

LEGENDS OF THE SUSQUEHANNA: FRONTIER NARRATIVES AND THE FOLKLORIC SENSE OF PLACE

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Abstract: This article examines two pieces of regional folklore set in the Susquehanna Valley during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries: the historical legends of Juniata Jack and Cherry Tree Joe McCreery. Taking an interdisciplinary approach that combines environmental history, folklore studies, and ecocriticism, I argue that these stories constitute a mythology of place that invites our critical attention. In effect, the collection of frontier narratives associated with Juniata Jack and Cherry Tree Joe McCreery has created an imaginary geography of the Susquehanna Valley, a storyline of tragic or heroic experience that combines landscape and narrative, connects the local residents to the past, and, in doing so, provides a point of access to the region's fraught history of frontier conquest, racial violence, and resource extraction.

Keywords: Susquehanna Valley; Pennsylvania folklore; historical legends; Juniata Jack; Cherry Tree Joe McCreery; Uriah J. Jones; Henry Shoemaker

Introduction

American folk legends often depict working-class figures—farmers, loggers, coal miners, and oil drillers—whose daily labors radically reshape the natural world.¹ These characters

participate in a long history of environmental conquest dating back to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, so we need to beware of romanticizing their labor for its heroic dimensions. But we must also acknowledge the complex combination of economic constraints and class politics that gave rise to these occupations. When reading folklore about working-class heroes, one might ask, what critical approaches will allow us to interpret those stories on their own ground, as products of the regional landscape reflecting cultural values at particular moments in time, without sanctioning the acts of racial or environmental violence those narratives often glorify? And what, if anything, might these legends teach us about land use (and abuse) in our own age?

To answer those questions, this article examines two pieces of regional folklore set in the Susquehanna Valley during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The first of these historical legends takes place in the 1750s, when a settler by the name of Jack returns home to his cabin along the Juniata River to find his family murdered by a band of roving Indians. Jack responds with rage and spends the rest of his life wandering the hills, seeking revenge, and killing Indians at every opportunity. So begins the legend of Captain Jack, the Wild Hunter of the Juniata (also known as Black Jack, Juniata Jack, and the Black Rifle). The second of these regional narratives concerns the life of Cherry Tree Joe McCreery, a lumberjack and log-driver who worked the West Branch of the Susquehanna during the mid-nineteenth century. A man of impressive size and strength, McCreery rode the first raft down the West Branch in 1827; he broke a famous log jam at the mouth of Chest Creek in 1875; and during the great Johnstown Flood of 1889, he saved a house afloat on the floodwaters by plucking it from the river and dragging it up the bank—or so the stories say.²

Historically, these two legends bookend the process of frontier settlement in the Susquehanna Valley, and thus they reveal in narrative form what historian Patricia Nelson Limerick has labeled “the legacy of conquest.”³ Embracing a view of backcountry settlement based on heroic masculinity, they glorify a history of racial violence and the boom-and-bust pattern of resource extraction. Yet these legends also have an upshot: they help to shape what ecocritic Kent Ryden has called a “folkloric sense of place.”⁴ They promote the study of regional geography by infusing abstract space with concrete experience and emotional meaning; they forge a sense of cultural identity rooted in the shared stories of a local landscape; and they connect readers

(or listeners) to the history of place, thus opening a space for political or environmental inquiry.

When we apply Limerick's historical critique and Ryden's ecocritical analysis to the frontier narratives of the Susquehanna Valley, we discover that the legends of Juniata Jack and Cherry Tree Joe McCreery constitute a mythology of place that invites our critical attention. In short, these historical legends have created an imaginary geography of the Susquehanna Valley, a storyline of tragic or heroic experience that combines landscape and narrative, connects local residents to the past, and, in doing so, provides a point of access to the region's fraught history of frontier conquest, racial violence, and resource extraction. If in the past the hapless telling of folk legends has constructed a vision of the frontier that distorts historical fact, then today the careful analysis of these stories may also help to explain the cultural attitudes of a region that remains woefully devoted to environmental exploitation as its primary means of salvation.

Frontier History and Folklore Studies

The frontier has long held a special place in the study of American history. At the end of the nineteenth century, Frederick Jackson Turner expounded his famous Frontier Thesis, arguing that western expansion and backcountry settlement was the defining national experience. Turner celebrated the frontier as a proving ground for democracy, an influential geography that shaped both political culture and masculine identity.⁵ Later in the twentieth century, Henry Nash Smith and Richard Slotkin complicated Turner's Frontier Thesis by uncovering the cultural myths and symbols that emerged from historical experience and continue to frame our understanding of the past.⁶ In colonial captivity narratives and early American frontier literature, Slotkin found a "myth of regeneration through violence" that involved a recurring pattern of conflict between whites and Indians, eventually giving rise to the "Indian fighter and hunter" as "the first of our national heroes." As we shall see, this mythology of racial violence will help to explain the basic motifs of the legend of Juniata Jack, a figure who resembles the frontier hunter Daniel Boone, Slotkin's archetype for the "myth-hero of the early republic."⁷

More recently, scholars of the so-called new western history have further complicated Turner's Frontier Thesis by devoting particular attention to

themes of race and the environment. Focusing on the perspectives of the oppressed and the colonized, historians Richard White and Patricia Nelson Limerick, among others, have emphasized the reciprocal relationships between men and women, Indians and white settlers, and Mexican and Asian immigrants. Occasionally, they have found a middle ground of accommodation and cooperation among multiple groups of settlers, but more often they tell a story of racial violence and resource extraction, reminding us that cultural values have collided on the frontier with tragic consequences. Shattering the illusion of the frontier as an unpeopled wilderness, Slotkin and the new western historians have replaced Turner's thesis with a more critical vision of the backcountry as a contested ground.⁸

The Susquehanna Valley, running from western New York into central Pennsylvania, provides an ideal location for exploring this legacy of conquest. Today, we may not imagine the Susquehanna as part of the American West, but it certainly shares a similar narrative of frontier history. In the eighteenth century, for example, the valley served as a middle ground where Indians and whites lived and worked in relative harmony, but after the Seven Years' War, this era of accommodation degenerated into a period of racial conflict that intensified during the American Revolution and resulted in the displacement of the Native peoples. The valley also experienced a series of market revolutions, a boom-and-bust pattern of resource extraction that thrust various groups into conflict as they competed for natural resources, rapidly reshaping the landscape in the process. During the colonial era, the fur trade led to the near extinction of the local beaver population; in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries timber and coal companies rapaciously exploited the Susquehanna's economic potential; and today, a new wave of natural gas drilling has begun, once again, to change the face of the region.⁹

Studies of the Susquehanna Valley have often identified a culture of improvement as the key characteristic of the region's inhabitants. Peter Mancall, for example, refers to the Susquehanna as a "valley of opportunity," while Susan Stranahan calls it a "river of dreams."¹⁰ In both cases, these historians explain how settlers have flocked to the valley in pursuit of economic ambitions; how their eyes have widened with the prospect of profit and independence; and how the goal of economic improvement has connected the frontier with the Atlantic commercial world, thus accelerating the capitalist transformation of the countryside. Unfortunately, these economic improvements have often damaged the land base, polluted the river, and displaced

those people on the losing end of capitalist competition. So the story of the Susquehanna flows both ways, glistening with opportunity and independence for some, clouded with cultural violence and environmental destruction for others.

To develop a critical analysis of Juniata Jack and Cherry Tree Joe McCreery, we might read their legends through the lens of the new western history. Both figures represent pivotal moments in the process of Indian removal and resource extraction, and the stories associated with their lives reveal how racist and capitalist ideologies underpinned the cause of frontier conquest. But there are two principal dangers to this approach. First, as literary critic Thomas Hallock has argued, scholars of the new western history too often engage in “a grail quest for fact.”¹¹ That is, they dismiss frontier legends as acts of obfuscation and, in doing so, ignore what the narratives achieve *as* narratives. They fail to consider how literature functions to advance the cause of empire; for example, how character representation essentializes racial differences, and how plot structure depicts racial conflict as inevitable, how heroic rhetoric displaces responsibility, and how the myth of pristine wilderness erases the contested nature of the backcountry. Second, seeking to unmask the ideologies of frontier conquest, new western historians sometimes slip into an elite academic critique of rural land-use practices. From the comfortable armchair of an outsider’s perspective, one can all too easily condemn the working-class heroes of regional folklore for their racial violence and destructive land-use practices, but such an approach may overlook the economic and cultural constraints that shaped those behaviors in the first place. In other words, we must be sensitive to matters of class politics as they influence the plot of historical legends like those of Juniata Jack and Cherry Tree Joe McCreery.

In many ways, the study of folklore has followed a critical trajectory similar to the study of frontier history. As an academic field, folklore studies emerged in the early twentieth century and matured in the 1960s and 1970s. At first, folklorists worked to recover, record, and collect both oral and written tales; then they sought to trace those tales to their original sources; and finally, they adopted theoretical frameworks allowing them to interpret folklore’s relationship to oral history and ethnic culture. During the first half of the twentieth century, under the influence of Franz Boas and his followers, many folklorists abandoned the racist assumptions derived from the nineteenth century—specifically, the evolutionary theory of the progress of the human

race, which often supported an ideology of white supremacy—and replaced it with a more enlightened understanding of cultural relativism and historical particularism. Taking an ethnographic turn in the 1970s, scholars then began to perceive folktales as individual performances involving both a speaker and a specific audience; they regarded each telling of a tale as a complex, contextualized event, and doing so, they left behind the preoccupation with source hunting and motif tracing. By the 1980s, folklorists had combined performance theory with reader-response literary criticism, and studies began to appear that focused on particular folklore genres, tracked those genres from oral traditions through written manifestations, and applied the techniques of literary historicism to the textual versions of different folktales.¹²

In addition to these methodological changes, folklore studies also experienced a shift in perspective from a nationalistic to a pluralistic vision of American culture. After World War II, folklorists like Richard Dorson celebrated the US national project as a democratic endeavor integrating multiple cultures into one melting-pot tradition, and this political assumption shaped his view of American folklore.¹³ In the 1980s and 1990s, however, folklorists took a turn toward multiculturalism as the next generation of scholars challenged the belief in a unified tradition. Instead, they sought to collect a variety of folklore from different subcultures within the United States and, in the process, they interpreted this source material as evidence of ethnic and cultural pluralism, replacing the metaphor of the melting pot, we might say, with that of a salad bowl.¹⁴ In recent years, Stephen Gencarella has called for the development of a more “critical” folklore studies that borrows its methodology from rhetorical theory. Defining folklore as a form of rhetoric—that is, a set of discursive practices engaged in the production and articulation of power—Gencarella argues that folklore itself constructs a vision of “the folk” that often resists or reinforces the dominant ideology. In short, a rhetorical approach to folk legends may allow us to unmask the discourse of power and to expose the structures of violence, conquest, and alienation embedded in those legends.¹⁵

If we read the legends of the Susquehanna through the lens of the new western history, and if we adopt the critical orientation to folklore that Gencarella promotes, then we can uncover within the frontier narratives of Juniata Jack and Cherry Tree Joe McCreery an ideology of environmental conquest that has long plagued the region of central Pennsylvania. Indeed, that is a primary goal of the second half of this article. But again, there are problems with this critical methodology—it lacks empathy and it threatens

to become a self-fulfilling prophecy. In other words, an aggressively critical attitude may condition us to engage in a condescending attack that neglects (or even rejects) the perspective of the local inhabitants who find in these folk legends a source of cultural pride and a point of access to their home region's history. Thus, critical folklore studies may lead us down the same path as the new western history, yet with a bit more awareness of narrative patterns and ideological practices.

A literary approach combining folklore studies and ecocritical analysis may yield a more nuanced interpretation of the legends of Juniata Jack and Cherry Tree Joe McCreery. In *Mapping the Invisible Landscape*, for example, Kent Ryden models an ecocritical reading practice that involves a broader awareness of the narrative techniques of regional folklore as well as a deeper sensitivity to the local inhabitants' cultural values and emotional perspectives. This is *not* to say we should let these Susquehanna legends off the hook and absolve them of all responsibility for reinforcing an ethic of conquest, but we *should* make an effort to understand the cultural source of such stories, the complex set of economic and emotional forces that inspired their genesis and perpetuation. Before proceeding to an in-depth analysis of the two legends, let us briefly consider Ryden's theory of a folkloric sense of place in a bit more detail.

To begin, Ryden draws a distinction between space and place, between the abstract representation of physical geography, as found in maps, and the personal dimensions of cultural geography, as apparent in storytelling. In the process, he develops a working definition of the sense of place that remains helpful despite, or perhaps because of, its ambiguity:

A place is much more than a point in space. To be sure, a place is necessarily anchored to a specific location which can be identified by a particular set of cartographic coordinates, but it takes in as well the landscape found at that location and the meanings which people assign to that landscape through the process of living in it. A sense of place results gradually and unconsciously from inhabiting a landscape over time, becoming familiar with its physical properties, accruing a history within its confines.¹⁶

Thus, Ryden emphasizes our temporal and emotional engagement with the land, and he suggests that folk narratives, in particular, reveal the ways in which local residents imagine and perceive their home ground.

Traditionally, scholars studying the relationship between folklore and geography have sought answers to four key questions: How does the folk legend travel across space over time? Can we use the legend to define distinct regions? Can we trace the legend to its material origins in the local landscape? And is the legend historically authentic and/or verifiable? While these approaches are certainly valid, they are also rather scientific and sterile. In contrast, Ryden is more interested in the ways in which “folklore *vivifies* geography”—that is, how it inscribes the landscape with memory and meaning, thus transforming space into place. He identifies four “layers of meaning” produced and transmitted through folklore.¹⁷ First, people invent and/or repeat folk legends to navigate and organize their physical geography; second, they use narrative to record and reinforce their versions of history; third, they employ folklore to strengthen their community identity; and fourth, they share stories to articulate an emotional bond with the local landscape. These four registers—geography, history, identity, and emotion—work together to shape a folkloric sense of place.

Put another way, folklore performs its own act of interpretation; it imposes its own set of meanings upon the environment; it layers the landscape with culture and thus creates local color. In many cases, regional folklore also advances its own version of history, which is perhaps why historians distrust it. But from the perspective of the literary critic, this narrative revision and retelling of historical events often reveals something interesting about the way in which local residents envision the past and their place within it. While it may be helpful (and necessary) to compare folklore to fact in order to uncover key moments of slippage, we ought not to dismiss folklore on account of its distortion of fact, for such distortion offers its own insights, its own opportunities for analysis. Indeed, we will not get very far toward a critical understanding of the Susquehanna Valley if we merely seek to confirm or deny the historical authenticity of Juniata Jack’s existence or Cherry Tree Joe McCreery’s heroic feats. The point of these legends is not to relate fact but to convey feeling. Jack’s Mountain *feels* haunted with a history of racial violence; the West Branch *feels* like a river that required incredible acts of personal strength and courage to carry out the task of resource extraction.¹⁸

We are better off, perhaps, if we approach Juniata Jack and Cherry Tree Joe McCreery not as historical figures but as examples of “migratory” or “floating” legends. Such stories travel into a region from elsewhere and anchor themselves to particular features in the local landscape, intertwining with songs and other oral traditions to recount historical events and express the

community's emotional response to a place and its past.¹⁹ For instance, the legend of Juniata Jack, a classic story of a white settler seeking revenge in the aftermath of an Indian attack, has fixed itself to Jack's Mountain in central Pennsylvania and memorialized the period of racial violence that defined the region following the Seven Years' War. But it does *not* recount actual historical events; it merely captures the local residents' response to those events. Likewise, many of the feats attributed to Cherry Tree Joe McCreery resemble those found in traditional songs like "The Jam on Gerry's Rocks," a ballad long popular in logging regions.²⁰ Because migratory legends are *stories*, not lists of facts, they move beyond (or beneath) history into the realm of emotion. Likewise, we don't read tall tales seeking evidence of actual historical events; we read them—and laugh at them—because they capture the community's emotional response to incredible features in the local landscape or extreme elements of the climate.

Now, with these two critical approaches in mind—the historical and the ecocritical, the legacy of conquest and the folkloric sense of place—let us examine a few written versions of the legends of Juniata Jack and Cherry Tree Joe McCreery and see what they can teach us, not only about the history of land use in the Susquehanna Valley but also about the emotional response to the region's working landscape.

Juniata Jack and Cherry Tree Joe McCreery

In the mid-nineteenth century, Uriah J. Jones recorded a version of the Juniata Jack legend in the *History of the Early Settlement of the Juniata Valley* (1855).²¹ Published a full century after the period it recalls, this work not only functions as a vehicle of historical memory, but it also mixes fact with fiction and distorts the historical record in provocative ways. While recounting the conflicts that accompanied the settlement of the Juniata Valley, Jones sheds more light on the cultural attitudes of his own moment than he does on the actual events of the eighteenth century. Consider, for example, the language of the subtitle, which sets "*the Trials and Privations*" of the white settlers against the "*Predatory Incursions, Massacres, and Abductions*" perpetrated by the Native peoples. Thus, Jones transforms a complex history of racial violence into a morality tale reflecting the ideology of the mid-nineteenth century, and in doing so he illustrates the process of historical revision that often occurs in narrative reconstructions of the past.

In classic folk-legend fashion, Jones depicts Juniata Jack as a frontier hero of superhuman strength and courageous character. "He was a man of almost Herculean proportions," writes Jones, and he possessed woodcraft and survival skills that rivaled those of his Indian enemies: "With an eye like an eagle, an aim that was unerring, daring intrepidity, and a constitution that could brave the heat of summer as well as the frosts of winter, he roamed the valley like an uncaged tiger, the most formidable foe that ever crossed the red man's path."²² According to Jones, Jack is also a man of mystery—no one knows his real name or his origins—and due to his "swarthy complexion," some believe he has a mixed-race heritage; perhaps he is part African or part Native American. But Jones insists upon Jack's racial purity, classifying him as "a white man, possessing a more than ordinary share of intelligence."²³ Nevertheless, it is telling that Jack is introduced in racial terms, thus suggesting the predominant theme that will dictate the events of his legend. From a fictional standpoint, Jack resembles Natty Bumppo, the hero of James Fenimore Cooper's *Leatherstocking Tales*, a frontier hunter who fought in the Seven Years' War and settled for a time in the upper Susquehanna Valley before migrating west. Indeed, Jack is a veteran of the same imperial wars, an inhabitant of the same watershed, and a composite of the same frontier archetype derived from the figure of Daniel Boone. Like Natty Bumppo, Jack is "a man without a cross" who performs his pioneer function in a national narrative of conquest that is directly determined by his racial affiliations.²⁴

Jones provides a rough sketch of Jack's life, which unfolds as follows: He arrived in the Juniata Valley in 1750 and built himself a cabin in the hills, hoping to devote his life to hunting and fishing, but upon returning from an excursion in 1752, he found his cabin in ruins and his wife and two children murdered by Indians. Thereafter, Jack vowed eternal revenge against any and all Native peoples. He retreated into the wilderness, emerging only at rare intervals, and he spent most of his time shooting Indians with his rifle, occasionally engaging in hand-to-hand combat, and always scalping his victims. Jones recounts a few of Jack's heroic acts of racial violence, all of which call to mind Richard Slotkin's theory of frontier narratives as artifacts of "the myth of regeneration through violence."²⁵ In such instances, Jack functions as a protector of white settlers, stalking the forests and slaying Indians before they can conduct any additional massacres. Thus, the figure of Black Jack gives form to a broad cultural anxiety about the trials of backcountry settlement, and his acts of violence carry out a kind of eighteenth-century racial cleansing of the frontier that absolves mid-nineteenth-century readers of their own

culpability for supporting contemporary policies of Indian removal. In other words, by valorizing white settlers and demonizing Indian peoples, the legend assuages white guilt for a history of racial violence.

Mixing fact with fiction, Jones also connects Juniata Jack to some actual historical figures. Eventually, for instance, Jack earned himself a number of followers and the settlers of the Juniata Valley trusted him with the command of a company of rangers. Governor Hamilton granted Jack "a sort of irregular roving commission to hold in check the unfriendly Indians on the frontier," and during the Seven Years' War, "Captain Jack's Hunters" patrolled the valley and defended the settlements by "*hunting* for Indian scalps."²⁶ This subplot of the story may allude to the Paxton Boys, the real-life band of vigilantes who led the Conestoga Massacre in 1763 and later fought in the Yankee-Pennamite Wars in the Wyoming Valley, but unlike the Paxton Boys Jack enjoys the official blessing of the colonial government, whose laws in this fictional universe actually sanction white-on-Indian violence.²⁷

However, as a man exhibiting all the cliché characteristics of rugged individualism, Jack does not fully align himself with government forces. During the Seven Years' War, for example, he refused to join Gen. Edward Braddock's expedition to Fort Duquesne because the British general would not allow the frontier hunter to serve in a voluntary capacity and conduct his own brand of guerrilla warfare. Instead, Braddock required that Jack and his rangers submit to military authority and, of course, Jack refused. According to Jones, had Braddock secured Jack's services, the expedition would not have failed so miserably. Thus, Jones's version of the legend makes an implicit claim about American nationhood that anticipates Turner's Frontier Thesis. Scoffing at General Braddock's demands, Jack delivers a veiled attack from the margins of the British empire against the aristocratic pretensions of central authority. The rugged frontier hero will not serve in a subordinate capacity, and his resistance to imperial power encapsulates the attitudes of rural settlers in the American backcountry whose interests and values had begun to coalesce into an emerging national identity. As historian Tom Hatley observes, this new cultural identity was often forged through acts of interracial violence, as groups of backcountry settlers from multiple ethnicities joined forces in a brutal effort of Indian removal that began in the Seven Years' War and carried through the American Revolution.²⁸

To conclude this version of the legend, Jones refers to reports of Jack's ghost appearing in the Juniata Valley, thus investing the story with an additional supernatural quality. Jack died as an old man in 1772, but his

ghost continues to haunt the backcountry region in which he spilled so much blood. Likewise, the settlers of the valley have fixed the story in the landscape by naming a mountain after Jack—Jack’s Mountain—which Jones calls “an indestructible monument to his memory until time shall be no more.”²⁹ Through the rumor of a ghost story and the name of a topographical feature, the legend of Juniata Jack has inscribed itself in the physical landscape, texturing the terrain with the memory of racial violence and imperial conquest, and so the narrative functions as a gloss on the cartographic record, for Jones’s readers can no longer look at Jack’s Mountain on the map without recalling the story of the Black Rifle.³⁰

Pennsylvania folklorist Henry Shoemaker recorded his first version of the Juniata Jack legend in chapter 10 of *Susquehanna Legends* (1913), a collection of short stories that displays the Progressive Era interest in regional folklore and reveals the influence of Turner’s Frontier Thesis on writers of the early twentieth century.³¹ Unlike Jones, Shoemaker claims to know Jack’s real name, tracing his identity to a settler by the name of Jacob Swartz who grew up near Harris’s Ferry and later moved to the Juniata Valley. Like Jones, however, Shoemaker also opens his legend with a discussion of Jack’s racial profile (indeed, nearly every version of the legend begins with a reference to race). “While it is true that his skin was extremely dark,” Shoemaker insists, “he contained no Negro nor Indian blood.”³² Instead, Jack’s father was a Spanish sailor and his mother was the daughter of a German innkeeper in Philadelphia. Later, his mother married a German and Jack took his stepfather’s name of Swartz. The family moved to Harris’s Ferry, and after growing up on the edge of the frontier, Jack married a young Irish woman and moved to a hunting cabin along the Juniata River. Significantly, then, Shoemaker departs from the narrative of Anglo-Saxon racial purity and describes Jack as a man of mixed ethnicity—part Spanish, part German, with an Irish wife—a more accurate representation of the multicultural character of the Pennsylvania backcountry in the eighteenth century.

This version of the legend constructs a captivity narrative that functions as a backstory to the standard sketch of Jack’s life. As a young man, says Shoemaker, Jack spent his time in the woods hunting and fishing, and at first he befriended the Native peoples of the region, often making camp with them and sharing both food and stories. One night, however, long before he had married, he agreed to camp with a group of Iroquois warriors on a bluff near Fisher’s Ferry, just a few miles south of present-day Selinsgrove. Their leader, Chief Yellow Prongs, offered Jack a peace pipe, but just as the young

hunter began to smoke, he was grabbed from behind and tied to a tree on the edge of the bluff. There the Iroquois began to torture him, first by heating a gun barrel and burning Jack's body, then by flaying him alive, cutting strips of flesh from his shoulders to his waist. In this scene, Shoemaker portrays the Iroquois as senselessly inhumane, villains who take pleasure in brutality and the physical pain of their victims. In contrast, Jack displays both courage and ingenuity; he laughs at the Indians for failing to make him cry out, and at one point he offers to torture himself, taunting his captors for their ineffective tactics. They hand him a hot gun barrel; he breaks free of his bonds, fights his way to the cliff, and plunges into the river below.

A chase ensues, in which Jack's superior woodcraft allows him to evade his Iroquois pursuers, who eventually give up. Meanwhile, Jack wanders through the wilderness, enduring immense pain, disoriented but not lost. Soon he stumbles into a camp of sleeping Indians and murders all eight of the men, sparing a young woman because, as Shoemaker declares, "His chivalrous nature would not let him kill her." Jack has no qualms, however, about brain- ing her companions with a gun barrel, "an awful task" resulting in "frightful carnage." As he recovers from his wounds, Jack undergoes a kind of trial in the wilderness, "a period of fiendish suffering" in which "no stoic could have been more calm."³³ Indeed, Shoemaker's Juniata Jack possesses all the attributes of a frontier hero: superhuman strength, impressive intelligence, wily woodcraft, a stoic resistance to pain, and a fierce capacity to defend his life (and seek his revenge) by means of violence.

To conclude the legend, Shoemaker summarizes the plot of the Jones version, but he makes a key revision by incriminating Yellow Prongs for the murder of Jack's family, indicating that the chief had never forgotten the white hunter's escape and so committed this act of treachery out of spite. Consequently, in Shoemaker's view, the Indians deserve the blame for Jack's ultimate conversion to an Indian killer, for they committed the original act of violence, not once (with Jack's torture), but twice (with the murder of his family). Adding a new chapter to an old legend, Shoemaker suggests that Jack's captivity and torture scarred him for life, thus explaining why he later became "the most bloodthirsty foe the Indians possessed."³⁴ In other words, this version of the story defends Jack's racial violence by personalizing the wrongs he suffered and thereby justifying his revenge. In the process, it downplays, and even erases, the more complex political and economic factors contributing to racial conflicts in the eighteenth-century backcountry.

Shoemaker recorded a second version of the legend of Black Jack in chapter 19 of *Juniata Memories* (1916).³⁵ Like his first version, published just three years earlier, this adaptation of the narrative begins by tracing Jack's identity to Jacob Schwartz (spelled differently in this version) and establishing his racial profile. According to some reports, General Braddock refused to enlist Jack's service in the expedition to Fort Duquesne because he mistook Jack for a Jew, a rumor that Shoemaker dismisses by appealing to Jack's facial features and essentializing race as a physical characteristic. In a new twist, however, Shoemaker frames this second version of the story with reference to "the recent discovery of a box of gold money" on an island in the Susquehanna, and he uses this event to invent another backstory for the legend of Black Jack.³⁶ In this version, Jack's father plays a larger role, and Jack first arrives in the Juniata Valley in search of a buried treasure. Thus, we can see how Shoemaker applied different plot structures to pieces of regional folklore, fitting them into captivity narratives, wilderness survival stories, and, in this case, the legend of a buried treasure.

The first part of this version deals with the story of Jack's father, who in the early eighteenth century joined a scouting party up the Susquehanna River to locate an inland waterway to the Mississippi. On this expedition, the sailor and his companions carried with them a chest of gold coins intended as a gift for Spanish officials in the Southwest, but one night, while camping on an island a dozen miles south of present-day Sunbury, the party suffered an Indian attack. A band of Shawnee warriors from Shamokin killed the entire group, with the exception of Jack's father, whom they scalped and left for dead. While pillaging the camp, the Shawnees overlooked the chest of gold coins, hidden in a canoe in a willow thicket, and of course, Jack's father survived. Suffering incredible torment from his scalped head, he set off downriver, but his canoe sprung a leak and he was forced to abandon the gold, which he buried on an island near Selinsgrove. After arriving in Philadelphia, the young Spanish sailor married a German woman who would soon become Jack's mother. Before shipping out on another voyage, he left her with a map of the buried treasure. When Jack came of age, he set out for the Susquehanna in search of his father's gold. "That was why Jack Schwartz left his city home for the perils of the frontier," declares Shoemaker. "And that was why he felt his first sentiments of hatred for the Indian race."³⁷ Unfortunately, Jack misread his father's map and began his search on the Juniata River, only later realizing his error, but by then a band of Indians had murdered his wife and children, and he had commenced his revenge.

In this version of the legend, Shoemaker attempts to soften Jack's racial violence in a number of ways. First, he represents the hunter's campaign of revenge not only as a personal vendetta but as a family duty reaching back to his father's generation. Second, while we might explain the murder of Jack's wife and children as the collateral damage of the Seven Years' War, this backstory suggests that the Indians of the Susquehanna Valley committed such crimes long before the imperial conflicts of the 1750s had inspired such desperate efforts. Third, and perhaps most surprisingly, Shoemaker invents a fictional friendship between Black Jack and James Logan, the Oneida Indian celebrated for his "eminence in oratory" in Thomas Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1787).³⁸ According to Shoemaker, the two men "resolved to hunt the treasure together," and in the process "the Mingo orator and Black Jack became fast friends while on this prospecting tour."³⁹ Later, when Logan relocated to the Ohio Valley, the two friends spent a year hunting deer together before the lure of the buried treasure drew Jack back to the Susquehanna. This interracial friendship blossomed in the 1760s, after Jack's temper had cooled, and, says Shoemaker, by the time of the hunter's death in 1774, "He had not killed an Indian in ten years."⁴⁰ Interestingly, this version of the legend dates Jack's death to the same year that Logan's family was murdered by a group of white men during Lord Dunmore's War in the Ohio Valley. Likewise, Shoemaker maintains that Jack himself was shot by a white man in the Juniata Valley amid the backcountry violence of the American Revolution.

Thus, Shoemaker's second version of the Juniata Jack legend constructs a narrative that allows the frontier hunter to move beyond his violent revenge toward a period of forgiveness forged through an interracial friendship. In the process, it advances a theory of frontier history that charts an inevitable transition through multiple stages of land use, from wilderness hunting to backcountry farming, and it affiliates Black Jack with James Logan, a figure long associated with the myth of the vanishing Indian. Whereas earlier versions of the legend stopped short of overt interpretation, here Shoemaker explicitly praises Jack as "an agent of civilization" who "felt no remorse for killing so many Indians" because "it was necessary to get the savages out of the country to make way for the settlements."⁴¹ Ironically, however, much like Natty Bumppo, Jack becomes the victim of the very civilization for which he cleared a space in the wilderness.

Such irony defines the folklore recovery project that occupied Shoemaker throughout the first half of the twentieth century. Born into a wealthy family

in New York, Shoemaker worked as a stockbroker on Wall Street before moving to Pennsylvania, where he became a prominent newspaper publisher who supported the Progressive politics of the Republican Party. He joined the Boone and Crockett Club, collaborated with Gifford Pinchot on conservation efforts, founded the Pennsylvania Folklore Society, served as chairman of the state Historical Commission and as state archivist, and eventually accepted a position as the nation's first state folklorist. Extending his conservation efforts beyond nature to include culture, Shoemaker published more than 200 books and pamphlets recording the regional folklore of Pennsylvania and he launched an ambitious effort to erect historical markers throughout the state, many of them memorializing Indian legends and frontier settlements.⁴² Thus, Shoemaker inscribed the state with stories drawn from oral traditions and historical legends, constructing a sense of the past rooted in particular locations and texturing the landscape with memory and meaning. Challenging the authenticity of Shoemaker's stories, scholars later debunked them as "fakelore," but when approached from a literary perspective, these stories teach us a deeper truth about the narrative reconstruction of history.⁴³

For Shoemaker, Pennsylvania folklore reinforced Turner's view of the frontier as the proving ground for democracy and the source of cultural identity, and thus it supported a vision of the United States as nature's nation, a western empire established through the heroic conquest of the wilderness. As an outspoken critic of industry, which he feared would establish monopolies, lay claim to the forests of Pennsylvania, and exploit such resources without benefit to the public, Shoemaker marshaled his frontier mythology to stand in opposition to the industrial development of his adopted state. Ironically, however, Shoemaker's family made its fortune from coal mining, banking, and railroading, so he was the product and beneficiary of the very industrial capitalism he set out to reject. Furthermore, the figures he chose to celebrate were themselves part of the process of environmental exploitation that Shoemaker bemoaned in his own age. In other words, we can draw a straight line from Juniata Jack to Cherry Tree Joe McCreery to the industries that undermined conservation efforts in the Progressive Era. When we view these folk heroes through the lens of the new western history, we find them participating in an unbroken narrative of displacement, conquest, and resource extraction, but Shoemaker's stories too often silence this pattern of violence. By framing frontier history in a rhetoric of romance, his legends erase the economic energies at the heart of the legacy of conquest and replace those capitalist forces with an elegy for a vanishing cultural spirit.

Nevertheless, Shoemaker's frontier narratives also create a sense of regional pride by inscribing the landscape with stories of heroic back-country feats. After all, these pieces of folklore represent figures from the working classes who struggle to scrape out a living in a region far removed from the economic resources of Pennsylvania's cities. In this sense, readers and listeners from central Pennsylvania may recognize some of their own class struggle and community solidarity when they learn of Cherry Tree Joe McCreery's labor in the West Branch timber industry. McCreery earns a living and forges an identity through his participation in resource extraction, as so many regional residents have done for the past two centuries. For better or worse, these industries have provided both economic opportunity—to an extent—and a sense of pride for the people of rural Pennsylvania, and Shoemaker's folkloric sense of place reinforces that regional identity. Even so, we must question the cost of such labor if we are to move beyond the boom-and-bust pattern of industrial development that continues to undermine the economic stability and environmental sustainability of the region.

These themes of class conflict and regional pride play out in the popular folk ballad of "Cherry Tree Joe McCreery," attributed to Henry Wilson and first published in the *Cherry Tree Clipper* in 1880. After the last timber raft passed down the West Branch of the Susquehanna in 1938, local nostalgia for a lost way of life inspired a renewed interest in the history of the timber industry, leading to several reprints of the ballad over the next two decades.⁴⁴ Shoemaker first mentioned Cherry Tree Joe McCreery in a press release from the Pennsylvania Folklore Society issued in 1950.⁴⁵ Responding to the popularity of the Wisconsin giant Paul Bunyan, Shoemaker reminded his readers of the real-life Pennsylvania lumberjack, Joe McCreery, whose heroic feats on the West Branch had also elevated him to the status of a folk hero. Two years after the press release, Shoemaker provided a footnote for the republication of Wilson's ballad in a special issue of *Pennsylvania History* dedicated to the timber industry, in which he recounted a few legends associated with McCreery's life.⁴⁶ A decade later, the folklore enthusiast George Swetnam wrote a pair of articles about Cherry Tree Joe McCreery for the *Keystone Folklore Quarterly*, which also have as their subtext an effort to promote regional pride.⁴⁷ "Cherry Tree Joe was the Pennsylvania Paul Bunyan," proclaimed Swetnam, "long before an advertising campaign crystallized around the Wisconsin figure of Bunyan all the legends that had been told for many years through the lumber industry from Maine to Washington."⁴⁸

As recorded by Shoemaker and Swetnam, the frontier narrative of Cherry Tree Joe McCreery exhibits elements of both the tall tale and the historical legend genre.⁴⁹ Indeed, those familiar with the figure of Paul Bunyan will easily recognize the tall-tale quality of the feats and features ascribed to Cherry Tree Joe. Some say he was seven feet tall; he kept a herd of moose as milk cows and a panther as a house cat; his wife cooked flapjacks on a six-foot-square griddle and used a barrel of flour for each breakfast. Once, to clear a log-jam, Joe pulled out his pocketknife and began to carve up the trees, but before he knew it, he had whittled them to slivers, and that's how toothpicks were invented. Such tales have no fixed location in the regional landscape, but other elements of Joe's life connect him to particular times and places and thus reveal aspects of a historical legend. He was born in Muncy, Pennsylvania, in 1805, and moved to Cherry Tree on the West Branch in 1818; he rode the first timber raft down the river in 1827; he broke the famous ten-mile log-jam at Buttermilk Falls; he broke a seven-mile log-jam at the mouth of Chest Creek; he challenged John L. Sullivan, the heavyweight boxing champion of the world, in Dwyer's Saloon in Renovo, and caused his opponent to back down; he single-handedly lifted a raft off Gerry's Rocks and refloated it; he saved a house from the Johnstown Flood in 1889; and he died of old age in 1895 at his home in Cherry Tree.

Other versions of McCreery's life are less heroic. Wilson's ballad of "Cherry Tree Joe McCreery," for instance, tells the story of a failed effort to improve river navigation on the West Branch. In 1870 the state passed a law allowing private individuals to make improvements on impassable stretches of water and to recoup their costs by charging a fee, perhaps by way of a toll, to those aided by the work. The state issued a \$3,000 appropriation for projects on the West Branch, which it doled out to several lumber barons, among them E. B. Camp, Robert McKage, James B. Graham, and John Patton.⁵⁰ Hoping to profit from the law, McCreery volunteered to clear a path through the rocks at Chest Falls, an obstacle notorious for snagging rafts and causing log-jams. En route to the river, he swilled a gallon of whiskey, and instead of building a splash dam, as some "men of sense" recommended, he simply dynamited the rocks, failing to produce any fundamental improvement.⁵¹ Afterwards, he ran a raft through the falls and smashed it on the rocks, but regardless of this outcome he still collected his payment, an act of duplicity inspiring Wilson's chorus: "Looking out for number one, / Spending all the money, / And getting nothing done."⁵² In the second half of the ballad, Wilson describes how McCreery became a scapegoat for every broken boat and log-jam that later occurred at Chest Falls.

This ballad illustrates a couple of important points. First, it reveals how the residents of the Susquehanna Valley frown upon the graft and corruption that often accompanies government appropriations for improvement projects. Today, this distrust of government spending continues to define the political culture of the region. Second, the ballad demonstrates how the protagonists of folk legends do not always perform acts of heroic valor, but often function as trickster figures that circumscribe cultural values by way of opposition. Drunk, lazy, and dishonest, McCreery serves as a foil to the celebrated work ethic of rural Pennsylvanians; rather than doing a job well, he takes advantage of the law to line his pockets with drinking money. This depiction of Joe's character meshes with the account of R. Dudley Tonkin, who claims to have known McCreery and who also represents him as a kind of ne'er-do-well. According to Tonkin, Cherry Tree Joe "dodged work when he could," but his showmanship and his many memorable performances nevertheless transformed him into "a sort of patron saint of the lumber industry."⁵³

Thus, the legend of Cherry Tree Joe McCreery promotes regional pride and strengthens community identity by reinforcing the rural values of the upper Susquehanna Valley. In his role as a trickster figure, he encapsulates many of the tensions produced during the period of timber extraction in the nineteenth century. His character demonstrates how regional identity emerges from direct contact and confrontation with the physical landscape, and his labor as a lumberjack, raftsman, and log-driver celebrates the working-class culture of rural Pennsylvania while also revealing the region's fraught relationship with the boom-and-bust pattern of resource extraction. Even in Wilson's ballad, Cherry Tree Joe stands out as a heroic figure, despite his dishonesty and intemperance, because he displays a rugged individualism in the face of moneyed interests, and he ultimately dupes a group of timber barons out of the funds they siphoned from the state government. In this sense, we might say that Cherry Tree Joe gives form to the rural population's working-class resentment toward downstream political leaders, businessmen, and bureaucrats, and thus he represents a figure of resistance. Embedded in the region's geography, mapped in narrative terms, this local legend empowers working-class residents by capturing their emotional response to the economic pressures exerted upon their home region by extraction industries.⁵⁴

However, we ought to not entirely absolve Cherry Tree Joe for his exploits or for his environmental exploitation. According to Jack Brubaker, McCreery's primary occupation offers a key to understanding his impact upon the land base. He was not a raftsman but a log-driver; that is, instead of navigating rafts of timber lashed together, he engaged in the more dangerous labor of

free-floating individual logs. In the first half of the nineteenth century, timber operations on the West Branch of the Susquehanna required two essential components: sawmills and rafts. The sawmills would cut logs into lumber, and the rafts would transport it downriver. Because rafts could only carry a finite supply of lumber, the industry engaged in selective cutting, taking only those trees (mostly pine) worth transporting in this fashion.⁵⁵ By mid-century, however, timber barons began to construct booms (mechanisms that would catch and release free-floating logs in accordance with water levels), and thereafter, log-driving became the preferred method of transportation, a paradigm shift that “radically changed the timber industry and the West Branch landscape.”⁵⁶ Enabling the transport of more timber, log-driving encouraged the practice of clear-cutting and led to a period of massive forest removal. Thus, the figure of Cherry Tree Joe McCreery represents a profound ecological revolution, so we should not read this legend without acknowledging its element of environmental conquest.⁵⁷

Conclusion

In *Here and There*, a recent work of narrative criticism about the history of land use (and abuse) in Pennsylvania, Bill Conlogue argues that the stories we tell about place have a profound impact upon matters of social and environmental justice.⁵⁸ Surveying a range of regional literature, from poems about New England hill farms to novels set in the water-scarce Southwest, Conlogue uses narrative to arrive at a deeper understanding of the working landscapes that surround his home ground in the coal fields and dairy country near Scranton. As his study reveals, the stories that have grown out of regional landscapes often speak directly to the environmental problems their inhabitants continue to face today. In its own way, this article has attempted to arrive at a similar conclusion, reading the historical legends of the Susquehanna in an effort to expose the legacy of conquest that defines land-use practices in the region while also working to understand the complex array of class conflicts and regional pride that have given rise to those legends.

The story does not end here, for storytelling is itself a recursive practice that involves perpetual revision and reworking. No story sits still, and even as the legends of Juniata Jack and Cherry Tree Joe McCreery fade from memory, new narratives have emerged in central Pennsylvania expressing

contemporary environmental conflicts and demonstrating that the region remains a contested zone. Consider, for example, two coloring books that appeared on the desks of Pennsylvania schoolchildren in the wake of the recent boom in natural gas drilling. The first, created by Talisman Energy's Good Neighbor Program, features a friendly dinosaur in hard hat, safety vest, and work boots, who goes by the name "Talisman Terry the Fracosaurus." The second, issued by the Marcellus Protest Group, depicts a sharp-toothed, fork-tongued, shape-shifting public relations dinosaur dubbed "Toxic Tommy."⁵⁹ Silly as they seem, these coloring books illustrate the ways in which character and narrative shape public opinion about land-use practices, even at the earliest ages. Their propaganda is obvious, almost humorous, but as with the legends of Juniata Jack and Cherry Tree Joe McCreery, we must approach these texts with critical tools that help to unmask the ideologies that lurk between their lines and images. What new frontier heroes, one might ask, will emerge in the future as the fracking boom continues to exert its influence on the natural and cultural landscapes of the Susquehanna Valley? And how should we read these new narratives if not with an eye toward the patterns of the past?

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NOTES

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1. See Richard M. Dorson, *America in Legend: Folklore from the Colonial Period to the Present* (New York: Pantheon, 1973); and Tristram Potter Coffin and Hennig Cohen, eds., *The Parade of Heroes: Legendary Figures in American Lore* (Garden City, NJ: Anchor Press, 1978). I follow Dorson in my use of the term "folk legend" to label the stories associated with Juniata Jack and Cherry Tree Joe McCreery.

Dorson and other folklorists distinguish between “tales,” which are told as fiction and often consist of fantastic or implausible elements, and “legends,” which are told as true, set in the historical past, and designed to invite commentary or criticism. See Dorson, “Legends and Tall Tales,” in *Folklore: Selected Essays* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1972), 159–76. For an overview of the way folklorists have defined different genres, see Dan Ben-Amos, ed., *Folklore Genres* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1976), which includes two relevant essays about legends: Max Lüthi, “Aspects of the *Märchen* and Legend,” 17–33; and Linda Dégh and Andrew Vázsonyi, “Legend and Belief,” 93–123.

2. The choice of these two historical legends may appear somewhat arbitrary, but I have selected them for a number of reasons. First, the events of both narratives take place primarily in the Susquehanna Valley in central Pennsylvania; second, they are representative examples of the historical process of frontier settlement that unfolded in that region from the mid-eighteenth to the late nineteenth century; and third, they illustrate the cultural attitudes that both contributed to and responded to the racial violence and environmental exploitation that accompanied the history of frontier settlement. This article is not intended as an exhaustive, quantitative study of folklore in the Susquehanna Valley but rather as a profile of two particular narratives that found their way into print, in multiple versions, during the twentieth century. I might have selected another set of stories to conduct the same fundamental analysis. For instance, I might have traced the different versions of the legend of Simon Girty, a white man of Scots-Irish descent whose family settled in central Pennsylvania and who, as a boy, spent seven years in captivity among the Seneca Indians. During the American Revolution, Girty fought alongside the Iroquois on behalf of the Loyalists, and many of the rumors about his life suggest that he encouraged acts of torture against colonial patriots, earning him the nickname “the White Savage.” However, Girty’s infamous exploits occurred outside of the Susquehanna Valley, so his legend falls beyond the scope of this study. Likewise, because other scholars have already adequately analyzed the stories associated with Girty’s life, I have decided to focus on the less popular (but related) figure of Juniata Jack. For an excellent analysis of the Girty legends, see Daniel P. Barr, “‘A Monster So Brutal’: Simon Girty and the Degenerative Myth of the American Frontier, 1783–1900,” in *Essays in History*, ed. Ed Lengel, Corcoran Department of History, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, 1998.
3. Patricia Nelson Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West* (New York: Norton, 1987), 17–32.
4. Kent C. Ryden, *Mapping the Invisible Landscape: Folklore, Writing, and the Sense of Place* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1993), 58–68.
5. Frederick Jackson Turner, *Rereading Frederick Jackson Turner: “The Significance of the Frontier in American History,” and Other Essays*, ed. John Mack Faragher (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998).
6. See, for example, Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950); and Richard Slotkin, *Regeneration through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600–1860* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1973). Later, Slotkin continued his study of the frontier myth in both *The Fatal Environment: The Myth of the Frontier in the Age of Industrialization, 1800–1890* (New York: Atheneum, 1985) and *Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: Atheneum, 1992).

7. Slotkin, *Regeneration through Violence*, 5, 18, 21. Slotkin's concept of "myth" is particularly relevant to the historical legends of Juniata Jack and Cherry Tree Joe McCreery. According to Slotkin, "A mythology is a complex of narratives that dramatizes the world vision and historical sense of a people or culture, reducing centuries of experience into a constellation of compelling metaphors" (6). When evaluating folk legends, we should not confuse myth with fiction or falsehood; instead, myth functions as a deeper set of cultural and psychological beliefs that give shape to the narrative structure and character description of the legends. Likewise, the legends of Juniata Jack and Cherry Tree Joe McCreery are not myths in themselves; rather, they are what Slotkin calls "myth-artifacts," particular iterations of the underlying cultural myth (8).
8. In addition to Limerick's *The Legacy of Conquest*, works that inform my knowledge of the new western history include the following: Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Richard White, *"It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own": A New History of the American West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991); Patricia Nelson Limerick, *Something in the Soil: Legacies and Reckonings in the New West* (New York: Norton, 2000); Patricia Nelson Limerick, Clyde A. Milner II, and Charles E. Rankin, eds., *Trails: Toward a New Western History* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1991).
9. For this history of the Susquehanna region, I draw on the following: Peter C. Mancall, *Valley of Opportunity: Economic Culture along the Upper Susquehanna, 1700–1800* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991); Susan Q. Stranahan, *Susquehanna, River of Dreams* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993); Brian Black and Marcy Ladson, "The Legacy of Extraction: Reading Patterns and Ethics in Pennsylvania's Landscape of Energy," *Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies* 79, no. 4 (2012): 377–94. For book-length discussions of the natural gas boom in Pennsylvania, see Seamus McGraw, *The End of Country* (New York: Random House, 2011), and Tom Wilber, *Under the Surface: Fracking, Fortunes, and the Fate of the Marcellus Shale* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012).
10. See Mancall, *Valley of Opportunity*; and Stranahan, *Susquehanna, River of Dreams*.
11. Thomas Hallock, *From the Fallen Tree: Frontier Narratives, Environmental Politics, and the Roots of a National Pastoral, 1749–1826* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 22. In his introduction, Hallock calls for more conversation between literary critics and the new western historians, a synthesis he achieves by drawing upon White's concept of the "middle ground" and Limerick's emphasis on "the legacy of conquest" in his reading of frontier narratives from the mid-eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth century. But Hallock also expresses a key note of skepticism about the pitfalls of a purely historical methodology.
12. Admittedly, this trajectory of folklore studies dramatically oversimplifies the field. For a more detailed history, the reader should refer to Simon J. Bronner's many books on the subject. For my brief overview, I draw upon Bronner, *American Folklore Studies: An Intellectual History* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1986); *Following Tradition: Folklore in the Discourse of American Culture* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1998); and *Folk Nation: Folklore in the Creation of American Tradition* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 2002).
13. For a succinct statement of this nationalism, see Dorson, *America in Legend*, xiii–xv. Dorson did not view his interest in a national folklore as incompatible with the fact of different regional and ethnic traditions. For example, in *Bloodstoppers and Bearwalkers: Folk Traditions in the Upper Peninsula*

- (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1952), he found in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan a heterogeneous culture that illustrated the American melting pot.
14. In *Following Tradition*, 483–502, Bronner includes a bibliographic essay that traces this shift from nationalism to pluralism within folklore studies from the 1920s to the 1990s. Likewise, in *Folk Nation*, 249–63, Bronner reprints an essay from Richard Kurin, a curator at the Smithsonian, demonstrating the multicultural perspective of the late twentieth century.
 15. Stephen Olbrys Gencarella, “Constituting Folklore: A Case for Critical Folklore Studies,” *Journal of American Folklore* 122, no. 484 (2009): 172–96; Stephen Olbrys Gencarella, “Folk Criticism and the Art of Critical Folklore Studies,” *Journal of American Folklore* 124, no. 494 (2011): 251–71. Gencarella was not the first folklorist to call for a rhetorical approach. See, for example, Roger D. Abraham, “Introductory Remarks to a Rhetorical Theory of Folklore,” *Journal of American Folklore* 81, no. 320 (1968): 143–58.
 16. Ryden, *Mapping the Invisible Landscape*, 38.
 17. *Ibid.*, 57, 62.
 18. In one of the few critical interpretations of the Juniata Jack legend, Dennis P. McIlroy examines multiple versions of the story in an effort to corroborate Jack’s historical existence, but in doing so, he adopts an approach to folklore studies that will only take the reader so far. First, he summarizes the versions of the legend as recorded by U. J. Jones and Henry Shoemaker; then he searches the historical archive for proof of Jack’s existence; and finally, he concludes that the legend of Captain Jack contains more fiction than fact. See McIlroy, *Juniata, River of Sorrows* (Hollidaysburg, PA: Seven Oaks Press, 2003), 192–209. In my analysis of the Black Jack legend, I hope to build upon McIlroy’s study by devoting more attention to the narrative techniques of the different versions.
 19. Ryden, *Mapping the Invisible Landscape*, 83.
 20. For a version of “The Jam on Gerry’s Rock,” see Dorson, *America in Legend*, 158–62. “The Jam on Gerry’s Rock” generally involves the death of a young log-driver, whereas the feats associated with Cherry Tree Joe McCreery often conclude with the triumph of the hero. For a Pennsylvania version of “The Jam on Gerry’s Rock,” titled “The Log Jam at Hughey’s Rock,” see George Korson, ed., *Pennsylvania Songs and Legends* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1949), 345–46.
 21. Uriah J. Jones, *History of the Early Settlement of the Juniata Valley: Embracing an Account of the Early Pioneers and the Trials and Privations Incident to the Settlement of the Valley, Predatory Incursions, Massacres, and Abductions by the Indians During the French and Indian Wars, and the War of the Revolution, &c.* (Harrisburg, PA: The Telegraph Press, 1855; reprint, Philadelphia: Henry B. Ashmead, 1856), 145–51.
 22. *Ibid.*, 148.
 23. *Ibid.*, 145.
 24. James Fenimore Cooper, *The Last of the Mohicans* (New York: Penguin, 1986), 117. For a detailed treatment of Daniel Boone as the archetype of the frontier hunter, see Slotkin, *Regeneration through Violence*, 268–312.
 25. Slotkin, *Regeneration through Violence*, 5.
 26. Jones, *History of the Early Settlement of the Juniata Valley*, 148–49.
 27. For a brief discussion of the Paxton Boys, see Daniel K. Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country: A Native History of North America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 201–8.

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- For a history of the Yankee-Pennamite Wars, see Paul B. Moyers, *Wild Yankees: The Struggle for Independence along Pennsylvania's Revolutionary Frontier* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007).
28. In *The Dividing Paths: Cherokees and South Carolinians Through the Era of Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), Hatley shows how interracial violence during the Seven Years' War and the Cherokee War of 1759–61 created a new unity among white settlers in the southern Appalachian backcountry. For a history of that process in the Susquehanna Valley, see Mancall, *Valley of Opportunity*, 130–216; Colin G. Calloway, *The American Revolution in Indian Country: Crisis and Diversity in Native American Communities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 108–28; and Frederick J. Stefon, "The Wyoming Valley," in *Beyond Philadelphia: The American Revolution in the Pennsylvania Hinterland*, ed. John B. Frantz and William Pencak (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998), 133–52.
 29. Jones, *History of the Early Settlement of the Juniata Valley*, 151.
 30. It should be noted that Jack's Mountain may also be named for Jack Armstrong, a fur trader who resided in the Juniata Valley until his mysterious murder in 1744. For more on Jack Armstrong, see McIlnay, *Juniata, River of Sorrows*, 122–30.
 31. Henry W. Shoemaker, "The Escape (Story of Fisher's Ferry)," in *Susquehanna Legends: Collected in Central Pennsylvania* (Reading, PA: Bright Printing Company, 1913), 174–86. Interestingly, both Jones and Shoemaker also promoted the legend of Simon Girty (see n. 2 above), which reveals just how central the theme of racial violence was to their folklore projects. For their versions of the Girty legend, see Jones, *Simon Girty, The Outlaw*, ed. A. Monroe Aurand Jr. (Harrisburg, PA: The Aurand Press, 1931); and Shoemaker, "Girty's Notch," in *Allegheny Episodes: Folk Lore and Legends Collected in Northern and Western Pennsylvania* (Altoona, PA: Altoona Tribune Company, 1922), 161–74.
 32. Shoemaker, *Susquehanna Legends*, 174.
 33. *Ibid.*, 183–84.
 34. *Ibid.*, 176.
 35. Henry W. Shoemaker, "A Story of Black Jack: The Narrative of a Buried Treasure," in *Juniata Memories: Legends Collected in Central Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: John Joseph McVey, 1916), 273–85.
 36. Shoemaker, *Juniata Memories*, 273.
 37. *Ibid.*, 280.
 38. James Logan, sometimes referred to as John Logan, was also known as Tahgahjute and Tachnedorus. See Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, ed. Frank Shuffleton (New York: Penguin, 1999), 66–68 and 233–64. For an analysis of "Logan's Lament," see Hallock, *From the Fallen Tree*, 109–17; and Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country*, 213–14.
 39. Shoemaker, *Juniata Memories*, 281–82.
 40. *Ibid.*, 282.
 41. *Ibid.*, 283.
 42. For these details about Shoemaker's life and legacy, I am indebted to Simon Bronner's excellent biography, *Popularizing Pennsylvania: Henry W. Shoemaker and the Progressive Uses of Folklore and History* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996). According to Bronner, Shoemaker's folklore recovery project "underscored loyalty to the land by being imbued with a romantic regionalism that expressed the glory of the frontier and its common, hardy folk" (xiii).

Among the historical legends that Shoemaker printed were several regional stories related to geographic features in the Susquehanna Valley landscape, such as “The Legend of Penn’s Cave” (1908), “The Indian Steps” (1912), and “Nita-nee: The Indian Maiden for Whom the Nittany Mountain Is Named” (1916). For a version of these place-based legends, see Bronner, *Popularizing Pennsylvania*, 187–210.

43. See Richard M. Dorson, *Folklore and Fakelore: Essays toward a Discipline of Folk Studies* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976). In this collection of essays, Dorson recounts his twenty-year battle against the forces of “fakelore,” which he defines as “a synthetic product claiming to be authentic oral tradition but actually tailored for mass edification” (5). Dorson lamented the commercialization of folklore and debunked writers like Shoemaker who revised (or invented) folk legends to produce works of literature that appeased an appetite for folksy stereotypes and fulfilled the demands of a marketplace driven by nationalistic nostalgia.
44. See, for example, Henry Wilson, “Cherry Tree Joe McCreery,” *Pennsylvania History* 19, no. 4 (October 1952): 461–64; and “Local Paul Bunyan,” *The Lock Haven Express*, January 28, 1950. For the full publication history, see Homer Tope Rosenberger, *Mountain Folks: Fragments of Central Pennsylvania Lore* (Lock Haven, PA: Annie Halenbake Ross Library, 1975), 195–98.
45. News Release from the Pennsylvania Folklore Society, January 12, 1950, Manuscript Group 114, Henry W. Shoemaker Collection, Pennsylvania State Archives, Harrisburg, PA.
46. Shoemaker’s footnote appears in Wilson, “Cherry Tree Joe McCreery,” 461.
47. George Swetnam, “On the Trail of Cherry Tree Joe,” *Keystone Folklore Quarterly* 7, no. 1 (1962): 15–33; Swetnam, “More about Cherry Tree Joe,” *Keystone Folklore Quarterly* 7, no. 2 (1962): 38–41. Rosenberger reprinted these articles in *Mountain Folks*, 199–207.
48. Swetnam, “On the Trail of Cherry Tree Joe,” 15.
49. For more on the genre of the tall tale, see Carolyn S. Brown, *The Tall Tale in American Literature and Folklore* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1987). According to Brown, “the tall tale is a fictional story which is told in the form of personal narrative or anecdote, which challenges the listener’s credulity with comic outlandishness, and which performs different social functions depending on whether it is heard as true or fictional” (11).
50. For details on this law, see Rosenberger, *Mountain Folks*, 195–96; and Earl E. Brown, *Commerce on Early American Waterways: The Transport of Goods by Arks, Rafts and Log Drives* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Co., 2010), 134–40.
51. Wilson, “Cherry Tree Joe McCreery,” 462.
52. *Ibid.*, 461.
53. Swetnam quotes this account from Tonkin in “On the Trail of Cherry Tree Joe,” 20.
54. In *America in Legend*, Dorson observes that most of the folklore collected from the timber industry in the nineteenth century does *not* celebrate heroic figures like Paul Bunyan; rather, it criticizes corrupt camp bosses and corporate management. In this sense, the ballad of Cherry Tree Joe McCreery has more in common with Dorson’s “true” folklore than it does with the literary “fakelore” of Paul Bunyan.
55. Although these early timber operations were confined to selective cutting, they were certainly not sustainable. As students of forestry know, this form of selective cutting generally involves “high-grading”—cutting only the best trees—which leads to the loss of biomass and biodiversity

and causes the forest's genetic stock to decline over time. Thanks to my colleague Ethan Mannon for alerting me to this fact.

56. Jack Brubaker, *Down the Susquehanna to the Chesapeake* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002), 95. Brubaker explains the transformation of the West Branch timber industry in the nineteenth century and highlights Cherry Tree Joe as a representative figure in this transformation. See 79–117, and especially 93–97.
57. Other stories about Cherry Tree Joe reveal additional ways in which he contributed to the environmental conquest of the Pennsylvania forests. One story, for example, suggests that he actually anticipated the shift from pine to hemlock, which occurred after the timber industry had stripped the state of pine, and another story reports that McCreery worked part-time as a market hunter, a practice with its own set of devastating ecological consequences. Swetnam repeats these stories in “On the Trail of Cherry Tree Joe,” 16, and “More about Cherry Tree Joe,” 38.
58. Bill Conlogue, *Here and There: Reading Pennsylvania's Working Landscapes* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2013).
59. See, for example, Erich Schwartzel, “Color Me Fracked: Energy Industry Produces Coloring Book to Make Case for Gas Drilling to Kids,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, June 19, 2011. After a brief media storm, Talisman Energy discontinued its coloring book, but readers can still download it, along with its Toxic Tommy counterpart, from the website of the Marcellus Protest Group: <http://www.marcellusprotest.org/talisman-terry-replaced-with-toxic-tommy>.