125), included a fraudulent letter of General John Forbes, dated Fort Du Quesne, November 26, 1758.

²⁰ An earlier edition, dated 1824, contained a different account, conveniently reprinted in D. W. Thompson *et al.*, eds., *op. cit.*, 131-135.

Queries.²¹ Miscellaneous in nature, these notes make no direct reference to the "Correspondence," but they do, surprisingly, include a brief two-paragraph entry in which Conyngham asserts that "Among the distinguished men who guarded the frontiers, Captain Jack of the Cumberland Rangers, is deserving of special notice"; and he then alludes vaguely to one of Jack's exploits not mentioned in the 1829-1830 publications, though those contain the only known earlier references to Captain Jack. Conyngham certainly knew of those earlier publications, however.

It would not be expected that either the booklet published at Carlisle nor, of course, Conyngham's unpublished notes, would attract wide attention to the material of the "Provincial Correspondence." However, Sherman Day was about this time compiling his *Historical Collections of the State of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia, 1843); and through Conyngham he learned of the "Provincial Correspondence" and also, probably, of the Carlisle *Charter and Ordinances*, both of which he quoted freely.²² Day's quotations are remarkable for two details. In the first place, quoting the "Provincial Correspondence" material almost verbatim, he identifies his source as "Mr. Conyngham's notes"; and if this really means what it seems to say, the identity of Samuel Hazard's contributor is almost certainly established.²³ In the second place, Day took Captain Jack and the "Black Hunter" to be one and the same person, and by this inspired error he created the personage of later fictionalized history and historical fiction.

Treble endorsed by the Borough of Carlisle, by Redmond Conyngham, and by Sherman Day, the material of the "Provincial Correspondence" quickly achieved a wider acceptance. I. D. Rupp quoted from it, as well as from authentic but unpublished state documents, in *The History and Topography of Dauphin, Cumberland, Franklin, Bedford, Adams, and Perry Counties* (Lancaster, 1846).²⁴ In 1856 Uriah J. Jones, a less sober historian, reproduced

²¹ "Historical Sketches, Containing Facts Not Generally Known, Compiled by Redmond Conyngham," *op. cit.*, Fourth Series, II, 9-141 *passim*. The reference to Captain Jack is on page 34.

²² *Op. cit.*, 262-271.

²³ *Op. cit.*, 264. A study of Conyngham's career as pseudohistorian, however useful, probably would give no final answer to the problem of the origin of the "Provincial Correspondence" but might permit a better evaluation of the probabilities.

²⁴ *Op. cit.*, 389-391.

and embellished Day's account of Captain Jack in his *History of the Early Settlement of the Juniata Valley*;²⁵ and in *The History of an Expedition against Fort Du Quesne*, published about the same date (Philadelphia, 1855), Winthrop Sargent treated Captain Jack as a historic person, on the basis of the texts printed by Hazard.²⁶

Finally, Samuel Hazard himself reentered the story. Completing, in this same year of 1856, his publication of the first series of the *Pennsylvania Archives*, he included in the final volume a set of notes on the frontier forts, where among his evidence he cited the texts he had published in the *Register* twenty-seven years before.²⁷ It is striking evidence of Hazard's faith in this material, and presumably in its contributor, that he used these texts without question, whereas any critical examination would have revealed discrepancies between it and the undoubtedly authentic documents Hazard himself had just edited in the *Archives*. Hazard equated the fictitious "Fort Louther" at Carlisle with the authentic fortification unobtrusively designated Carlisle Fort;²⁸ reassured by a letter that identified three traditional fort sites at Shippensburg, he found room there for both the "Fort Franklin" of the "Provincial Correspondence" and the Fort Morris of historical record.²⁹ Perpetuated by local historians (who conveniently ignored one of the three traditional sites at Shippensburg and disagreed which of the other two was which), and included in the 1896 *Report of the Commission to Locate the Site of The Frontier Forts of Pennsylvania*,³⁰ these phantom structures still haunt our historical landscape.

It is possible that the "Provincial Correspondence" affected Hazard's editing of the *Archives* in other and less obvious ways as well. Hazard's decision to arrange his edited documents in chronological order necessitated his assigning conjectural dates

²⁵ In the later and better known edition of this work (Harrisburg, 1889), the account of Captain Jack appears on pages 134-139.

²⁶ *Op. cit.*, 196-197.

²⁷ *Op. cit.*, XII, 323-467.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 348-349, "Fort at Carlisle—Lowther."

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 412-415, "Fort Morris at Shippensburg."

³⁰ Two vols. Commonly referred to as *Frontier Forts*; a second edition appeared in 1916. See I, 508-512, "Fort Lowther"; 513-514, "Fort Morris"; 518-520, "Fort Franklin."

in some instances;³¹ and some of these conjectural datings indicate that Hazard, like the fabricator of the "Provincial Correspondence," supposed frontier hostilities to have begun in Pennsylvania earlier than was actually the case.³²

Publication of the *Archives* and of the *Colonial Records*, therefore, which logically should have discredited the "Provincial Correspondence," actually opened a new chapter in the history of these curious and rather unprepossessing texts. Originating as substitutes for history and owing their first acceptance to the general unavailability of authentic records, the fraudulent texts have in fact survived in uneasy coexistence with the genuine documents and sometimes even in opposition to them.

Among the circumstances that account for this survival is the fact that it really is not so much the fraudulent documents themselves that are remembered but some of the ideas incorporated in them. Three historical legends in particular derive from them, those of Fort Louther, Fort Franklin, and Captain Jack. Few people now associate these with Hazard's publications of 1829-30 or even realize that they had a common origin. "Fort Louther" has replaced the colorless designation "Carlisle Fort" and has confused its early history; "Fort Franklin" survives in confused relationship to Fort Morris; "Captain Jack," as enlarged upon by Sherman Day, has flourished in the complete absence of any evidence that he was in fact "one of the most remarkable characters in the Province of Pennsylvania." In 1873 he appeared as the star of Charles McKnight's *Old Fort Duquesne; or Captain Jack the Scout*; and in our own day he has reappeared among the colorful throng in Hervey Allen's novels, which, like the "Provincial Correspondence," some readers tend to mistake for history.³³

Another factor, possibly the most important in the survival of

³¹ Originally Hazard had considered an arrangement by subject; see William B. Hesseltine and Larry Gara, "The Archives of Pennsylvania: A Glimpse at an Editor's Problems," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, LXXVII (1953), 328-331.

³² Note "A Journal in 1754," *PAr*, II, 159-166, on which is based the "Provincial Officers—1754" of *PA2*, II, 516-517 (1876 ed.). H. M. M. Richards pointed out the true date, 1757, in *Frontier Forts*, I, 105-106; see also the present writer's *Forts on the Pennsylvania Frontier*, 310, n. 20.

³³ See especially, *Bedford Village* (New York, 1944), 49-63: "The Secret Story of Captain Jack." Allen makes "Jack" the given name, and supplies "Penwick" as a family name. The same author's *Toward the Morning* (New York, 1948) contains imaginary descriptions of "Old Fort Franklin" (p. 238) and "Fort Lowther" (p. 257).

this material, is the circumstance, already stressed, that the "Provincial Correspondence" made its appearance when authentic records were little known; so uncritical readers, having first accepted the spurious texts, tended to accommodate the genuine, but later known, information to these, rather than to test the one against the other. Hazard himself illustrates this tendency and by his example probably encouraged it. A circumstance favoring this uncritical acceptance was the fact that the subject matter of the "Correspondence" was too minor to attract severe critical scrutiny; provincial forts at Carlisle and Shippensburg are, generally speaking, of rather local interest, and even the texts that extolled Captain Jack did not really attribute to him any significant acts or achievement.

Finally—though in fact it came first—there is the circumstance that although the fabricator of these texts committed errors of fact that are demonstrable, and should be evident, at the present day, he had a better-than-ordinary fund of historical lore for his own day. What he says of Fort Louthier is inaccurate, but there had been a fort at Carlisle. What he says of Fort Franklin is equally incorrect, but there had also been a fort at Shippensburg. His account of Captain Jack is imaginary, but there had been a real Captain Jack, though the facts of his life were quite different from what is in the "Provincial Correspondence." Possessing some notion of the historic background, however, and having learned a few specific facts—perhaps through hearsay, perhaps from inadequate or hastily read documents—the fabricator proceeded to fill in the picture with imaginary and invented detail and then, unaccountably, chose to exhibit his composition in the deceptive guise of genuine and original documents: apparent authenticity to counterbalance the actual falsification.

Charles McKnight identified the real Captain Jack in his book *Our Western Border*, published in 1876.³⁴ McKnight's two-page account relied upon the texts published in Hazard's *Register*, but added that "His monument can be now seen at Chambersburg, with the following inscription: 'Colonel Patrick Jack, an officer of the Colonial and Revolutionary wars—died January 25th, 1821,

³⁴ *Our Western Border, Its Life, Combats, Adventures, Forays, Massacres, Captivities, Scouts, Red Chiefs, Pioneer Women, One Hundred Years Ago* . . . (Philadelphia). The account of Captain Jack appears on pages 109-111.

aged ninety-one years.' " This identification seems to be generally accepted and probably is correct. The fact that Patrick Jack died only eight years before publication of the "Provincial Correspondence" means that the compiler might easily have heard of him. The compiler did not, as one might guess, get his information from the gravestone, however; he does not seem to have known Jack's given name, and the gravestone is in fact of later date.

in a paper read before the Kittochtinny Historical Society in 1921, Mr. O. C. Bowers assembled, from printed sources and county records, most of the available data relating to Patrick Jack and pointed out how poorly these fit the Captain Jack of legend.³⁵ It is true that the fictitious Captain Jack is much more the creation of Sherman Day and Uriah Jones than of the "Provincial Correspondence," but even those purported documents have little in common with authentic history. Far from becoming a captain by 1753 and taking his company to join Braddock in 1755, the real Patrick Jack did not become a lieutenant until 1763, when he was commissioned in Captain Christopher Lem's company, raised in the vicinity of Bedford.³⁶ Jack presumably was then thirty-three years old, and apparently did not become a captain until 1777, when at the age of forty-seven he held this rank in the Cumberland County Associators.³⁷ Unlike the legendary Captain Jack, whose family were all massacred by Indians, Patrick Jack had surviving relatives, one of whom, a daughter Mary Jack, provided in her will, dated December 1, 1859, for "gravestones . . . for the graves of my parents and their family."³⁸ Unlike the legendary Captain Jack, he does not lie in an unmarked and lonely grave.

Fraudulent though they are, the documents of the "Provincial Correspondence" have shown remarkable vitality, and in some limited areas their influence is still felt. A variety of factors have contributed to this effect, ranging from verbatim reprinting of certain of the texts—notably the John O'Neal letter—to the unwary acceptance of some of the mistaken assumptions, including,

³⁵ "Col. Patrick Jack," *Papers Read Before the Society*, IX (1915-1922), 509-533.

³⁶ *PA2*, II, 614. As reprinted in *PA5*, I, 337, the name appears as "Patrick Fack." See Bowers, *op. cit.*, 522-523, for Jack's deposition, October 5, 1805, regarding William Dixon's services in 1763-1764.

³⁷ Bowers, *op. cit.*, 518-521.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 530.

for example, the notion that general frontier hostilities prevailed in Pennsylvania before 1755. Most commonly, what have survived are names and details—Fort Louthier, Fort Franklin, Captain Jack—lifted from their context and used either by local historians or, more justifiably, by fiction writers. In an earlier day this use of questionable and unverified materials can be accounted for, understandably, by the dearth of accessible and authentic sources: They were in fact substitutes for history. Continued use of them in more recent days, while it may be equally accountable, is less defensible. Partly it is a matter of mere repetition and reluctance to abandon a familiar idea. Partly it may be that misplaced devotion to the romance of history—in this case the romance of the frontier—invites suspension of judgment in the presence of the colorful anecdote and the vivid detail. In a very real sense the “Provincial Correspondence” is the stuff of romance, and it is at least fitting, if not perhaps inevitable, that this material, which originally was fiction disguised as fact, has had its widest circulation in the pages of Hervey Allen’s novels, where facts are made the materials of fiction.