# SHANK’S BEN

“Shank’s Ben” was a native American who murdered my 5th great grandfather, Johannes George Jurrie “John” Mack (1719 Germany-1780 NY), and his daughter Elsie. I’ve known this from a rather sentimental book, Legends of the Shawangunk, cited by other descendants. I just did a Google search for him, however, and found a great deal more about him, including earlier and more detailed versions of the murder. As well as being a bloodthirsty killer, Shank’s Ben was a towering and formidable figure who one can’t help but somewhat respect after reading anecdotes from many sources about his remarkable life.

From The History of Orange County, Chapter XIV, Town of Crawford, by J. Erskine Ward

<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/49260/49260-h/49260-h.htm>

Near the site of the old Slott grist mill on the bank of the river is an old log hut which is said to date back to the ante-Revolutionary period. During that war this hut was on the Van Amburg property, and that family was somewhat closely connected with the noted Anneke Jans, who once owned the ground now covered by the vast estates of Trinity Church in New York City, in which her myriad heirs, scattered all over America to-day, still claim an equitable share, and justly so, perhaps. In this old log structure once lived a stalwart female member of the Van Amburg family, and the story is that during the Revolution a big reward was offered by the British officers for her capture. "Shanks Ben," a noted Ulster County Tory, like Claudius Smith of Orange County, being attracted by this rich reward, planned her capture. He concealed himself in one of the farm haystacks where he knew she would come to feed her cattle at a certain time. But when he saw the huge old-fashioned hay-fork in her hand, he concluded that discretion was the better part of valor, and was in fact glad to escape with his own life, fearing she might chance to puncture his brave anatomy in reaching for the required hay-fodder. If this somewhat noted woman was ever captured by the redcoats the records fail to disclose it.

The earliest version of the murder of John and Elsie Mack that I can find is from The Indians: or Narratives of Massacres and Depredations on the Frontier, In Wawasink and its Vicinity, During The American Revolution (1846), by C. A. Bevier, pp. 37-42

<http://www.jrbooksonline.com/DOCs/Bevier_pamphlet.doc>  
  
Murder of John and Elsie Mack, by the Indians, in the Shawangunk Mountain—Narrow Escape of John Mans and Col. Jansen.

THE writer is well aware that a detailed account of this massacre, and all the circumstances connected with it, has long since been published, though he has never been able to procure a copy of it; and knowing that a desire to see it in print exists, especially amongst the connections of John Mack, the writer has been induced to give a sketch of it in this place. He is indebted for the materials to two individuals who had the statement direct from the lips of John Mans, with whom they were both well acquainted.

Mr. John Mack, mentioned above, lived in Wawasink [Wawarsing]; he had a son in law named John Mans [Mentz], who lived on the east side of the Shawangunk. Sometime during the war he resolved to go over to visit his daughter accompanied by another daughter, named Elsie. In the morning, as they started, they called at Peter Vernooy’s. Elsie, who was dressed in white, looked in the glass and observed, that she “looked like a corpse.” This has always been considered very remarkable.

There was at this time a footpath crossing the mountain. It began on the west side, at a place called Port Hyxon, and ended at Col. Jansen’s afterwards General Jansen, west of the Shawangunk village. They crossed the mountain in safety, and made the contemplated visit. On their return his son in law [John Mentz] accompanied him with two horses, as far as the top of the mountain, for him and Elsie to ride on, the old man being rather infirm. John Mans proposed to take his rifle with him, but his father warmly opposed it, saying it was not necessary. When they arrived at the top of the hill, where they were to separate, they dismounted, and the old man seated himself on a log and smoked his pipe. Whilst setting here, Mans discovered by the horses’ ears that they saw something, and looking round he discovered two men advancing in the path which they had just left, and another, whom he recognized as a notorious Indian, called Shanks Ben, taking a circuitous route through the woods, in order to get in advance, and so surround them. {NOTE: It may be proper here to state that **John Mans and Shanks Ben had been well acquainted before the war;—had lived on terms of intimacy with each other—had often joined in the chase, for which both were famous, and also for running; but a quarrel about a dog, and the war, had broke up this intimacy, and they were now bitter enemies.** [emphasis added]} Mans understood his design, and was aware of the imminent danger that awaited him. It was then that he regretted bitterly that he had not taken his rifle. He said he might have shot the Indian, if he had had it. The other two were Tories. They had with them two young negroes which they had taken prisoners at Col. Jansen’s. Mans started with Elsie by the hand, in a direction so as to elude the design of his enemy. The old man, knowing it would be vain for him to attempt to flee, sat still, resigned to his awful fate. Mans ran with the girl until he came to a precipice of about twenty feet perpendicular, down which he jumped. Here he was obliged to leave the girl, notwithstanding her earnest entreaties to the contrary. He thought he might have saved her, had it not been for a little dog which followed them, and kept constantly barking, by which the Indian could follow. In jumping down the precipice he sprained his ancle, which troubled him considerably. He was obliged to take off his shoe and stocking, and go bare footed, on account of the swelling of his foot.

When he came in sight of Col. Jansen’s, he saw a number of men around, and not knowing whether they were friends or foes, he tarried some time, until he discovered they were whites. He then approached, and related the awful tale; but the fatal blow was struck—the scalping knife and tomahawk had done their work—his father in law and the blooming maiden were found side by side, covered with purple gore, and their immortal spirits fled for ever.—The scene was solemn and affecting beyond description. It was with difficulty, in after times, that Mans could be persuaded to relate this melancholy tale; and he could never do it without shedding a flood of tears; and the recital of which usually affected his auditors in the same way. Hard indeed must be the heart of that man in whose eye the tear will not start at scenes like this.

Intimately connected with this narrative is the account of the [earlier] narrow escape of Col. Jansen from being taken by the same party who killed Mr. Mack and daughter.

A desperate effort was made by Shanks Ben and others, to take Col. Jansen, and some other distinguished individuals who lived in that vicinity. It is probable that a large reward was placed on their heads by the British. That notorious Indian, as has since been ascertained, had been laying for whole days and nights in places of concealment, waiting for an opportunity to take those distinguished “sons of liberty,” but a kind providence would not permit him to accomplish his nefarious design.

Early one morning the Colonel went to his barn, to see to his stock, and discovered Shanks Ben in the stable. He ran for the house with all his might, and the Indian in close pursuit. The black woman, who was in the stable milking, saw the race. She said that the Indian came so close that he grasped after the skirts of his coat—but he reached the house in safety, closed the door, and secured it. The Indian, disappointed of his prey, and exasperated, seized an axe which happened to lay near by, and began to work his way through the door, the Colonel then called to his wife to fetch him his pistols, which he fired, or intended to fire through the door. The Indian however desisted, and went into the kitchen, where he and the two Tories, (who were recognized as such by the black woman, who observed that they had blue eyes and painted faces,) helped themselves to the best that the house could afford, not forgetting the cider, of which the Indians are excessively fond.

Whilst the enemy were thus engaged, a white girl by the name of Goetches was observed by the black woman coming to the house. She made signs to her to go back, but she misunderstood them, thinking she meant her to come, which she did, when she was taken prisoner. The enemy took her a short distance; but she being unwilling to go with them, they dragged her along for some time and then killed and scalped her. They took two young negroes of Col. Jansen’s, who have never been heard of since. They were seen by Mans in the mountain. An alarm was given at Jansen’s, either by blowing a horn or firing a gun, and the neighbors come to his relief; but, as usual, the work of death was done, and the enemy were beyond the reach of pursuit.

Such are some of the miseries of war. May we, by contrast, learn to appreciate the blessings of peace, and all those invaluable institutions for which our venerable ancestors pledged their “lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor;” and which they so nobly won.

This even more detailed version of the murder appears in Chapter XV of Tom Quick, The Indian Slayer, and the pioneers of Minsink and Wawarsink, by James E. Quinlan (1851). The volume begins with a disclaimer which casts doubt on the historical accuracy of its contents: “The critic will readily discover that our little book, though not a fiction, is novel in its character. It is neither a biography, history or legend; but a combination of all three in a series of sketches which possess more or less coherence, and which the author hopes present a tolerably fair picture of border life.”

<https://www.jrbooksonline.com/HTML-docs/tom_quick_1851.htm>

One of the first settlers of the north eastern part of the town of Shawangunk was Johannis Jansen, who held a colonel's commission during the Revolutionary war. On account of the position he occupied among the patriots, he was much hated by the tories and savages who infested the neighboring mountains. He was not molested, however, until near the close of the war, when the Indians had removed to the western country, and he no longer apprehended an attack from them.

On a Monday morning in September, he had occasion to go to a barrack near his barn, where he encountered two Indians, who attempted to grasp him and take him prisoner. He however eluded them, and ran towards his house, (which was a stone one) at full speed, and shouting murder! One of the savages got so near him that he stretched forth his hand to take hold of him. The Colonel, however, got into the house soon enough to close the door behind him, before the Indian came up; but he failed to bar and bolt it. A trial of strength ensued between the two for a few moments—one endeavoring to force open the door, and the other trying to keep it closed. The Colonel proved the strongest; when the Indian discovered a broad axe in the porch, and endeavored to force open the door with it. Jansen, however, frightened him away by calling loudly for his pistols and musket.

As soon as the savage had left the porch, the Colonel took his station in the entry with his musket and pistols, resolved, at all hazards, to prevent any one from entering. His wife, deeming it most prudent to close the window shutters, for the purpose of darkening the room, and thus concealing herself as far as practicable, raised the sash for that purpose, when a fellow, disguised as an Indian; pointed his musket at her, and drove her back. The blue eye of the disguised tory betrayed the white man.

The assailants succeeded in effecting an entrance into the lower part of the house. The party consisted of four Indians and one tory, each armed with a musket, and its deadly accompaniments, the tomahawk and scalping knife. Among these was one, perhaps the leader of the gang, named Ben Shanks, who had spent his younger years in the neighborhood of Colonel Jansen, and many times labored for him on the farm. This fellow was well acquainted with every part of the county of Ulster, (which then included Sullivan) and was chiefly noted for his peculiar atrocities in time of war.

He was at this time about forty years of age. In person he was tall, slender and athletic; his hair was jet black, and clubbed behind—his forehead high and wrinkled—his eyes of a fiery brown color, and sunk deep in their sockets—his nose pointed and aquiline—his front teeth remarkably broad, prominent and white—his cheeks hollow and furrowed. In a word, Ben Shanks, when arrayed in all the warlike habiliments of his nation, presented one of the most frightful specimens of human nature that the eye could rest upon. Like the others of his party, he now wore a coarse wagoner's frock of a grayish color, with a red handkerchief bound closely around his head.

Not many months anterior to the time of which we are speaking, a young woman, by the name of Hannah, had come up from the city of New York; where her parents resided, for the purpose of paying a visit to the family of her uncle, Mr. Christopher Mentze, who was by occupation a tailor, and lived not far from Colonel Jansen's house. She was in the bloom of life; aged about eighteen years, possessed of handsome features, and, in all respects, what might be termed a comely girl. Being of an industrious disposition, she employed herself in spinning in the family of Colonel Jansen, it appears that she had spent the Sabbath, previous to the fatal Monday, of which we have been speaking, at the house of her uncle, and was just returning through the gate-way at the end of the barn, to resume her occupation at the wheel, when the Colonel's three female slaves, who had been captured by the Indians, were placed beside the kitchen door, under the care of Ben Shanks. As she passed the corner of the barn, one of the slaves discovered her from the kitchen, and motioned to her, in the most forcible manner that circumstances would permit, to keep back; but the poor girl, having not the least suspicion of danger, paid no attention to the signals of the slave, and walked leisurely forward into the kitchen. When she was informed of her danger, however, her terror became extreme. She wrung her hands in agony, and besought the unfeeling monsters, in terms that would have pierced a heart of adamant, to spare her life, and let her remain where she was. In these entreaties, she was warmly seconded by both the female slaves—but all in vain. One of the monsters seized her by the hand, and, with his uplifted tomahawk, compelled her to take her station by the side of the negroes at the kitchen door. Gathering up the spoils they had collected in the cellar and kitchen, the enemy ordered the negroes, with the unfortunate girl, to advance, while one of them led the way, across the fields, toward the mountain. The luckless maiden again used every effort to prevent her being carried off; but the ruffians, turning a deaf ear to all her entreaties, seized her by the arms, and dragged her away from the door.

Mr. Christopher Mentze, of whom mention has already been made in this narrative, was a native of Germany, and resided at this time, in a comfortable log tenement, about three quarters of a mile west of Colonel Jansen's seat. He had already lived beyond two score years and ten, and with that never-tiring perseverance so peculiar to his countrymen, he had the satisfaction to support a young and thriving family solely by the exertions of his needle. John; the eldest of his children, was now in the prime of life, having reached his four-and-twentieth year-strong, active, and fleet, and passionately addicted to the pleasures of the chase. He had married the daughter of an humble citizen on the farther side of the mountain, previous to his entering the service of the State. As the Indians and tories had more frequent opportunities of committing their depredations upon the defenceless inhabitants on that side of the mountain, his father-in-law, John George Mack, had been in the constant habit of removing, for safety, all unseasonable apparel to the house of Mr. Mentze. It happened, unfortunately, (as will be seen in the sequel) that Mr. Mack, with his youngest daughter, Elsie, had come over, for the purpose of bringing home the winter clothing of the family, at the time when Ben Shanks and his party paid their unexpected visit to the residence of Colonel Jansen. On the morning of the ever-memorable Monday, before alluded to, they had prepared their stock of clothing in two separate parcels, and got everything in readiness to return home. Their route lay through the woods, along an Indian footpath, leading directly across the mountain, and the distance from the house of Mentze to the first habitation on the other side, was nine miles. When they had proceeded nearly four miles through the woods, and reached the foot of a precipitous ridge, not far from the summit of the mountain, Mr. Mack remarked to his son-in-law that he had now gone far enough, and he might prepare himself to return. The old man then seated himself on the ground, against the trunk of an oak tree, and made preparations to light his pipe; while his daughter Elsie, (a sprightly girl of eighteen) ascended about five feet above him. The spot upon which they had now located themselves was singularly wild and romantic. From the top of a large flat rock, not more than fifteen yards above them, they could distinguish the two lofty promontories which confine the Hudson at Newburgh—more than one half of the town of Shawangunk—and a great portion of the county of Orange. The soil was thinly covered with tall trees of oak and maple, and a thick underwood of the ever-verdant laurel. They had scarcely been seated for the space of ten minutes, when the two horses that were grazing in the bushes on the right of the path, suddenly lifted up their heads—pricked their ears—and looked steadfastly towards the east. Presently, however, they again betook themselves to grazing, and nothing farther was thought of it. But the sagacity of these animals could not be deceived; for, a few minutes after, as the old man was in the act of striking fire into his tinder-horn, they again raised their heads as before, and, with pointed ears, stared more fiercely in the same direction. Mentze now remarked that there must certainly be something more than common near the horses, or they would not behave in so strange a manner—perhaps a deer or a bear—upon which the old man cast his eyes over his right shoulder, and, seeing plainly through the bushes, he suddenly exclaimed, "They are Indians!" The other, rising up on tiptoe, and looking over the tops of the laurel, replied: "No; it is a tory, with negroes." On a closer examination, however, John at length distinctly recognized the frightful visage of Ben, who, with three negroes behind him, was gradually edging towards them in a circuitous direction, and, under cover of the laurel bushes, had already advanced within ten paces of his prey. The plan adopted by this artful savage for the capture of the whole party, was evidently this: While the blue-eyed tory, with his three red brethren, descended the hill about one hundred yards, and took post upon the path, to intercept them in their progress downwards Ben himself, with three negroes at his heels, cautiously inclined towards them, under cover of the bushes, and aimed to strike the path just above the girl. As he was thus advancing slowly at a distance from his comrades, with the three negroes following in file behind him, it seemed manifest to Mentze that he labored under certain fearful misgivings in regard to the fidelity of the blacks; for, although he did not cease to keep a watchful eye upon the unarmed individuals before him, yet, ever and anon, he cast keen and threatening glances at those who followed his steps.

From the fatal experience of many bereaved families in the country, Mentze was at no loss in apprehending the object of Shanks. Unarmed and having no hope of safety but in flight, his first idea was to mount the animal bound to the rock-oak sapling, and ride at full speed down the path; but a moment's reflection convinced him that, by adopting this course, the horse must inevitably stumble in proceeding swiftly over the stones lying in her way, and he accordingly abandoned it as impracticable. Passing then directly under the neck of the animal, he ran off with the utmost speed. As he turned abruptly towards the south, on reaching the bank of a brook that ran down from the mountain, he heard a loud and distressing scream from the girl. The spot upon which he now stood was nearly fifteen feet perpendicular from the surface of the stream; and not deeming it prudent to waste any time in seeking for a more convenient place of passage, he resolved to spring from the bank towards the body of a tree that grew near the water, and, laying hold of it, to slide gradually down to the root. In doing this, however, his velocity was so great that his hand slipped in the act of seizing the tree, and he fell down upon his feet in the bottom of the brook. Rising up immediately, he again attempted to resume his flight; but found that his left ankle was severely sprained, and that his shoes, being filled with water, greatly impeded his progress. To divest his feet of these impediments was but the work of a moment, and then, regardless of his painful ankle he held his way,

"O'er swamp and hill—through bush and brier,"

till he suddenly found himself on the verge of a field belonging to Thomas Jansen, (a brother of the Colonel, who lived about two miles distant) and not above two hundred yards from the house. Seeing persons passing and repassing he hailed in a loud tone and was answered by the well-known voice of one of his friends.

In the meantime, Colonel Jansen had alarmed the inhabitants of the town, and several parties of men had collected at various points to prepare for a vigorous pursuit of the enemy. After relating his tale of woe to those assembled at the residence of Mr. Jansen, Mentze proceeded in haste to the house of his father and having there repeated the same mournful intelligence, he took down his faithful rifle, and, disregarding the acute pain in his sprained ankle, quickly retraced his steps up the mountain path. On arriving at the spot where the Indians were first discovered, he saw several gentlemen employed in the examination of a bundle of clothes found at the foot of a tree, the mystery of which, as may well be supposed, he soon cleared up. It was then concluded that the Indians had either murdered Mr. Mack and his daughter, and concealed their bodies in some part of the forest, or else had carried them captive to answer some horrible purpose they had in view. But when it was considered that in the latter case, the bundle of clothing, instead of being left behind, would most probably have been carried along with them—and that the old man, had invariably expressed his determination never to follow any Indian as a prisoner of war—the majority of the persons present inclined to the opinion, that they had both fallen victims to the deadly tomahawk. A search was of course, immediately resolved upon; and seeing a remnant of the bridle still hanging from the sapling to which Mentze had fastened his horse, it appeared evident that the animal had broken loose and strayed with its fellows into the adjacent woods. After a short examination, tracks were distinctly recognized leading in a westerly direction towards the before-mentioned brook, and the first impulse of the party was to follow them in that direction, searching carefully on each side as they passed along. When they had crossed the brook, and ascended about ten paces up a gentle declivity, the unfortunate objects of their search were at once exposed to view. The corpse of the poor girl lay stretched at full length upon the bank, with the clothing she had worn properly arranged; and her father lay upon his hands and knees about five feet lower down, at the foot of a rock-oak tree. Both were scalped in a most horrible manner. From the position in which the old man was found, it appeared evident that he had struggled long in the agony of death. His hands were clenched and filled with leaves, and his head hung down between his shoulders.

Having contemplated the sad spectacle for some moments in silent astonishment, some gentlemen of the party prepared a temporary bier to convey the bodies to a house, that the last solemn service due to their mortal remains might be decently performed. As they were upon the point of proceeding homeward with their melancholy burden, they perceived, with grief that their unhappy friend Mentze was unable to move. Overcome by the heart-rending scene which his lifeless relatives exhibited, and exhausted with the pain of his sprained ankle, he found himself utterly incapable of exerting sufficient strength to follow the mournful procession. But the sun was now set, and he was not in a condition to pass the night in the forest; supported, therefore, on each side by the arms of his friends, he was eventually enabled to descend from the mountain, and to enter the comfortable, but now mournful mansion, of his kind, commiserating parents.

The next day, a strict search was made in the fields and woods in the vicinity of the Colonel's homestead, for Hannah, who was no longer with the savages when they attacked Mentze; and when the party were almost on the point of abandoning their object in despair, a dog belonging to one of them was observed to direct his course towards a lonely field, in which no careful investigation had yet been made. His master followed him, and soon came in sight of the mangled corpse of her whom they sought. Like her friend Elsie, she too had been scalped, and the bleeding skull excited feelings of horror in those who came to witness the scene. She, too, was transported in silence to the humble mansion of her venerable uncle, and from thence, in due season, to that solitary bourne from whence no earthly traveller returns.

From History of Sullivan County [New York] (1873) by James Eldridge Quinlan, pp. 394-402

<https://archive.org/details/historyofsulliva00inquin?ref=ol&view=theater>

In 1757, the valley west of the Shawangunk was much exposed to Indian outrage. To protect the inhabitants of the frontier, as well as those who found it necessary to travel from Esopus to Minisink, block-houses were erected at certain points, which were garrisoned by soldiers, whose duty it was to act as scouts.

"IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY, December 7, 1757.

"Lieut. Governor Delaney, among other things, communicated to the House as follows:

"The enemy, the Indians, having made incursions into the counties of Ulster and Orange, and murdered some of the inhabitants, I ordered detachments of the militia to be employed on the scout, to protect the settlers, promising to recommend their services to you, at the next meeting, which I now do. I also, on repeated applications from thence, gave orders to have a line of block-houses built, more effectively to secure that part of the country.

"And to encourage the inhabitants to stay and not abandon their settlements, the frontier is now and has been for some time guarded by troops posted there by the Earl of Landoune's orders; but when His Majesty's service next season shall call for those troops, it will become necessary to place others there under pay of the province, lest that part of the country be destroyed by the French and their savages," etc.

"A guard of 160 men, exclusive of officers, were ordered for Ulster county to the frontiers, and 40 for Orange county."

One of these block-houses was on what is now known as the Devens' place, north of Wurtsborough, and it is probable that some of the soldiers were stationed in the stone-mansion of Derick Van Keuren Westbrook, in Westbrookville. This line of fortifications was built under the superintendence of James Clinton, who subsequently became a prominent general of the Revolutionary army.

During the French and Indian war, the Gonsalus family suffered severely from the Indians, and one of them (Samuel, the first white man who was born in the county) became famous as an Indian-hunter and scout. In "Notes of the Ancient History" of Ulster county, published in the New Paltz Times of March 10, 1865, it is alleged that "Sam's Point," a well- known feature of Shawangunk mountain, was thus named in consequence of the following incident: In September, 1758, a scalping-party of Indians from the Delaware, crossed the mountain to Shawangunk, and killed Daniel Gitz, Grif. Easton and a man named Neaffie. The country being alarmed, the savages hurried back; but on the mountain met Samuel Gonsalus, to whom they gave chase in order to capture him. He knew all the paths better than his pursuers, and hastening to the Point, leaped a rocky precipice of some thirty or forty feet, where he believed that he could break his fall amongst a clump of saplings, (probably cedars or hemlocks). He thus made his escape unhurt, and gave his name to the "big nose of Aioska-wasting." [Note: According to an old map in our possession, there was a tract of land in the vicinity of Sam's Point known as the Gonsalus patent. Query: Did Sam own the Point? And was it not thus named because it was literally Sam's Point?]

Samuel's knowledge of the woods, and of the habits and habitations of the hostile Indians, enabled him to do good service to the country during the war with the French and their native allies. The writer already quoted, however, asserts that in the war of the Revolution, he declared for the King, and joined the tories and Indians of Butler and Brant. The author of the "Notes" says that Lieutenant Colonel Johannes Jansen of the militia of Southern Ulster, was very active in scouting with his regiment along the frontiers, and being a man of position as well as wealth, and so near the mountain, it was supposed he might easily be captured, and that he would be a valuable prize. The task was undertaken in September, 1780, by Samuel Gonsalus, Ben. DeWilt (commonly called Shank's Ben [Note: Shanks Ben (or Ben Shanks, as he was called on the Delaware) was at this time about forty years of age. In person he was tall, slender and athletic; his hair was jet-black, and clubbed behind- his forehead high and wrinkled- his eyes of a fiery brown color, and sunk deep in their sockets - his nose pointed and aquiline- his front teeth remarkably broad, prominent and white - his cheeks hollow and furrowed. Arrayed for war, he was one of the most frightful specimens of humanity that the eye could rest upon. Like the others of his party, he wore a coarse wagoner's frock of a grayish color, with a red handkerchief bound' closely around his head. (Pamphlet of Hon. Charles G. DeWitt, quoted in Tom Quick.)] and three other Indians who were formerly of the neighborhood. This Ben was a tall, bony savage, and was well known in Shawangunk. He had served with distinction in the French war; had his wigwam in the vicinity of Jansen's residence, and had often worked for him. They attempted to ambush the Colonel as he was leaving his house in the morning; but they were discovered by a boy, who raised an alarm, when Jansen ran into the house, and secured the door just as Shanks slashed it with an axe, and endeavored to force it open. Failing in their main design, the assailants proceeded to plunder the kitchen, the only room which they could enter; and it was here that a female slave discovered who they were. Hearing Mrs. Jansen call out as if the neighbors were coming, they hastily left, and took with them three negroes, and a white girl named Hannah Grunenwalden, who was employed by the Jansens. They soon killed and scalped her, because they feared her screams would guide pursuers. Proceeding thence to Scrub Oak Ridge, over which an old path then and now leads, they overtook a man named John George Mack, Elsie, his daughter, and John Mentz, his son-in-law. Mentz had often seen Ben and knew he was an enemy. Seeing him in time, he escaped, hoping that the old man and Elsie would be spared; but the savages had recently tasted blood, and they did not wish to be encumbered with prisoners who were not able to travel as fast as they could themselves. Hence Mack and his daughter were also slain and scalped. When a handful of militia followed in pursuit of Gonsalus and his party soon after, they discovered the bloody remains of the gray-haired old man and his daughter. With many tears, their bodies, with that of Miss Grunenwalden, were deposited in their last resting place.

There is a tradition in Shawangunk, that John Mentz soon after went off in the woods with his rifle; that for eighteen months he was not heard of by his family or friends; that he would never speak of his adventures during his absence; that he would shake his head mysteriously when Sam and Ben were mentioned; and that there is no subsequent track or trace of Gonsalus or Shanks. This tradition, like many other traditions, has no foundation in truth; and as much can be said of the alleged connection of Samuel Gonsalus with Shank's Ben. We have seen and conversed with men who saw Shank's Ben (whose Indian name was Huycon) on the Delaware river, in 1784, and Samuel Gonsalus died near Obed Van Duzer's place, one mile and a half west of Wurtsborough, on the 20th of November, 1821, aged 88 years. Old age, and not Mentz's rifle, put an end to his life.

There’s a brief mention of the murder in "Evacuation Day", 1783, by James Riker (1883). It adds only one detail, asserting that the murder occurred in 1780.

<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/33419/33419-h/33419-h.htm>

The version of the murder which I first saw is a later and less reliable popularization, in Legends of the Shawangunk (1887), by Philip H. Smith, pp. 162-164

<https://archive.org/details/legendsofshawang00smit/page/162/mode/2up?q=shanks+ben>

JOHN MACK was an old resident of Wawarsing. John Mentz, his son in law, lived on the east side of the mountain. The only communication between the two families was by an Indian trail leading over the mountain, known as the Wawarsing path. Some time during the Revolution Mack started on a visit to his daughter, Mrs. John Mentz, accompanied by his younger daughter, Elsie. On their way they called at the house of a neighbor. While there, Elsie, who was dressed in white, catching a view of herself in the glass, declared that she “looked like a corpse.” As she was of a vivacious temperament, the remark impressed itself on the minds of her friends, some regarding it as a premonition of some evil that was to befall her. Without further incident they accomplished their journey, and made the contemplated visit.

On their return, John Mentz accompanied them as far as the top of the mountain, with two horses for the old man and his daughter to ride. Mentz proposed taking along his rifle, but was dissuaded from so doing by Mack, who thought it was not necessary. On arriving at the summit where they were to separate, the father and daughter dismounted, the former seating himself upon a log and lighting his pipe. Presently strange movements of the horses indicated they saw something unusual; and looking down the path over which they had just come, Mentz saw two Indians advancing, while a third, whom he recognized as the notorious Shanks Ben, was taking a circuitous route through the woods, so as to get in advance of them.

Mentz understood the significance of this movement, and realized the danger of their situation. He bitterly regretted he had not followed his own counsel, and brought along his rifle. He might easily have killed the two Indians in the path at a single shot. He had formerly been on intimate terms with Shanks Ben. They had hunted in company, and together had engaged in the labors of the farm; but a quarrel about a dog, and the bitter feeling engendered by the war, had contributed to destroy their friendship, and they were now sworn enemies. The old man, knowing it would be vain for him to attempt escape, sat still, resigned to his inevitable fate. Mentz started with Elsie in a direction designed to elude pursuit; coming to a precipice, he was obliged to leave the girl, in spite of her earnest entreaties that he would not abandon her, and save himself by jumping off the ledge some twenty feet in height. In his leap he injured his ankle badly, but succeeded in making good his escape. Mentz said he might have saved the girl had it not been for a little dog that followed them and kept constantly barking.

When Mentz came in sight of Colonel Jansen’s, he saw a number of men collected there. A relief party was immediately made up and dispatched to the mountain, where they found the bodies of the old man and blooming maiden, side by side, covered with purple gore, and mutilated by the tomahawk and scalping knife—their immortal spirits gone forever! The scene was solemn beyond description; and it was with difficulty that, in after years, Mentz could be induced to speak of it; and he never related the story without shedding a flood of tears.

At the time of the murder of John Mack and his daughter Elsie, Shanks Ben and his associates were returning from Col. Johannes Jansen’s. Lured by the prize offered by the British for the scalp or person of the doughty Colonel, the wily savages had attempted to ambush Jansen as he was leaving the house in the morning. The Indians were discovered by some of the family, and the alarm given. The Colonel ran with all his might for the house, hotly pursued by Shanks Ben, and closed the door just as the latter hurled a tomahawk at his head. This door is still preserved as a relic of the past, bearing the prints of the Indian’s weapon. Failing to enter the main building, the assailants plundered the kitchen; and hearing Mrs. Jansen call out as if the neighbors were coming, they hastily left the place.

A young white girl, named Hannah Grunenwalden, daughter of a neighbor, was that morning coming to spin for Mrs. Jansen, and was approaching the house as the Indians were engaged in their plunder. Mrs. Jansen called to her to go back, but Hannah misunderstood the warning, and fell an easy captive. The Indians also took with them two negro boys, that were never heard of afterwards. Fearing her screams would guide pursuers, Shanks Ben and his companions soon killed and scalped the girl.

A red spot on the top of a large rock on a farm belonging to Brundage Peck is still shown as the place where Hannah met her fate—a stain which the storms of a century have not effaced. When the remains of Hannah, together with those of John Mack and his daughter Elsie, were deposited in their last resting place, the whole community, on either side of the mountain, mingled their tears in the common sorrow.

There is a tradition in Shawangunk that some time after the close of the war, John Mentz went off into the woods with his rifle, and for more than a year he was not heard of by his family or friends; that he would never give a satisfactory account of his absence; that he shook his head mysteriously when Shanks Ben was mentioned, and that the latter individual was never again seen.

Shanks Ben, at this time, was about forty years of age. He was tall and athletic; hair jet black, and clubbed behind; forehead wrinkled, and brown eyes deeply sunk in their sockets, and his cheeks hollow and furrowed. The natural frightfulness of his visage was heightened by an accident; and when arrayed for war, he was one of the most hideous specimens of humanity the eye could rest upon.

From Legends of the Shawangunk (1887), by Philip H. Smith, pp. 164  
  
<https://archive.org/details/legendsofshawang00smit/page/162/mode/2up?q=shanks+ben>   
  
One day Shanks Ben and two other savages came upon a log cabin in the town of Shawangunk. The man was not at home; but his wife saw them approaching, and escaped to the woods, leaving an infant sleeping in its cradle.  
  
One of the Indians raised his tomahawk, and was about to slay the child, when it looked up into his face and smiled; even his savage heart was touched and he restored the tomahawk to his belt. With a fierce oath Shanks Ben thrust his bayonet through the innocent babe, and ran about the place holding up the child impaled on the cruel instrument, in the hope that its screams would entice the mother from her concealment. Failing in this, Ben dashed out the little one’s brains against the door post; and the marauders departed, first appropriating what they could conveniently carry away.  
  
During the Revolution, Cornelius Decker was one day at work in a field near the present village of Bruynswick, when he felt a strange oppression, as though some great personal danger were impending. He could not shake off the feeling and presently returned to the house, where he was laughed at for his caprice. After the war was over, Shanks Ben came through the neighborhood. In an interview with Decker and others, Ben pointed to a log in the field above mentioned, and remarked than he one day lay behind that log with the intention of shooting Decker when he came to his work; but that the latter, having always deported himself as a friend, he could not find it in his heart to take his life. On comparing the day and hour of Ben’s concealment behind the log, it was found the time coincided precisely with that of Decker’s feeling of presentiment.  
  
A very different version of the legend of the baby is told in, History and legend : fact, fancy and romance of the Old Mine Road, Kingston, N.Y., to the mine holes of Pahaquarry (1908), by c. G. Hine, p. 73.  
  
<https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/11257/images/dvm_LocHist002233-00041-0?ssrc=&backlabel=Return&pId=80>   
  
As we pass down the road toward the west we come to a lane on the left leading to Indian Hill, in the near corner of which, now a vacant lot, once stood the old stone church of Wawarsing. The date of erection is unknown, but “Olde Ulster” says that a church had been here long enough to be described in 1742 as the “Old Meeting House”. At the time of the last Indian raid down this valley, August 12, 1781, the savages entered the church and amused themselves by throwing their tomahawks at the panels of the pulpit, leaving a number of gashes which were never repaired. Two of the more venturesome of th whites attempted to shoot some of the invaders as they stood in the church door, but one gun missed fire and one gunner missed aim and they were compelled to run for it without having done any damage. The church stood until 1843, when it burned.   
  
Keeping down the lane and through a farm gate we see on the right the John C. Hoornbeek house, formerly the dwelling of a Vernoy. At the moment of attack only Mrs. Vernoy and her baby were about the place; she in the barn and the child in its cradle in the house. Two of the enemy entered the house, Shanks Ben, a noted Indian, and a Tory, who was one of the party. The woman, knowing it was certain death to show herself, was compelled to remain where she could, unseen herself, see into the open door of the house. Thus she saw the savage to the cradle with raised tomahawk to strike, when the babe smiled in his face and he could not bring himself to kill it; but not so the representative of civilization, who without compunction dashed out the innocent life. Even a babe’s scalp had a money value in those days, for the English appear to have deliberately put a price on scalps.  
  
This latter version of the baby story (though with an alternate source) is repeated in a different context in The Indians: or Narratives of Massacres and Depredations on the Frontier, In Wawasink and its Vicinity, During The American Revolution (1846), by C. A. Bevier, p. 7.

<http://www.jrbooksonline.com/DOCs/Bevier_pamphlet.doc>  
  
When [white Tories] went out with the Indians, they painted their faces, to avoid detection; but they could not paint their eyes, by which they were sometimes distinguished. In point of barbarity, they were even worse than the Indians, as will appear from the following circumstance, which occurred along the Mohawk River, and was related afterwards by one of those demons in human form, whilst under the influence of strong drink.  
  
The Indians and Tories gained access to a dwelling, and they found an infant laying in a cradle. As the Indian approached the child with his tomahawk, it smiled, and he shrunk back from the deed. Although he had, doubtless, often plunged the fatal instrument of death into the bosom of hardier foes, without compunction, the stout heart of the savage warrior gave way before the penetrating smile of infant innocence: the infernal Tory then advanced, and executed the fatal deed.

From Taxation in New York State, by Frederick David Bidwell, p. 186-7

<https://books.google.com/books?id=SpUuAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA187&lpg=PA187&dq=%22Shanks+ben%22+wawarsing&source=bl&ots=iNlPZufsmP&sig=ACfU3U14JYjF0wq66j_gvemqYY9rOLIF8w&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjh6ajg5rzwAhWNFlkFHfXkAi4Q6AEwEHoECBkQAw#v=onepage&q=%22Shanks%20ben%22%20wawarsing&f=false>

“An act of the [New York] Legislature passed November 20, 1781, exempted from taxation the inhabitants of the Town of Rochester, Ulster County, whose buildings and crops had been destroyed by a late incursion of the enemy. This was the only exemption from taxation on account of an Indian massacre during the Revolutionary War. The massacre occurred August 12, 1781, and the band of Tories and Indians was led by a Tory by the name of Caldwell, and an Indian by the name of Shanks Ben. The old stone fort at Wawarsing bore the brunt of the attack and the whole of the upper Roundout valley was that August Sabbath destroyed in flames.”

From History of Sullivan County [New York] (1873) by James Eldridge Quinlan, pp. 317-320

<https://archive.org/details/historyofsulliva00inquin?ref=ol&view=theater>

In 1784, three Indians named Nicholas, Canope and Ben Shanks or Huycon, carne to their old camping-grounds on the Delaware to fish and hunt. But little is known of Nicholas. Canope was a native of Cochecton, where he had grown from childhood to manhood, and was much esteemed. When the Colonies revolted, he went to Canada and took up the hatchet for King George. Ben Shanks was a crafty, subtile [sic] savage. His christian-name was Benjamin. Before the war he had worked for the farmers of Shawangunk, and quite often for a man named Schenck. From that circumstance he was known as Schenck's Ben, and ultimately, on account of the great length of his legs, as Ben Shanks. [Note: He was also known as Ben de Wilt, or Wild Ben.] He was engaged in almost every expedition from Niagara against the frontiers of Ulster, and was so useful to the British that at one time he was in command of one hundred warriors. It is said that he was the tallest Indian ever seen on the banks of the Delaware, and the natural hideousness of his aspect was intensified by an accident. While on the war-path with a large party, a quantity of powder got wet. Shanks attempted to dry it by a fire, when it exploded, and burnt him and several others so badly that they were disabled for some time. He was much disfigured in consequence.

When Shanks and his companions returned to the Delaware in 1784, they were first seen at Cochecton, where they stopped a day or two to renew the friendly relations which had existed before the war. Among others, they visited Joseph Ross, David Young and Josiah Parks. While they were at the house of Ross, they amused themselves by shooting across the river at a large chestnut tree, which is still standing. They were advised by several persons to go no farther, and told that their lives would be in danger if they went below, as there were some desperate characters there--Tom Quick among the number--who would not hesitate to murder them. Huycon, Canope and Nicholas did not heed this advice. They had passed back and forth through this region in safety during the war, and believed that it would be cowardly to tum back from fear when peace was established. They went as far as the Shohola, where they commenced trapping for beaver, and where Haines, while roving through the woods, discovered them. He professed to very glad to see them, and accosted them in the most friendly manner, calling them brothers, and assuring them that he was overjoyed to meet them once more. The Indians having just killed a deer, the whole party partook of a hearty meal of venison. After this, the savages invited Haines to visit them again, and he urged them to come to his cabin at the Eddy. He then went home, and as soon as possible concerted with Tom Quick and a man named Jacobus Chambers to entice the red men to his house, and there murder them in cold blood, and rob them of their furs and other property.

Their plan was to induce Shanks and the others to visit the house of Haines, under a promise of protection, and get them to engage in fishing at the Eddy, while Quick and Chambers were in ambush on the shore, from which they would shoot Haines' guests. Accordingly Haines prevailed on Shanks and Canope to come out, by promising to protect them, and take their furs to Minisink, and exchange them for such articles as they needed. Nicholas, it seems, did not come with the others for some reason not now remembered. Not long after, Quick and Chambers reached the Eddy, and according to agreement concealed themselves in a clump of bushes close by the fishing rocks, where Haines had promised to entice his *proteqes*. They did not wait long before Canope, Huycon and Haines, and a little son of the latter, came to the rocks and began to fish. Before Tom and his companion fired, it occurred to Haines that the boy might be injured in the affray, and he ordered him home. Something in the manner of the white man caused the Indians to suspect his fidelity, but he quickly quieted their suspicions, and the three continued their sport. Canope having broken his hook, and none of the party having one to give him, he laid down on the rocks near Shanks, with his head resting upon his hand. This was considered a favorable opportunity, and Quick and Chambers fired. One of their balls passed through Canope's hand and the lower part of his head; but did not kill him. He ran to Haines, and claimed the protection which had been promised; when the wretch seized a pine-knot, and exclaiming, "Tink! tink! how you ust to kill white folks. 'Pant! 'pant! I'll sand yer soul to hall 'n a momant!" [sic] dispatched him by beating out his brains.

Even Tom, who for many years had been familiar with scenes of blood, 'was shocked at Haines' perfidy. He came up as the latter was dealing out his blows, and shouted, "D--n a man who will promise an Indian protection, and then knock him on the head!"

Shanks, who was unharmed, jumped into the river, and pretended to be wounded and drowning, until the current had carried him to a point where the bank was covered with bushes. Here he scrambled on shore, and ran off, limping, hallooing and groaning, as if in real agony. The ruse did not deceive Quick, however, who, finding that Shanks was traveling pretty fast for a man who pretended to be fatally wounded, started in pursuit, loading his rifle as he ran, and was soon near enough to fire. At the moment he snapped his gun, Shanks glanced back over his shoulder, and fell to the ground. He afterwards said that he dodged at the flash of the gun. Be this as it may, Tom did not hit him. A. ball-hole was afterwards found through his blanket, but when it was made could not be determined.

After the last discharge of the gun, Huycon took to his heels in earnest; and Quick found that *his shanks* were neither active nor long enough to compete with those of the savage. He returned to the rocks, saying, "If ever legs did sarvice [sic], it was them.”

Shanks was next seen at Cochecton, where he stopped to rest and get something to eat. He was very much enraged, and "damned the Yankees for killing Canope,” and swore that they should suffer for what they had done. After his wants were supplied, he proceeded on his journey up the river until he reached the house of Joseph Ross, who invited him to stay with him ; but he refused to come near Ross at first, the bad faith of Haines haying caused him to distrust every pale-face. He finally consented, however, to remain there a short time, .and was kindly treated by Mr. Ross and his neighbors.

While here, the conduct of Shanks afforded much amusement. Ross and his workmen were hoeing corn, and every time they went to their work, Shanks accompanied them. As soon as he entered the field, he proceeded to the highest ground in it, and after glancing rapidly and suspiciously over the surrounding country, he seated himself *a la Turc*, among the rustling corn, where he remained out of sight for fifteen or twenty minutes. He would then jump upon his feet, get upon the tips of his toes, raise his head as high as possible, look around as If expecting to see an enemy, and then squat upon his haunches again. As long as he remained in the field, he acted in this way. Ross's boys could compare him to nothing but a vigilant and alarmed turkey-cock. After remaining a few days, he left Ross, still threatening vengeance upon the Yankees who had murdered Canope. He was ferried across the Delaware by Josiah Parks, whose name has been already mentioned. The death of Canope was regretted by the frontier settlers for many reasons. It was brought about by unmitigated treachery, and was a wanton and brutal homicide, which might bring upon innocent parties the most deplorable consequences.

Chambers was arrested and put in jail. Quick and Haines skulked about from place to place, and kept themselves beyond the reach of constables and sheriffs. Shanks never returned to the country. Sufficient evidence to convict Chambers could not be found, and he was discharged from custody. In time, the three murderers came out openly and boasted of their foul deed. They were never disturbed for it, and Haines continued to live on the Delaware many years, while Quick, after a long life replete with murder and outrage upon the red man, died from old age near Port Jervis. [Note: Tom Quick and the Pioneers.]

Chapter VII of an earlier book, History of Delaware County, by Jay Gould (1856) tells the same story in different words.

<https://www.dcnyhistory.org/books/gould7.html>

Among those who remained on the hunting-grounds of the Delaware, were Canope, whose tragical end I am about to relate, and Huycon, or Ben Shanks. The following account of the transaction, is taken from the Republican Watchman, of Sullivan county.

Previous to the war, they had been frequently at Minisink, particularly Canope, who was a fine specimen of his race, and had been highly esteemed by his white neighbours.

Ben Shanks, it is said, was the tallest Indian ever seen on the Delaware, and probably from this circumstance received his name. During hostilities, they had taken an active part in favor of King George, and had accompanied several of the ruthless expeditions of the tories and savages against the whigs of Warwarsing and Minisink.

Huycon, as has already been shown, was bold, crafty, and cunning; and, on one occasion, had penetrated Warwarsing, and nearly succeeded in taking prisoner Colonel Jansen, a noted patriot. Shanks was distinguished for his barbarous murders, and was very obnoxious to the whigs, on account of the part he had taken in the murder of John Mack, and the two young ladies who were killed on the Shawangunk.

At the time the circumstances detailed below occurred, the few white families who had located themselves in Cochecton previous to the war, had returned, and again lived on their farms. Some of them were old acquaintances of Canope and Huycon. The Indians stopped on their way down to renew the friendly relations which had existed previous to the late troubles. One of the men they called to see was Joseph Ross, who lived near the mouth of the Calicoon, and some of whose descendants still reside in Cochecton. Ross appears to have been an honest and humane man, and now that hostilities had ceased, felt no longer unfriendly to the Indians, notwithstanding their cruelties during the war. He advised Canope and Shanks to go no farther, and told them it was dangerous to go below, as there were some desperate characters there - Tom Quick among the number, - who would rejoice in an opportunity to kill them: Mr. Josiah Parks gave them the same advice.

The two chiefs were experienced and brave warriors, however, and knew not what fear was. They had lurked about the houses of the whigs when war existed, and they imagined it would now be cowardly to turn back through fear. Saying that it was "peace time," and that they did not think the whites would hurt them, they went to the ponds in the vicinity of Handsome Eddy, where they fished and hunted, but carefully avoided the settlers and others. While they were thus engaged, they were discovered by a man named Ben or Benjamin Haines, who lived at the Eddy. He professed to be friendly, and told them if they would go with him to the river they might make his house their home. They declined at first, but he promised to protect them, and finally they were induced to accompany him.

This Haines, as the result will prove, was a dastardly wretch. He was as barbarous as a savage, but did not possess a single trait which partially redeems the Indian character. The murders of Quick may shock us; but the mean treachery of Haines can elicit no other feeling than abhorrence and contempt.

While the Indians were at his house, Haines pretended that it was necessary for him to go to Minisink after rum and ammunition. The real object of his journey was to see Tom, and induce him to go to the Eddy and murder his guests. It is said, that he wished to get possession of the furs which the Indians had brought with them, and which were of considerable value. He found the old Indian-slayer, who was yet wild with rage, on account of having been robbed of his skins, at the cabin on the Lackawaxen. Tom readily listened to Haines, and agreed to kill the savages, provided he could get any one to help him, for he thought it not advisable to cope with Huycon and Canope alone, as it was well known they were each nearly equal to him in cunning and bravery.

Among Tom's friends was a man named Cobe Chambers, or Shimer, who had formerly lived in Shawangunk, and who was an acquaintance of the two young ladies who had been so barbarously slain by Shanks and his party. It is not too much to suppose he was a lover of one of them, or a near relative, as he readily agreed to assist Tom in killing the guests of Haines, although, as the event proved, he was unused to scenes of blood. If this were not so, why should he, who had never before engaged in any affair in which the life of an Indian was involved, now, in a time of profound peace, engage in an attempt to destroy two of the hated race, and one of whom was regarded with so much abhorrence, because he had shed the blood of two innocent and inoffensive girls?

After conferring with Tom, Haines returned home, with the understanding that the Indian-slayer should follow in a day or two, and bring Shimer with him. Haines found Canope and his companion still at his cabin when he returned. Quick and Shimer reached the Eddy a day or two after Haines got there. They found the latter and the Indians in the cabin waiting for their morning meal to be cooked by the "woman of the house." Ben professed to be surprised at their coming, and greeted Tom as an old acquantaince [sic], but gave him a fictitious name, so that the Indians, who had never seen him before, would not know who he was. After inquiring where they were going, &c., he invited them to eat breakfast with him, which after a little urging, they agreed to do.

While Ben's wife was "putting the dishes on the table," he filled a bowl with water, and taking it out of doors, put it on a stump a rod or two from the house. He then returned and told the Indians to wash themselves. They went out of doors for that purpose, and Haines had a brief opportunity to confer with Tom and Shimer. He told them that he would get the savages to go with him to the "fishing- rocks," to catch fish, and that the opportunity to shoot them from that place would be good, as there was a convenient clump of bushes close by, from which to fire. Tom expressed his satisfaction with what Haines had said - the Indians came back into to the house, and all sat down and ate a hearty breakfast. Tom and Haines seemed to be perfectly at ease all the time, as if nothing more than usual was on their minds, while Cobe appeared to be somewhat disconcerted.

After breakfast, the new comers apparently renewed their journey up the river. They were soon in ambush, however, near the place where Ben said he would entice his proteges. It was not long after, that Huycon, Canope, and Haines, and a little son of the latter, came" to the rocks," and began to fish. Before Tom and his companion fired, it occurred to Haines that his son might be injured in the affray, and he ordered him to go home. Something in the manner of Haines caused the Indians to suspect his fidelity; but he quickly quieted their suspicions, and they then continued to fish as before. Canope, having broken his hook, and none of the party being in possession of one to give him, laid down on the rocks near Shanks, with his head resting upon his hand and elbow. This was considered a favorable opportunity by Tom and Shimer, and they "took aim." Cobe, who was not used to such business, was greatly exited, and Tom declared after-wards, that his (Cobe's) hand trembled so, that he heard the barrel of his gun rattle against the log on which it rested.

They fired: Tom's ball passed through the hand and lower part of the head of Canope, wounding him dangerously. Shimer, as might have been safely predicted, did not hit Shanks. The wounded man ran to Haines and claimed the protection which had been promised; but instead of granting it, the wretch seized a pine-knot, shouting, " Tink! tink! how you used to kill the white folks. 'Pent! 'pent! I'll send your soul to hell in a moment!" and then dispatched him by beating him on the brain.

Even Tom, familiar as he was with scenes of blood, was shocked at the perfidy of Haines. He came up as the latter was dealing out his blows, and exclaimed, "D-- n a man who will promise an Indian protection and then knock him on the head!"

Shanks, when he heard the report of the guns, jumped into the river, and pretended to be wounded and drowning, until the current had carried him down stream a short distance, to a place where the bank was covered with bushes. Here he scrambled on the shore, and ran off limping, hallooing, and groaning as if in great agony. The ruse did not deceive Tom, however; who, finding that Shanks was travelling pretty fast for a man who was apparently so badly wounded, started in pursuit, loading his rifle as he went, and soon got sufficiently near to fire. At the moment he snapped his gun, Shanks looked back, and as Tom shot, fell. The Indian afterwards said that he dodged at the flash of his gun. Be this as it may, Tom did not hit him. A ball- hole was afterwards found through his blanket, but whether made by Cobe or Tom could not be ascertained.

After the last discharge of the gun, Huycon took to his heels in earnest; and Tom found that his shanks were neither active nor long enough to overtake him. He returned to the "rocks," saying, " if ever legs did service, it was them."

Two weeks had elapsed since the Indian chiefs passed through Cochecton, when Shanks returned alone, "damning the Yankees for killing Canope," and swearing that they should suffer for what they had done. He was first seen at a house a short distance from Cochecton bridge, where he stopped to rest and get something to eat. While he was there, Mrs. Drake, whose father-in-law and first and second husbands were killed by savages and tories, came into the house. Almost immediately after seeing the savage she fainted, so great was her dread of those who had slain so many of her near and dear friends. He was next seen by Mr. Joseph Ross, who invited him to tarry a while at his house; but he refused to come near Ross at first, the bad faith of Haines having caused him to suspect every pale-face. He finally consented, however to stay with Mr. Ross a short time. He was kindly treated by Mr. R. and his neighbors.

While here, his conduct afforded much amusement to the juvenile members of the family. Mr. Ross and his "hands," were hoeing corn, and every time they went to their work, Shanks accompanied them. As soon as he got to the field he selected the highest ground in it, and, after glancing rapidly and suspiciously over the surrounding country, he seated himself a la Turque, among the waving and rustling corn, where he remained out of sight fifteen or twenty minutes. He would then get upon the tip of his toes, " stretch his neck" upwards as far as possible, look around, as if expecting to see Tom, and then squat upon his haunches again. As long as he remained in the field he acted in this way. The boys could compare him to nothing but a rather vigilant and somewhat alarmed turkeycock. After remaining a day or two, he continued his journey homeward, to relate another great wrong committed by the white man. He left Ross, breathing threats of vengeance, and was ferried across the Delaware, at Equinunk, by Mr. Parks, who has already been mentioned.

The death of Canope was regretted by most of the frontier settlers, for many reasons. His murder was brought about by the blackest treachery, and in violation of a solemn treaty of peace, the strict observance of which was necessary to their safety. Nothing could justify the murder. It was known that others beside Tom were engaged in the transaction, and there was good ground for fear that the Indians would avenge his death, and in doing so, not discriminate between the bloody perpetrators of the outrage, and those who would have sheltered him from harm.

The Indians made a formal complaint to the government against Shimer, Haines, and Quick; but it does not appear that the offenders were apprehended, or that any attempt was made to punish them. After waiting a reasonable time, the savages did what was quite natural on their part: they fell upon a couple of white men in the vicinity of Fort Pitt, and murdered them. A gentleman named Skinner, whose ancestors settled at Cushetunk nearly one hundred years ago, and whose possessions were extensive during the early days of the settlement of Cochecton, styles the murdered men "Uncle Ross and Cousin Cyrus." By this we are given to understand that the vengeance of the Indians fell upon men who had never treated the natives unkindly.

After this event, the fears of the pioneers gradually wore away; and finally they continued to fish, and hunt, and cultivate their lands without apprehension.

A much later book, In Days of Yore (1902) gives yet another account of the murder of John and Elsie Mack and the escape of Colonel Jansen, with additional details that may be fanciful embellishment, but in some cases ring true.

<https://tile.loc.gov/storage-services/public/gdcmassbookdig/indaysofyore00bots/indaysofyore00bots.pdf>

THE PERIOD OF THE REVOLUTION.

In Fiske's history of the Revolutionary War, it says: "The barbarous border fighting was due to the fact that powerful tribes of wild Indians still confronted us on every part of our steadily advancing frontier.[1] They would have killed and scalped our backwoodsmen, even if we had had no quarrel with George III, and there could be no lasting peace until they were crushed completely. When the war broke out, their alliance with British was natural, but the truculent spirit which sought to put that savage alliance to the worst uses, was something which it would not be fair to ascribe to the British commanders in general; it must be charged to the account of Lord George Germain, and a few unworthy men who were willing to be his tools."

It is well known that the Indians and Tories were incited by the British, as the history also says that "in the battle of Newtown. Aug. 29, 1779, fifteen hundred Tories and Indians were led by Sir John Johnson." Now as to the more local scene. The English came as near as Kingston, which they burned.[2] Jo Brant[3] came as near as Minisink, while Shanks Ben confined mostly in these parts. …

[1] This frontier was still confined to Western New York.

[2} Kingston was twice burned; by the Indians, June 7, 1663; by the British, October 16, 1777.

[3] Jo Brant or Thayendaneega (accent on penult) was educated for the Christian ministry, but the event of the Revolutionary War changed his intended calling as well as his character for life. See Stone's life of Brant.

[4] **Shanks Ben was a half-breed, although spoken of in the history of Ulster county, as an Indian**. [emphasis added]

MURDER OF JOHN AND ELSIE MACK.

John Mack lived at Wawarsing; he had a son-in-law named John Mance, who lived on the east side of the Shawangunks. Some time during the war, he resolved to go over and visit his daughter, accompanied by another daughter named Elsie. There was at this time a foot path crossing the mountain. It began on the west side, at a place called Port Hyxon, and ended at Col. Jansen's west of the Shawangunk village. They crossed the mountain in safety and made the contemplated visit. On their return the son-in-law accompanied them with two horses as far as the top of the mountain, for him and Elsie to ride on, the old man being rather infirm.

John Mance[5] proposed to take his rifle with him, but his father[in-law][6] opposed it, saying it was not necessary. When they arrived at the top of the hill where they were to separate they dismounted and the old man seated himself on a log and smoked his pipe. While sitting there, Mance discovered by the horses ears that they heard something, and looking around he discovered two men advancing in the path which they had just left, and another, whom he recognized as a notorious Indian called Shank Ben taking a circuitous route through the woods, in order to get in advance and so surround them. Mance understood his design and was aware of the imminent danger that awaited them. It was then that he bitterly regretted that he had not taken his rifle. He said that he might have shot the Indian if he had had it. The other two were Tories. They had with them two negroes whom they had taken prisoners at Col. Jansen's. Mance started with Elsie by the hand in a direction so as to elude the design of the enemy. The old man knowing it would be vain for him to attempt to flee, sat still, resigned to his awful fate. Mance ran with the girl until he came to a precipice of about twenty feet high, perpendicular, down which he jumped. Here he was obliged to leave the girl. He thought he might have saved her, had it not been for a little dog which followed them and kept constantly barking by which the Indians could follow. In jumping down the precipice he sprained his ankle, which troubled him considerably. He was obliged to take off his shoe and stocking and go bare-footed on account of the swelling of his foot. When he came in sight of Col. Jansen's, he saw a number of men around, and, not knowing whether they were friends or foes, he tarried some time, until he discovered they were whites. He then approached and related the awful tale. His father-in-law and the maiden were found side by side covered with purple gore. It was with difficulty in after times, that Mance could be persuaded to relate this melancholy tale.

[5] NOTE—When John was desired by his father to bring up the horses for the purpose of assisting Mr. Mack and his daughter some distance on their way, he readily assented to the proposal provided he might carry his rifle with him, but the old man deemed it an act of childish folly to be pestered with firearms on horseback, resolutely withstood his proviso, and at length snatching the halters from John's hands, he said in angry tone, that he would go himself. The mother, however, could not brook the idea of her son's disobedience, and finally succeeded in persuading him to accompany their friends without the encumbrance of his faithful weapon.

[6] NOTE—It would not seem out of place here to mention, and especially for the now rising generation in this vicinity, that Christopher Mance who was a tailor by occupation, (familiarly called Stuffle Mance), who was at this time past 70, and the son John who figured so prominently in the above narrative, subsequently moved to Cragsmoor, and with the grandson, ("Old Uncle Jakey") who lived to be 90, and the great grandson ("Uncle James") who lived to be 84, all lie buried in the Cragsmoor cemetery, east of the "Oak Tree;" the grave of the latter being marked by a bowlder resting on a marble base. Their graves are those of the pioneer.

Intimately connected with this narrative is the account of the narrow

ESCAPE OF COLONEL JANSEN

from being taken by the same party who killed Mr. Mack and his daughter. A desperate effort was made by Shanks Ben[7] and others to take Col. Jansen and some other distinguished individuals who lived in that vicinity. It is probable that a large reward was placed on their heads by the British. That notorious Indian as has since been ascertained had been lying for whole days and nights in places of concealment waiting for an opportunity to take those distinguished "sons of liberty." Early one morning the Colonel went to his barn to see to his stock and discovered Shanks Ben in the stable. He ran to the house with all his might, and the Indian in close pursuit. The black woman who was in the stable milking saw the race. She said that the Indian came so close that he grasped after the skirts of his coat, but he reached the house in safety, closed the door and secured it. The Indian disappointed of his prey, and exasperated, seized a broad-ax which happened to lay near by, and began to cut the door. The Colonel then called to wife to his fetch him his pistols, which he intended to fire through the door. The Indian desisted and went to the kitchen where he and two Tories (who were recognized as such by the black woman, who observed they had blue eyes and painted faces), helped themselves to the best that the house could afford. Whilst the enemy was thus engaged, a white girl, by the name of Goetches[8] was observed by the black woman coming to the house. She made signs to her to go back, but she misunderstood them, thinking she meant her to come, which she did, when she was taken prisoner. The enemy took her a short distance, but she being un willing to go with them, they dragged her along for some time, and then killed and scalped her. They took the two young negroes of Col. Jansen's who were never heard of since (except by Mance in the mountain as before stated). An alarm was given at Col. Jansen's either by blowing a horn or firing a gun, and the neighbors came to his relief, but the work of death was done, and the enemy was beyond the reach of pursuit.

[7] NOTE—Shanks Ben was born and brought up in the vicinity of Col. Jansen's place, and had before the war been in the employ of the latter on his farm, and had often went hunting with the John Mance here described as being at this time about forty years of age, and on this occasion like the others of his party, wore a coarse wagoner frock of a grayish color, with a red handkerchief bound closely around his head.

[8] NOTE—Miss Hannah Goetches was a neice [sic] of Christopher Mance spoken of in history as being aged eighteen, and possessed of handsome features, was from New York city, where her parents resided. She had been on a visit of several weeks at her uncle's, and had set out on her return, via Newburgh and Peekskill, and soon arrived at the encampment of the American Army; but the British being in possession of New York, refused a transport, and she was compelled to return to the family of her uncle. Being of an active and industrious turn, and withall an excellent spinster, she employed herself in that capacity, in the family of Col. Jansen, and as stated above, not understanding the signal, she walked leisurely into the kitchen, (having been over to her uncle's where she had been visiting with her friend, Miss Elsie Mack). When

she became aware of her danger, her terror became extreme, she wrung her hands in agony, and begged them to spare her, but her pleadings were in vain.