

Nancy Ann Means (Sloan, Wasson), 1717–1776

Abducted by Indians during the French and Indian War

Nancy Ann Means (Sloan, Wasson)

This interesting family story was sent to William Lee Anderson III, 5th great grandson of Nancy Means, in December 1997 by Paul Corbett, another Means descendant, who lives in Sharon Pennsylvania.

A Plonk-related 5th great-grandmother Nancy Ann Means was born in 1717 in Ireland. Her mother may have died in childbirth. In the summer of 1718, her father and five children left Londonderry and arrived in Boston, Massachusetts, on 14 October 1718. By 1720, the family moved to Bucks County, Pennsylvania. About 1734, she married William Sloan in Bucks County. Their children were: John Sloan, born about 1734; William Sloan, born about 1736; Robert Sloan, born 1738 in Franklin, Pennsylvania; and Jane [Jean] Sloan, born 7 October 1744. After William died in 1744, Nancy remarried John Wasson on 26 May 1744 in Bucks County. Their children were: John Wasson, born about 1745; Thomas Wasson, born 1745; Robert Means Wasson, born about 1746, James Wasson, born 1746, and Elizabeth Wasson, born 1747.

On 26 May 1756 in central Pennsylvania, Nancy Means' second husband John Wasson was killed and she was taken hostage. Descendant Walter Reed Sloan, 1888–1974, wrote the following:

The story of Ann Wasson is not one of youth and romance as has been portrayed of other Indian captives, but that of suffering and privation. The story of a noble pioneer woman who was willing to risk all that this country should be developed for her children. In the spring of 1756 we find Ann Wasson living with her second husband, John Wasson, and seven children—John, William, Robert and Jane Sloan, issue with her first husband, William Sloan, and Thomas, James and Elizabeth Wasson, issue with her second husband, John Wasson on a plantation of 450 acres in Peters Township, Cumberland (now Franklin) County. The times were exceedingly dangerous. Since Braddock's defeat the previous fall the Indians had been terrorizing this whole section. Many settlers had lost their lives and many been captured. Rev. John Steele's meeting house had been turned into a fort, which was a place of refuge for the women and children of the neighborhood, as well as a stronghold when attacked by the Indians. On April 5, 1756, Fort McCord, just a few miles away, had fallen with the loss of many lives. Seedtime was at hand. John Wasson was busy tilling his land. On May 26, 1756, Ann Wasson leaving her seven children at Fort Steele, had gone to their plantation, risking her life that she may be at the side of her husband. Without warning they were attacked by the Indians. John Wasson was horribly mangled and scalped. Ann Wasson was taken captive. (Sloan 1930)

Soon after the event, the *Pennsylvania Gazette* reported:

On Wednesday 26th May 1756, They [the Indians] came to the Plantation of John Wasson in Peters Township, Cumberland County, whom they killed and mangled in so horrible and cruel manner, that a regard to decency forbids describing it, and afterwards burned his house and carried off his wife. A party of Steele's and Peters' men went out after the enemy, but to no purpose. (Pennsylvania Gazette 1756, 108).

After the Indian raid, authorities were notified. John Potter, Sheriff of Cumberland County, learning from the older children of an uncle, a brother of Nancy Means, living in Newton, Bucks County, Pennsylvania, notified him as follows:

Mr. Robert Means-

These are to certify to you, your brother [in-law], John Wasson, last Wednesday was barbarously killed by the Indians and his wife carried captive, and as the time is so exceedingly dangerous in these parts and no relatives of the orphans here to take care of them, the children desires to go to you; and all things considered, it appears to us most advisable; and with them we send you an account of his estate as it is now situate, his crops in the ground, the young lads can tell you best. His debts appears to be near fifty pounds, and if you incline to administer, send word to come up with the young lads yourself, you being the highest relative. This 29th of May 1756.

John Potter
Will Maxwell
Hez Alexander
William Dunwoddy
Moses Thomson (Corbett 1997)

One of these officials was Hezekiah Alexander who later in 1767 migrated to Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, and became a justice of the peace. He was a McGuire-related 2nd cousin 7 generations removed.

Nancy Ann Means was held for 3.5 years, possibly near Assinink, in the southern part of New York, by Ekoan, a Munsee chief because in the fall of 1759, Delaware Indian Chief Teedyuscung [pronounced Tē-dē-us-kung] demanded from Ekoan the release of thirteen pioneer prisoners, but only received two elderly white women and two boys. (Wallace 1949, 211–212)

On 27 November 1759 at Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, Teedyuscung and his party was given the following pass by Timothy Horsfield:

These are to request all his Majesty's liege people to suffer the bearer, King Teedyuscung & Daniel, with seven other Indians, men & women having with them four white captives. \iz. two women & 2 boys to pass unmolested to Philada. their business being to deliver the said captives to his honour the Governor. Given under my hand & seal at Bethlehem on the 27th Nov., 1759. Timo. Horsfield. (Pennsylvania State Archives n.d., 3:692)

On 1 December 1759, Pennsylvania Lieutenant Governor James Hamilton received Nancy Means and the three other hostages. The official record was:

Names of 4 prisoners delivered by Teedyuscung to Gov. 1st Dec.1759

Memorandum of Ann Wasson She was taken ill the year 1756 in the beginning of May, at Caghnehecheeky in Cumberland County her husband John Wasson was then killed and scalped. She left seven children about two miles off, and she hopes they are alive some where. She is unable to support herself. She has two brothers some where in Chester or Bucks County. Memorandum of Maria Wagoner She was taken in the year 1757 in September and her husband was then killed and scalped his name was Conrad Wagoner they lived on Scarboro in Lancaster County, she has no children. Peter Newfang, a lad of about 11 or 12 years of age was taken in the year 1756 in May on the other side of the mountains, his mother was then killed. He can't talk a word of German. His father, Balhaser Newfang, is a private soldier in Battalion of Penna. Regiment. (original at Pennsylvania State Library, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania)

On 4 December, Hamilton officially thanked Teedyuscung:

Brother: The sight of our flesh and blood, after a tedious captivity gives us great pleasure, and I thank you for the return of the four prisoners, and expect you will continue to do your utmost that all be returned to us as soon as possible. (Gave a string of Wampum.)
Brother: You have acted a just part in bringing the six horses that have been stolen from

the poor people on the borders by some of your unthinking young men.
(Pennsylvania State Archives n.d., 4:6)

On 7 December, Hamilton addressed the Pennsylvania Assembly:

There are two Indian messengers in town from the Ohio, who, with Teedyuscung, to whom they were recommended to be conducted here, have been assisting in a council of Indians held at Atsintsing, an Indian town, situate on the Cayuga Branch of the Sasquehannah. Teedyuscung, having delivered to me four prisoners, two elderly women and two boys, who are quite naked and destitute, I recommend it to you to enable me to make some provision for them, and likewise to send these messengers away well pleased with their reception, being of opinion with Teedyuscung, that it will be of great service, at this time, to engage the friendship of the nation to whom they belong.
(Pennsylvania State Archives n.d., 3:12)

On 8 December, Isaac Norris, Speaker of the House, arranged for provisions for the four prisoners and addressed Hamilton:

We have recommended the other parts of your Honor's message to the commissioners who will make a suitable provision for the prisoners now delivered, and also to take care that the messengers from the Ohio shall depart well satisfied with their reception. Amongst us signed by the Order of the House December 8, 1759 Isaac Norris Speaker.
(Votes of Assembly, Vol. 5, December 8, 1759)

Nancy Means may have remained a ward of the Province of Pennsylvania for about a year (Sloan 1930). Further research by descendent Paul Corbett has provided:

Just when and where Ann Wasson was united with her children is not known. On April 22, 1762, letters of administration were issued at Carlisle on the estate of John Wasson, with Ann Wasson and William Sloan, her eldest son, as administrators in the settlement of this estate it was brought out that John Wasson "had received all and singular the personal estate of William Sloan", Ann Wasson's first husband. As this sum was now due the Sloan children. William Allison, John Holiday, William Maxwell and James Potter asked to act as arbitrators. On May 26, 1762, they made settlement with the consent of all parties. This settlement was confirmed at an Orphan's Court held at Shippensburg on the 8th day of March 1763. (Corbett 1997)

In 1769, Nancy was a member of the congregation of Doctor John King's Presbyterian Church in Mercersburg, Pennsylvania (Sloan 1930). The last known evidence of her eventful life was on 30 October 1772 when her son Thomas entered a caveat on a survey of the Wasson family farm on behalf of himself, his mother, his brother and sister (Sloan 1930). Presumably, she was buried in Mercersburg, Pennsylvania. Other sources include: (Wasson n.d.) (Finafrock 1942, 25) (Pennsylvania State Archives n.d., 5:6:276, 289, 297, 299, 305, 315) (Albert n.d., 609). Also:

In November 1951, while digging a ditch along the South Penn railroad on his farm, one and a half miles northwest of Williamson, Pennsylvania, Elmer C. Myers uncovered the skeleton of a man, believed to be that of John Wasson. Dr. William E. B. Hall, Chambersburg Hospital pathologist, who examined the remains immediately after they were found, reported that the man was brutally attacked with both a tomahawk and war clubs. Marks on the skull and other indications pointed to a violent death; ribs were fractured by blows to the body, and one of the skeleton's arms was broken by twisting. The discovery of the skeleton prompted research into the life of John Wasson and it was learned that he had taken up residence on the farm in Peters Township during the period of the French and Indian Wars. The farm was located only a few miles from the Rev. John Steele's church at Church Hill, near the present village of Lemasters. (Corbett 1997)

We descend from Nancy Means' daughter Jane Sloan, 1744–1819, from her first marriage to William Sloan who died before 1744. About 1765, Jane married William Oates, 1734–1818, and about 1778, moved to Lincoln County, North Carolina.

Sources

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