



FOUNDING FEMALES Female Qualifying Ancestor Index

Female Ancestor Number: o66

Name: Fraser Dunlap, Jane/Jean (Bell)

Dates: 1735-1815

Colonial Society: PA

Date added to ROA: 7.25.2023

Service: Woman of Distinction: celebrated frontierswoman and innkeeper, c.1755/58

Authority: Byers, William Lester, and Annie M. Gilchrist. *A Brief History of Bedford County* (Bedford, PA: Inquirer Printing Co., 1924), 2-3; Whetzel, Dan, "1755 Frontier Life - An Intertwining of Local and International Events," *Mountain Discoveries Magazine*, Fall/Winter 2017, pp. 44-47; PA Historical and Museum Commission marker, file 1953HM0003.

Biography:

The life of Jane/Jean Bell McClain Fraser Dunlap has been celebrated through the centuries as one of tenacity. While some of the most well-known stories about Jane may not be proved through primary documentation, they hint at the complexities, realities, and lore of frontier life in the early part of the 18th century. One thing we can state clearly, Jane lived and raised her family in a perilous place, full of uncertainty and complicated Provincial politics and agendas.

Widowed at age 20, she remarried and would eventually follow her second husband, John Fraser, from their home in Maryland over the border into Pennsylvania to a soldier's encampment (Forbes' Army). Her husband served in various capacities, including local guide and negotiator, in service to the British amid the French & Indian War (1754-1763). This encampment would become known as Fort Bedford. Popular lore of her descendants and others tells of Jane's capture by the Miami Indians, and her valiant escape after 18-months of captivity. Like many stories of this type and time, it's difficult to evaluate legend versus fact. Yet, there is certainly no question that the relations between the Algonquian diaspora and the ever-encroaching settlers of British North America made for a life of the unknown, including constant danger and death. Jane and John established an inn and trading post in 1758, known as Fraser Tavern, near Fort Bedford, which is known to have provided meals for the army officers.

These are the simple facts of an extraordinary life of survival of a female Pennsylvania frontier settler: Married at age 16, the widow of a British officer (McClain) at age 20, remarried and reported to have been held captive by age 20, reunited with her second husband (Fraser) 18 months later, operating an inn/trading post by age 23 (while her husband served in his war capacities), widowed a second time at age 38 as a mother of five children, she married quickly a third time, Captain Richard Dunlap (also a soldier),



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who would die in a raid in 1781, leaving her a three-time widow at age 46, with one son and five daughters. Jane Bell McClain Fraser Dunlap died at age 80 (1815) at the home of a daughter.