

Captain Samuel Brady's Daring Rescue of the Stoops Family Near Lowellville, Ohio



Researched By Roslyn Torella

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Introduction

One of the earliest tales that I could find documented that occurred near present day Lowellville, Ohio just over the state line in Lawrence County, Pennsylvania was about the legendary scout named Captain Samuel Brady (1756-1795) who gained fame for his battles against the Native Americans who populated the states of Ohio and Pennsylvania in the end of the eighteenth century. The name Brady appears on landmarks throughout North East Ohio. If you ever traveled along the Cuyahoga River near Kent, Ohio you will have seen signs for "Brady's Leap" which got its name from the same man who is the hero in this story.

Brady is credited with the rescue of a Pittsburgh woman named Jane Stoops who had been captured near Pittsburgh by Native Americans. Brady came upon Mrs. Stoops, her young son William and a party of Native Americans in the area along the Mahoning River about a mile and half below Lowellville (present day Lawrence County, Pennsylvania). In the rescue attempt Brady shot and killed the Indian leader. This tale has appeared in various publications over the years and provides a glimpse into what life was like in the early frontier days of the late eighteenth century. Like any legend that is over two hundred years old there are various versions. Here is one of those versions.

In 1780, Native American tribes in the Ohio and Pennsylvania areas were quite hostile as they had been at war with American settlers who had encroached upon their land. Even after Ohio became a state in 1803, many parts of Ohio were still considered "Indian Territory". The Stoops kidnapping is attributed to Indians from one the hostile tribes identified as Seneca, Muncy, Wiandot or Shawnee.

A 1805 map (next page) shows the settled areas of the state and as you can see, the area which we now call Lowellville was not identified on the map and was sparsely populated. It would not be until the 1830s when Lowell, McGillsville and Petersburg (all of which make up present day Lowellville) would find a place on the map.

Brady spent most of his career as a scout and Indian fighter and was no stranger to the dangers of being a scout as his own father, John Brady, was killed in an Indian ambush in 1779. . Brady has been described as a vengeful "Indian Hunter". He spent much time in Ohio and Pennsylvania in pursuit of Native Americans.



(Source: Library of Congress)

Rescue of Jane Stoops

The Stoops (also reported as Stupes) family had settled on Chartiers Creek near Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The family was made up of James and Jane (sometimes known as Jenny) Stoops and several children. It is believed that the Stoops family emigrated from Ireland with their youngest children leaving their older children in Ireland. Some reports indicate that the Stoops had fourteen sons and one daughter.

Brady in 1780 was asked to travel to the Indian Territory near present day Sandusky, Ohio in order to bring back intelligence about the Indian movements and their camps. It was on his way back from a scouting trip that he encountered the captured Stoops family. Before meeting up with Brady, Mrs. Stoops and William had been captured by the Indians a few days before at their cabin near Pittsburgh. The part of the story detailing the capture of the Stoops family is fairly consistent in the various versions of the story. On the day of the capture, Mrs. Stoops kept telling her husband that she thought she had seen Indians in the woods near their cabin. Mr. Stoops apparently did not believe her until the Indians attempted to break into the cabin after night had fallen. During the attack, Mr. and Mrs. Stoops attempted to escape with William but 3 year old William was fussy and making it difficult for them to escape unseen. Mrs. Stoops urged her husband to take off to Pittsburgh where he could round up help and to return if he could. She also feared that if her husband stayed, then their remaining children, who were away at school in Pittsburgh, would become orphans.

Mr. Stoops made his way out of the cabin and headed towards Pittsburgh. He was in his shirttails and had his gun with which he shot at the Indians, as they pursued him. Eventually they gave up chase of Mr. Stoops and returned to the cabin. By this time Mrs. Stoops had left William in his bed while she hid in the "potato hole" under the floor of the cabin. The Indians entered the cabin and looted it for food and set it on fire. Mrs. Stoops fearing for William's safety cried out and was found by the Indians. It was reported that the Indians understood some English and she begged them not to harm William.

The Indians left taking Mrs. Stoops and William with them while the cabin was destroyed by the fire they had started. There were between five and eight in their party and their leader was on horseback, with the others on foot. There are other versions of this story that indicate that there were actually two Stoops children, but most of the stories indicate only William.

As they were traveling, Mrs. Stoops would break twigs in order to leave evidence for her husband and his rescue party to locate her and William. When the Indians realized what she was doing, they beat her. As was custom for the period, women wore long dresses at that time which made traveling on foot difficult, in order to ensure that Mrs. Stoops kept up with the party, her dress and petticoat were cut and shortened in "squaw

fashion". William was small and would not be able to keep up on foot so he was tied to the Indian leader on horseback.

On the same day as the Indian party reached the northern bank of the Mahoning River near the state line, Brady was in the area looking for game to kill for food. His scouting party were out of provisions and he had only one load left of powder for his rifle. Brady had gone ahead of his party to look for food, he hoped to find wild game. Brady was dressed in Native American attire and when he was spotted by the Indian party, they believed him to be one of their own. When Brady saw the party, he immediately fired upon the Indian leader on horseback and both the Indian and William fell to the ground. The other Indians quickly ran and climbed trees in order to avoid being shot by Brady unaware he had no more powder. Brady immediately went to Mrs. Stoops and tried to pull her with him and at first she resisted thinking he was an Indian and not understanding why he shot and killed the party leader. Brady and Mrs. Stoops were previously acquainted and eventually did she recognize him. In the chaos Brady was unable to retrieve William as the Indians began to regroup and pursue the escapees. Brady and Mrs. Stoops soon found Brady's scouting party who had with them a squaw they had captured near Sandusky. As Brady and his men crossed the Mahoning, the squaw carried Mrs. Stoops on her back across the river.

Once on the other side, the squaw made her escape and swam across the river. It is unknown why Brady did not pursue her. The squaw found the surviving Indians and joined them on the other side of the river. The Indians still had William and were trying to decide what to do with him. Apparently in anger for the death of their leader and the escape of his mother, one Indian had struck William with his tomahawk and when the squaw arrived she found William injured with a wound on his head that was an inch and half long. The squaw begged her fellow Native Americans to spare his life which they did and she cared for him on their journey. The Indians did attempt to locate Brady and his party and that evening came very close to a hiding place Brady and his party had found under a "shelving rock". As the Indians passed, the hidden men and Mrs. Stoops held their breaths so they would not be discovered. When it was safe, Brady and his party traveled back towards Pittsburgh and returned Mrs. Stoops to her home. In other versions of the story, Brady's scouting having heard the shot of his gun and seeing the Indian party presumed he was dead and returned to Fort McIntosh (near present day Beaver, Pennsylvania) to gather men to go back and retrieve Brady's body. In this version, Brady and Mrs. Stoops met up with the party near Fort McIntosh.

Although she survived her ordeal, Mrs. Brady was badly cut and it took quite some time for her to heal physically and emotionally. She grieved terribly for William as she had no idea what had become of him.

After the Rescue

Eventually William ended up near Detroit, Michigan. He had been in captivity for a period of three years before he was returned to his family. During this time he had been sold by the Indians to the British and being that he was a white child, he was sent to school. Eventually through an exchange of prisoners between the Americans and the British, William gained his freedom and he was sent home on a salt pack horse accompanied by his older brother, Samuel Stoops, who went to Michigan to retrieve him after the exchange. It is said his mother recognized William by a birth mark. As an adult William settled in Sewickley, Pennsylvania and married a woman named Nancy in 1808 and he died near Pittsburgh in 1835. Mrs. Jane Stoops died in 1793 and is buried in the graveyard of the First Presbyterian Church in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.



According to the legend, William as a young man would on occasion return to the spot where his mother was rescued and his brother-in-law, John McFarland eventually purchased this same land and settled there. John McFarland's wife was the sister of Nancy Stoops, William's wife. It is said that some years after John McFarland purchased the land he found the bones of the Indian leader who Brady had killed still lying on the spot of the rescue. He then buried the remains on the property. The present day location is said to be along "Trail No. 7", known as the "Old Mahoning Trail" that enters Ohio where the Mahoning River crosses the state line. The red lines on the map to the left, indicate the location of Native America trails during Ohio's frontier days.

(Source: Archeological Atlas of Ohio)

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