

“What Means This Stone?”

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The newly and beautifully restored **Fantinekill Monument** has been reinstalled at the northern border of the Village of Ellenville. Many local residents have noted its absence the last year or so; many others never realized it was missing or know what it commemorates.

The monument of Shawangunk granite was erected more than one hundred years ago (Decoration Day, 1903) in memory of the families massacred by Indians and Tories on May 4, 1779. The men, women and children who were victims of the raid were descendants of the earliest white settlers in or near Napanoch, Jean and Abraham Bevier, who had settled on land purchased for them by their father, Louis Bevier, one of the New Paltz patentees.

By 1779, Napanoch was a busy, thriving settlement; Ellenville was not even dreamed of. About a mile and a half south of Napanoch, along the **Old Mine Road** and near the stream called the **Fantinekill**, three farms had been established by Jesse Bevier, the widow Elizabeth Bevier, and Michael Sax. The dwellings occupied by the three families were relatively close to each other.

According to “Olde Ulster,” this little settlement was the frontier. The valley of the **Rondout**, the scene of this bloody event, had suffered from raids in the wars against the French, but no Indians had been seen in recent years.

Early in the morning of May 4, 1779, a band of Indians and Tories made a surprise attack on the three **Fantinekill** farms. Eleven people were killed and their homes burned. The home of Elizabeth Bevier, Isaac Bevier’s widow, was set on fire. The widow Bevier and her daughter Magdalen fled the house. Elizabeth was tomahawked. Magdalen, reported to be “not quite right,” was spared because the Indians believed that her condition

of mind was a visitation of the Great Spirit demanding their commiseration. She was released shortly and was given a letter for Captain Andries DeWitt in Napanoch, together with a bloodstained war club. She had rescued the Dutch family Bible later preserved by the Bevier family. Elizabeth’s two sons, Solomon and Josiah, were killed.

At Jesse Bevier’s farm, he and his two sons fought valiantly to defend their home. Nevertheless, the dwelling was torched. They were able to save part of the farmhouse; all members of the Jesse Bevier family survived the raid.

Such was not so at the third farm. Johanna Bevier Saks and her children, ranging in age from 14 to 29, were all killed. Johanna and Elizabeth, and their children, were supposedly buried in one grave, but that is not confirmed.

Meanwhile, word reached Colonel Courtlandt, who commanded the garrison at Hunk. He set out with soldiers, as did Col. Andries Bevier, but they arrived too late to accomplish much other than exchanging a few shots.

We are indebted to Abraham G. Bevier for his 1846 account of the **Fantinekill** massacre, which concluded: “The writer would simply ask if it would not be an act worthy of ‘the sons of noble sires’ who lost their lives in protecting for us the inestimable born of liberty to erect a marble slab with some suitable inscription to perpetuate their memory We ask not a monument like that on Bunker Hill, or the one contemplated to the memory of Washington. Then, when our children shall ask us in time to come, ‘what means this stone?’ we will tell them.”

Fifty-seven years later, such a monument was erected on **Budd’s Hill**, north of the village line. It was located near the burial site of some of the victims. A parade began in **Liberty Square** on Decoration Day (now Memorial Day), May 30th, 1903, with Ward Post and other veterans of the Grand Army of the Republic, children from the public school, members of the fire departments, Napanog Tribe, International Order of Red Men, and other interested citizens in the line of march. After Kate Hornbeek unveiled the bronze tablet (*photo, below, taken by Ellenville photographer W.H. Wylie, whose studio was opposite the O&W Depot, and provided by K.D. Millard of Kingston to K.T. Terwilliger*), mounted on a handsome ➤

