

The Fascinating Life of Richard Jaqua Transcribed by Jerry Phares, Jeffersonville,
Indiana
from an original document (unattributed)
May 1999
(This account is also recorded in
The History of Seneca County, Ohio, pp. 151-154)

The father of Richard Jaqua was a citizen of the state of Connecticut. Soon after the Revolutionary War the family moved into Columbia County, in the state of New York, where, on the 9th day of April, 1787, Richard Jaqua was born. Some time after, the family moved to Canada West, and settled near Brockville.

On the 9th day of October, 1809 Richard Jaqua was married to Elizabeth Wilsee, a young Canadienne. When the war between England and the United States broke out, Jaqua was the owner of two hundred acres of land and considerable personal property.

When he was drafted as a soldier to join the British Army, his American pride was stronger than the laws of Canada, and he at once determined that he would not take up arms against his native land, and that he would take up his belongings and make good his escape to his native land at the first opportunity. Soonafter, the draft, and on the last day of the year 1812, he and nine others crossed the St. Lawrence, about forty miles below Kingston.

One of these others was his friend, Ezra Brown, who, also, afterwards became one of the first settlers of Seneca County. Jaqua carried a small feather bed and bed clothes, and Brown carried the clothing for both. When the party arrived at the American picket fort, it was late at night. The next morning the whole party of run-aways were sent, under guard, to Ogdensburgh, in the State of New York, where Major Forsythe was in command. The examined each man separately, and being satisfied of the truth of their statements, gave each man a pass.

Jaqua then went over to his native county of Columbia, and the 3rd day of April, 1813, started back for Ogdensburgh. On his way he met his friend Brown at Morristown, New York. They were both experienced in the the use of small boats and intimately acquainted with the dangerous places in the channel of the St. Lawrence. Here they came to the conclusion that they would help other deserters get over to the American side, and for that purpose procured a craft, by the means of which they helped a goodly number of the fugitives to get across the river to the American side.

This sort of employment was exceedingly dangerous, inasmuch as no crafts of any sort were allowed to touch the Canadian shore; yet these friends followed up this work during all the summer and fall of 1813. The Canadian authorities became fully informed of these operations and sent a squad of men to a small island opposite Gibway Point, with instructions to capture both Jaqua and Brown as they were passing to and fro.

One night, Jaqua, Brown, Patterson, and five others crossed over to Gibway Point and secreted themselves until morning when Patterson walked along the beach to attract the attention of the Guard. Immediately, three men were seen putting out from the island in a punt-boat, and then made for Patterson. These men and Patterson getting into sharp conversation, Patterson receded from the British and the shore, and when they were far enough away to be considered safe, Jaqua, Brown and the other men, who were secreted with them, jumped up, and with cocked guns and the help of Patterson, took the men prisoners and handed them over to a militia captain at Rawsee. This captain detailed a guard, consisting of Sergeant Whipple, Jaqua, Brown, and several others, to take the prisoners to Sackett's Harbor which they did.

In the Fall of the same year, 1813, the American Army, under General Wilkerson, was in camp on the American side of the St. Lawrence, a short distance below Gravelly Point. General Hamlin, with his troops, was stationed at a point on the same side called French Mills. Hamlin was anxious to have Wilkerson, with his men, join him, but to bring this about, it would require a long and tedious march by land, or to embark and sail through the thousand Isles, which all knew, was a dangerous undertaking.

Hamlin sent two messengers with his orders for Wilkerson, and when they arrived at Morristown, where Jaqua and Brown then were, one of the messengers was taken sick and became unable to proceed further. The other messenger employed Jaqua and Brown to take him to General Wilkerson's headquarters. They took the punt boat and travelling by night — only, they reached General Wilkerson's camp in two weeks, after they left Morristown. a few days thereafter, Brown and Jaqua were engaged by General Wilkerson to pilot him and his forces down the river with their punt boat. They passed safely through the Thousand Isles and reached a point about four miles above Fort Prescott, then crossed the river into Canada. For about four weeks thereafter, Jaqua and Brown were constantly busy piloting parties down the river. For fear of trouble from the Canadian authorities, Mr. Jaqua kept his name and the fact that he was drafted in Canada a profound secret for all the time he was associated with the movements of the American troops along the St. Lawrence.

On the 14th day of May, 1814, Jaqua enrolled his name as a private in the company of minute men under Captain Ellis, at Houndsfield, about five miles above Sackett's Harbor. During his service in that company, one Wolsey was in charge of a fleet of small boats loaded with stores belonging to the United States, and vessels then in process of construction. When the company arrived at a point off Big Sandy Creek, near Sackett's Harbor, they were noticed by the British Fleet, and Wolsey, to save his fleet, ran it into the mouth of Big Sandy. The bar at the mouth of the creek prevented the British vessels from passing in. Thereupon the British immediately embarked in small boats, and followed Wolsey. The alarm was given to the minute men, who arrived very soon at the scene, and joining with a company already thereon duty, gave the British battle and forced them to retreat. The British left ninety-six of their men dead

on the field.

Mr. Jaqua succeeded in having his family brought across the border in the Fall of 1813, and now joined them. In 1815 he was engaged in hauling timber and lumber to Sackett's Harbor, where some 74 vessels were being built. He moved to the Western part of the state of New York, where he lived six years, and then moved to this county in 1882 and settled in Eden township, where lived to the time of his death. His friend Brown had preceded him as a pioneer to this county.

Colonel Jaqua, as he was familiarly called, received neither compensation nor pension from the Government for all his valuable service, until 1872. His Property was all confiscated by the British Government in Canada. It was through the efforts of the Honorable C. Foster, member of Congress from this district, that the Government recognized the meritorious work of Mr. Jaqua and granted him a pension, by special act, that tended very materially to gladden the few remaining years of the Colonel's life.

Co. Jaqua was a little more than six feet high, and well proportioned. He was blessed with an iron constitution, and great force of character. In his boyhood days his chance for an education was not very good; but whatever he lacked in book learning he made up by his sound sense and clear judgement. In stature and personal appearance, in his movements and tone of voice, he resembled Josiah Hedges, the Proprietor of Tiffin. He had a noble bearing, an open, frank, but sincere, countenance, heavy lower jaw, clenched lips, dark eyes, nose not very large and a little of the Roman shape, and a fine forehead. His very looks would say: "I'll do as I agree, sir." He took a very active part in public affairs in Seneca county, and contributed largely to the development of her resources, having lived here more than half a century. He was social in his nature, a good husband and father, and, above all, an honest man. He died, without a struggle, in peace with God and Mankind, on the 26th of September, 1878, aged ninety-one years, five months and seventeen days. His wife had preceded him in death on the 7th of May, 1877, aged eighty-six years, seven months and four days. This venerable couple lived in happy wedlock nearly seventy years, more than two generations of time. The Colonel was buried with plain, but impressive ritual of Masonry, having been an honored member of the order during the greater part of his life.

Requiesce en pace

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Re-typed by Jerry Phares from his photocopy of the original document. The words "The Fascinating Life of" in the title, actually "Fasinating"[sic] are written in pen on the original. The words underlined words in paragraph 3 "he would not take up arms against his native land, ..." are crossed out in pen on the original. (Possibly as repetitive coupled with the same phrase in the next part of the same sentence.) This document has no attribution of authorship, nor is it dated. Mr.

Phares first saw this document as a child (in the 1960's) and it was described to him as "a family historical document" or words to that effect. The original is typewritten on a very thin onionskin-type paper. A small corner is missing. (Indicated by **** in the re-type) ...Mr. Phares also states that the document appears to be written by someone in Seneca County, OH, from the usage "this county" and "this district".

[Note: In a letter to Dale Brown dated May 29, 1999, Mr. Phares notes that the above account contains factual errors (these are not enumerated in the letter). At that time, Mr. Phares did not know who wrote the account nor was he aware of the source of the writer's information. The document from which the above was transcribed was in the possession of Mr. Phares's great aunt and was kept with old family papers and photos in a cedar chest. The original was in the possession of her son. The unreadable portions of the document (indicated by **** in Mr. Phares's transcript) were filled in by Dale Brown, based on the account recorded in *The History of Seneca County*]