

Winter's Description of Frances Slocum

[The following letter from the pen of George Winter is re-printed from a proof-sheet furnished us by Mrs. C. G. Ball, of Lafayette, Mr. Winter's daughter. It was written as a communication to the Philadelphia Press—date not attached. The picture referred to is one of two oil portraits by this artist now, as we understand, in possession of Slocum families at Wilkesbarre, Pa. This one is reproduced in Meginness' book on Frances Slocum, and the other in Lossing's "Field Book of the Revolution."]

SIR: A few days since my attention was called to your interesting reminiscences published in the *Washington Chronicle*, since reproduced in the *Lafayette Courier*.

Your allusions to Frances Slocum, the "Lost Sister," are of peculiar interest to me, as I am familiar with her history, being at the time of her discovery, a resident of Logansport, and intimately acquainted with Colonel G. W. Ewing at the time he wrote the letter that led to her discovery, which you published so long ago.

In the year 1839, at the request of the Slocum family, I visited the "Deaf Man's Village," for the purpose of sketching the likeness of Frances which is the only effort of the pencil of her executed from life. Her history being so romantic and interesting I availed myself of the opportunity then and there of making sketches of the Captive's home from several points of view, and other surroundings that I thought would be of general interest.

My visit to the Captive's home was attended with many interesting circumstances. It was a potent auxiliary in satisfying a desire of seeing and knowing the red races in their aboriginal homes, I having been allured in 1837 to Indiana to be present at the councils held by Colonel A. C. Pepper at the village of Kee-waw-nay, in regard to the Pottawattamie emigration west of the Mississippi.

There have been several notices of the history of Frances Slocum during the time intervening between her discovery and the present. They are, however, marred by many inaccuracies.

Having known Frances Slocum personally, and being familiar, too, with her Indian family, will you accept the following statement of personal appearance, which I extract from my journal (unpublished) of a visit to the "Deaf Man's Village," A. D. 1839.

I will, however, premise that Colonel Ewing was not an Indian agent. Colonel A. C. Pepper was the agent at the time of the discovery of the "Lost Sister." Colonel Ewing was an Indian trader of considerable prominence and success. He was of the well-known firm of Ewing, Walker & Co. Ewing, as a trader, knew Frances Slocum for many years, but it was not until the captive woman was in deep affliction—hopeless of recovery, and in the conviction of mind that the realities of life were about to close upon her—that she revealed her history to Colonel Ewing. Her anticipations of death at that time did not receive their fulfillment, for she did not die until 1847.

The following are the extracts from the journal:

"Preparations were then made for the 'sitting.' An old split-bottom chair was brought in by 'Kick-ke-se-quah' from the adjoining room, which I placed near the little window, so as to obtain the best angle of light to fall upon her. Frances Slocum presented a very singular and picturesque appearance. Her '*toute ensemble*' was unique. She was dressed in a red calico 'pes-mo-kin,' or shirt, figured with large yellow and green figures; this garment was folded within the upper part of her 'mech-a-ko-teh,' or petticoat, of black cloth of excellent quality, bordered with red ribbon. Her nether limbs were clothed with red fady leggings, 'winged' with green ribbon; her feet were bare and moccasinless. 'Kick-ke-se-quah,' her daughter, who seemed not to be without some pride in her mother's appearing to the best advantage, placed a black silk shawl over her shoulders pinning it in front. I made no suggestions of any change in these arrangements, but left the toilette uninfluenced in any one particular.

"Frances placed her feet across upon the lower round of the chair. Her hands fell upon her lap in good position. Frances Slocum's face bore the marks of deep-seated lines. Her forehead was singularly interlaced with right angular lines and the muscles of her cheeks were of ridgy and corded lines. There were no indications of unwonted cares upon her countenance, beyond times influences, which peculiarly mark the decline of life. Her hair, originally of a dark brown, was now frosted. Though bearing some resemblance to her family (white), yet her cheek bones

seemed to have the Indian characteristics—face broad, nose bulby, mouth indicating some degree of severity, her eyes pleasant and kind.

“The ornamentation of her person was very limited. In her ears she wore a few small silver earbobs, peculiarly Indian style and taste. Frances Slocum was low in stature, being scarcely five feet in height. Her personal appearance suggested the idea of her being a half-breed Pottawattamie woman rather than a Miami squaw. The Miamis and Pottawattamies have very distinctive characteristics in regard to stature and conformation of head and facial appearance.”

The above description of the personality of Frances Slocum is in harmony with the effort of my pencil.

Allow me to add that she had three daughters, one only of whom is now living. She is residing on the Mississinnewa, the wife of the Rev. P. Bondy, a Miami Baptist preacher, who was converted to Christianity under the missionary zeal of George Slocum, a Baptist, son of Isaac Slocum, who settled in the Miami National Reservation. Mrs. Bondy was a widow when I knew her, in 1839; her name then was “O-sou-pak-shin-quah.”

“Kick-ke-se-quah,” the oldest daughter, was the wife of Captain Jean Baptiste Brouillette. He died three years since. The Captain was a distinguished Miami; he was a medicine man (not a juggler), an orator of great volubility and force; he was also a convert to Christianity, and preached among the Miamis with success. The other daughter died before the discovery of Frances Slocum. Her death was associated with very painful and startling circumstances. The story runs that the son of a chief wooed her, but did not win her heart; her affections were bestowed upon another champion for her love. Her happiness, however, was not consummated by marriage. She drooped and died; and suspicion, ever active, suggested, and, it was feared, too truly, that she was the victim of poison.

The wigwam upon the Mississinnewa, at the “Deaf Man’s Village,” was a large, double log cabin, of comfortable capacity, such as characterizes the thrifty farmer’s home in the West. A smaller cabin was attached to it, in which a very aged squaw lived. There was also a small bark hut, separated from the

main log, by a distance of a few rods. In addition to these structures, were a tall corn crib and stable, all of which, unitedly, constituted the famous "Deaf Man's Village"—the home of Mon-o-con-a-quah, the "Lost Sister," Frances Slocum. "She-buck-onah" was the name of the deaf chief, the second husband of the heroine of whom we have written so long an epistle. Hoping it may not be considered obtrusion upon your active engagements, I remain yours very truly,

GEORGE WINTER.

Sketch of Frances Slocum

THE story of Frances Slocum, the "White Rose of the Miamis," as some one has poetically styled her, has been often told, but in connection with the preceding description of her by George Winter, the romantic and curious incidents of her career will bear repeating here.

Frances Slocum has now been dead some fifty-eight years. Born to the white man's heritage she began life under the loving care of white parents. She ended it a squaw among the Miami Indians, a thousand miles from her birth-place, the wealthy widow of a chief and alienated utterly from her own race, from whom she had been separated more than sixty-eight years. The account of this transformed life is one of the most remarkable to be found in all our Indian annals.

The Slocums were Quakers who came from Rhode Island to the Wyoming valley, in eastern Pennsylvania, when Frances was four years old, and settled where the city of Wilkesbarre now stands. This was in 1777. The next year occurred the historic attack and butchery by the British and Indians which has so often been the theme of prose and verse. The Slocum home was assailed and pillaged by three Delaware Indians when the men were absent. The mother and most of her children fled and concealed themselves in the woods, but little Frances, who, in the consternation of the moment seems to have been overlooked, secreted herself under a flight of steps leading to the loft till one of the Indians discovered her feet protruding, and dragged her