

# Benjamin Harvey's Discovery of the Lake

## Introduction

The story of Benjamin Harvey and the discovery of Harvey's Lake in 1781 is from [A History of Wilkes-Barre](#), copyrighted in 1909, by the noted Wyoming Valley historian, Oscar Jewell Harvey. The material is not edited and it retains the character of language 70 years ago.

During the early war years of the American Revolution two militia companies guarded the Wyoming Valley under the leadership of Col. Zebulon Butler. During 1776-1777, however, the Wyoming militia had to leave the Wyoming frontier to assist Washington who had been forced to flee to Valley Forge after defeats to the British army and their Indian allies.

The unprotected Wyoming frontier fell to prey to marauding British troops and Indians. Under the leadership of Major John Butler, for the British government, bounties were offered for American scalps. Wyoming was in danger and the Wyoming militia under Zebulon Butler's leadership was sent home. Before the home militia arrived in the Valley, however, the British and Indians, on July 3, 1778, massacred Wyoming's unprotected old and young in the Battle of Wyoming.

In response to the Wyoming Massacre the Sullivan Expedition was sent by Washington through Wyoming to New York. Sullivan's army of 3300 destroyed the Iroquois Confederacy. By 1780 about 150 families had returned to the ravaged Valley.

Benjamin Harvey was born in Lyme, Connecticut, on July 28, 1722. An early settler in the Valley, he had built a saw and corn mill on Harvey's Creek in 1776. He was on duty with the local militia outside the Valley during the Wyoming Massacre, but he lost a son, Silas, in the Wyoming Battle.

After the massacre Harvey left the area, with other fleeing settlers, but he returned to the Valley in August, 1778. His home near Harvey's Creek had been burned by the marauders but his mills on the creek were standing. He purchased land in Plymouth in order to be nearer protected areas. On the land there stood a log home and barn which had escaped the torch of invaders. In 1780 his capture by British and Indian raiders and his eventual release led to the discovery of Harvey's Lake.

Harvey died in Plymouth on November 27, 1795. He is buried in Hollenback Cemetery in Wilkes-Barre.

[Editor's Note: Additional information on Benjamin Harvey may be found in O.J. Harvey's History of Wilkes-Barre (1927), Vol. III, at p. 1260-1261 and related pages. This work is available at the Osterhout Library and the Luzerne County Historical Society.

Oscar Jewell Harvey (1851-1922) was a ninth generation descendent of Benjamin Harvey. An 1871 graduate of Lafayette College, he taught at Wyoming Seminary and became a lawyer in 1875. He lost an election as Mayor of Wilkes-Barre, entered federal service in Washington D.C., but is best known as the author of the four volume History of Wilkes-Barre (1907-1909) completed in 1927 by Ernest G. Smith, Wilkes-Barre newspaper publisher who married into the Harvey family.

There is no surviving documentation to support O.J. Harvey's account of Benjamin Harvey's discovery of the Lake. O.J. Harvey published a similar Lake discovery account in his The Harvey Book (1899) which can vary in detail from the account here (including Benjamin Harvey eating his pet dog on the homeward trek from Niagara). O.J. Harvey's account is likely an embellished family tradition true in all larger aspects but the precise details may be at issue but unanswerable given the absence of alternative historical evidence.]

## Chapter 1

### Indian and Ranger Marauders Capture Harvey and Son

A town meeting of the inhabitants of Westmoreland (Connecticut name of the Wyoming District) was held at the house of Abel Yarrington, Wilkes-Barre, on Tuesday, December 5, 1780. John Hurlbut, Esq., acted as moderator, and he, Colonel Denison, Captain John Franklin, James Nisbitt and Jabez Sill were chosen selectmen of the ensuing year. Also, men were chosen to fill the offices of town clerk, treasurer, constable, surveyors of highways, fence viewers, listers, collectors, leather sealers and grand jury men. "The fewer of the inhabitants," says Miner, "may be inferred from the fact that James Nisbitt and Jabez Sill were each chosen to three offices, and several others were voted in to the duties and honors of two.

"The occasion was one of comparative cheerfulness. Winter had set in – snow had fallen—the enemy, kept at a respectful distance by the spirited conduct of Hammond, Bennet, VanCampen, Rogers and Pike, would not be likely, it was thought, soon to return. With frost, sickness had ceased; and Forseman's arrival with a supply of cattle dissipated all fears of suffering from famine. But these pleasing dreams of security were destined to be brief duration."

On November 19, 1780, a detachment of 19 "Rangers" and five Indians set out from Niagara, under the command of Lieutenant John Turney, Sr., on a marauding expedition to the valley of the Susquehanna. In due time the party reached the river, where they took canoes and descended as far as Secord's on the west bank of the river, two or three miles above the present borough of Tunkhannock. Leaving their canoes here they marched westward through a gap in the mountains and then in a southerly direction towards the valley of Wyoming. They arrived on the summit of Shawanese Mountain, overlooking the Plymouth Township settlement, in the afternoon of Wednesday, December 6<sup>th</sup>, 22 days after leaving Niagara.

On the evening of this day George Palmer Ransom, a member of Capt. Simon Spalding's Westmoreland Independent Company, in the Continental service at the Wyoming garrison, Manasseh Cady, Jonathan Frisbie, James Frisbie, Nathan Bullock, Benjamin Harvey and his son Elisha, all privates in Capt. John Franklin's militia company, were gathered together at the home of Benjamin Harvey, where, also, were his daughter, Lucy Harvey and Lucy Bullock, a daughter or sister of Nathan Bullock. Mr. Harvey's home was in what is now the borough of Plymouth, on the northwest side of Main Street, about midway between the present Center and Eno avenues.

There had been a heavy fall of snow a few days previously, and on this Wednesday night the weather was extremely cold; but, within the deep and broad fireplace in the "living room" of Benjamin Harvey's house, there blazed a fire of pine knots and chestnut logs, whose genial brightness and warmth the little company seated about the hearth enjoyed with much satisfaction, heedless of the blustering winds and drifting snow without. At the same time the men of the party were enjoying also plenteous draughts of

the hardest kind of hard cider, which, with our New England forefathers, was the usual drink on extraordinary occasions during the winter season.

The hours were yet early when, suddenly, a noise was heard by this little group of friends at the fireside, which hushed their conversation and caused them to look at one another with apprehension. The noise was caused, simply, by two or three gentle knocks struck on the outer door of the house; but there was a ringing sound to them, which, to the experienced ears of those within the house indicated that the knocks did not come from the knuckles of a closed hand.

After a few moments of silence, the knocking was renewed, but more sharply than before, Benjamin Harvey then went forward and unbarred the door, whereupon it was pushed violently open, and five Indians, in full war-paint crossed the threshold. Glancing through the doorway, Mr. Harvey discovered that the house was surrounded by a number of armed men, which fact he immediately made known to his companions. Shortly afterwards the commander of the band, accompanied by two or three of his men, joined the savages within the doors, demanded food and drink for his party.

These marauders, it will be understood, were Lieutenant Turney and his detachment from Niagara, who, as soon as the shades of night had fallen upon Wyoming, had passed, as quietly and rapidly as possible, from their bivouac on top of Shawanese Mountain down into the valley.

Having satisfied their hunger and thirst without delay, they began to bind with cords the arms of the inmates of the house, who, in the meantime, had been informed by Lieutenant Turney that they must consider themselves prisoners of war. The marauders then set out for the mountain with their nine captives and with such booty as they could easily secure and carry. Arriving on top of the mountain, and out of danger of immediate pursuit, the party halted for consultation. After a while one of the Indians, who was past middle age, and was apparently a chief, led Lucy Harvey and Lucy Bullock aside from the other captives, and by the dim flickering light of a torch painted their faces in true Indian style. Then, unloosing the cords with which he bound the young women, he told them his name, and added: "Go, tell Colonel Butler I put on this paint!"

Parting from their relatives and friends, whom they never expected to see again, Lucy Harvey and Lucy Bullock made their way into the valley, through the gloomy forest and over the rough, snow-covered ground. Reaching the Plymouth highway they hastened in the direction of the Wilkes-Barre ferry, which they reached a short time before daylight. Awakening the ferrymen, they were rowed across the river by him, and arrived in a few minutes at Fort Wyoming.

## Chapter 2

### Harvey Placed in Custody of Indians

One of the sentries on duty there at that hour was the young man named Charles Harris, who, being acquainted with the Misses Harvey and Bullock, recognized their voices when they hailed the fort. Being admitted within the walls, they quickly told their story to the commander of the garrison, who ordered the alarm-gun to be fired. But by this time the captors and the captured were far on their journey, and beyond the sound even of the signal which fell upon the ears of the people of the valley as notification that someone in the community had been murdered into captivity.

An hour or two later there arrived at the fort a young Irishman named Thomas Connolly, who had deserted from Lieutenant Tunney's band shortly after the Misses Harvey and Bullock had been released. He gave information as to the route the party had traveled in approaching the valley, and stated that they expected to return northward the same way.

As soon as possible that morning Captain Franklin, with twenty-six of his men, set out from the fort in pursuit of the fleeing enemy, and marched up the river as far as Secord's where the pursuit was abandoned, being considered hopeless. Finding at this point the canoes left behind by the marauders, Captain Franklin and his men entered them and floated down to Wilkes-Barre, where they arrived after an absence of three days.

The two young women having been released, in the manner previously described, the marauders and their remaining captives marched away from the valley as rapidly as the snow, the darkness of the night and the tangled wilderness would permit. They traveled all that night and the next day, at the close of which they arrived at the headwaters of Mehoopany Creek, which empties into the Susquehanna a dozen or fifteen miles above Secord's. Apprehending annoying consequences from the desertion of Connolly, Lieutenant Turney had changed his line of march, and had forced his band and their captives to cover a good deal of ground—some of which was remarkably rough and rocky—in a comparatively short space of time. The captives, in addition to having their arms bound, were compelled to carry upon their backs the plunder which had been seized by their captors.

Benjamin Harvey was at this time in the fifty-ninth year of his life, and although a man of remarkable physique (he was six feet and three inches in height, and solidly built), yet he nearly collapsed under the strain of this forced march. He was the oldest man in the party, and when they reached Mehoopany, where they purposed to encamp for the night, it seemed certain that Mr. Harvey would not be able to endure the hardships of the march on the morrow. George Palmer Ransom, one of the Lieutenant Turney's captives, who lived to an old age, years afterward narrated that Benjamin Harvey during the march from Plymouth to Mehoopany, after frequently unbraiding Turney for his heartlessness, would berate and curse all Indians in general, and those in particular who were his captors; and then, when almost out of breath, would call down a variety of imprecations upon the "British red-coats and red

devils” who had so often made his life miserable. Ransom said that Turney was very much annoyed by these outbreaks, but managed to make a show of holding his temper.

Early in the morning of December 8<sup>th</sup> (which was Friday), Turney and the Indian chief held a consultation, which resulted in Mr. Harvey being placed in the custody of the Indians—evidently to be disposed of in whatsoever manner the latter should determine upon.

## Chapter 3

### The Trek to Niagara

Colonel Wright, in his "Historical Sketches of Plymouth," says: "After spending (at Mehoopany) the cold and chilly night of December as they best could, in the morning the Indians held a council of war as to what was to be done with old Mr. Harvey. The value of his scalp in the British market preponderated the scale against his life. The savages bound him to a tree with thongs, and fastened his head in a position that he could move neither to the right nor to the left. The old chief then measured off the ground some three rods, called the three young braves, and, placing a tomahawk in the hand of each and stepping aside, pointed his finger to the head of the old man. All this done in silence and without the least emotion depicted upon their stoic countenances.

"The first one hurled his tomahawk—after giving two or three flourishes in the air—with a piercing whoop. It fastened itself in the tree, five or six inches above the old man's head. The second and third made the same effort, but with life effect. The whole Indian party now became furious; the young warriors, for their want of skill in this, probably, their first effort, and the older ones from some other impulse. An angry scene ensued and they came nearly to blows. The old chief approached the victim and unloosened his bonds.

"The old gentleman, in giving an account of this episode, said that as each tomahawk came whizzing though the air it seemed as though it could not but spilt his head in two. That so far as he could understand from the Indian dispute—having some knowledge of their language, though imperfect—the old chief took the ground that the Great Spirit had interfered and prevented his death; while the others imputed it wholly to the unpracticed hands of the young braves, and that the Great Spirit had no hand in the matter. The stubborn will of the old sachem prevailed, however, and though in minority, his counsel in the affair decided the issue."

Very soon after this occurrence the party moved down the Mehoopany to the Susquehanna, then up river into New York and on to Fort Niagara by the most expeditious route. Miner (in his history) says: "On their way they suffered much from cold and hunger, but at Tioga Point they killed a horse, and then fared sumptuously. It is wonderful that cold, toil, hunger, and anguish of mind had not arrested the current of life, and left them a prey to the wolves. Their sufferings in that inclement season, bound, loaded, and driven several hundred miles through the wilderness to Canada, no pen can describe."

While Lieutenant Turney and his command and their captives were in "Camp 40 miles from Genesee, December 14, 1780, "Turney wrote to Brigadier General H. Watson Powell at Fort Niagara, and sent him by an express, the following letter (now printed for the first time):

"I have the honor to inform you that on the 6<sup>th</sup>...I arrived near Wilksbury Fort, situated at ye upper end of the Shawnese Flats, where I found some inhabitants under the protection of the fort. On the first night after my arrival I ordered my men to surround three of ye houses; who, forcing their way into

them, brought off seven prisoners, and I was lucky enough to prevail upon the Indians to leave the women and children behind unhurt. I then determined upon securing my retreat as fast as possible, for ye ground being covered with snow, and the garrison consisting of 300 men, exclusive of 30 more in another fort on the opposite side of ye river. I was apprehensive of being pursued and, perhaps, obliged to leave my prisoners behind. Should my proceedings meet with your approbation I shall think myself amply rewarded for any little trouble or fatigue I may have had in ye execution.

“I am thus far on my return to Niagara, and as I have now no resource left for provisions—having killed my horses—I bet you will be so kind as to send a fresh supply to meet me on the road. My party, in other respects—notwithstanding with fatigue—are in good spirits, and I have ye pleasure of observing to you that they have shown ye greatest zeal for His Majesty’s service; and indeed, from ye whole of their conduct, have proved themselves worthy of any assistance you may think proper to send them.”

At Fort Niagara, under the date of December 27, 1780, Colonel (formerly major) John Bulter wrote to Captain Mathews as follows:

“Lieutenants Turney and Wimple returned from the frontiers of Pennsylvania on the Susquehanna a few days ago, where they had been on a scout with 20 rangers. They surprised a fortified house in the night and took in it seven men. By one of the prisoners having an order from Colonel Butler, of the Rebels (which was found on him), directing that he should be furnished with horses, etc., and be forwarded with all dispatch, I am led to believe he was entrusted with letters, which he must of destroyed. The prisoners inform us the crops were very fine the last season in that part of the country. An express from New York for His Excellency, General Haldimand, joined them. His dispatches, I am told, go with this opportunity.”

At Fort Niagara, under the date of December 28, 1780, Brigadier General Powell wrote to General Haldimand the following letter (now printed for the first time):

“I take the opportunity of transmitting by Mr. Lando, who is charged with dispatches to Your Excellency, the report of Lieutenant Turney’s scout. As Mr. Turney’s family is in Canada, I have given him leave to pay them a visit, and if you should have occasion to send an express to these posts, I can recommend him as a very proper person to be entrusted with it. He will wait at Montreal for your orders. I have given Mr. Lando 10 pounds Halifax to defray his own and his company’s Mr. Drake, expenses here, and to carry him to Montreal.”



## Chapter 4

### Release of Harvey and Discovery of Lake

The seven Plymouth captives were detained at Niagara during the remainder of the winter and through the spring of 1781, being lodged with many other American prisoners, from different parts of the United States, in barracks just outside the walls of the fort. About that time the British authorities in Canada had begun operations to reclaim the crown lands which lay on the southwest bank of Niagara River opposite Fort Niagara. Arrangements had been made to found a settlement there, and the lands were to be cultivated in order to raise supplies of food for the support of the numerous British Loyalists who, driven from their homes throughout the United States, had taken refuge at Niagara. In the spring of 1781 a number of the prisoners at Fort Niagara, including Benjamin Harvey and his companions were taken across the river and made to work on these new lands.

In the latter part of May, 1781, Benjamin Harvey was released on parole by the military authorities at Fort Niagara, who, evidently, were of the opinion that he was too aged either to be made much use of as a prisoner in their hands, or, being back within the American lines, to aid the cause of the Rebels.

When he was turned loose at the fort, and directed to make his way homeward, he was not provided with anything in the way of food or money. He went forth with nothing but the clothes he wore, a hunting knife and a small piece of flint—this last being the article which every man carried to use with a piece of steel to strike fire.

Accompanied by a little dog, which had been his faithful companion for some months, Mr. Harvey started on his homeward journey without delay, traveling on foot southeasterly through the Genesee country and Western Central New York, and then onward till he struck the Chemung, or Tioga River. Here he happened upon an empty canoe, into which he got with his dog without hesitation, and paddled down the river. A few days later, having passed Tioga point and entered the Susquehanna River (80 miles above Wilkes-Barre), he began to realize that he was nearing home.

At this time, there were no settlers located either at Tioga Point, or far a considerable distance down the Susquehanna. Those settlers who, prior to the Revolutionary War, had taken up lands and established homes along the river near Mehoopany, Tunkhannock, and Bowman's Creeks, had either voluntarily withdrawn from, or been driven out of the country during the years 1776-1778, and had never returned.

On his homeward journey Mr. Harvey reached the mouth of Bowman's Creek (three or four miles below Secord's and on the same side of the river), just at nightfall one day, when there were indications of a coming thunder storm. Paddling into the creek he dragged his canoe out of the water, and lay down under it to escape the storm and spend the night. The next morning he discovered all about him evidences of a recent Indian bivouac.

Fearing that if he continued his course down the river he might fall in with a band of predatory savages, he decided to abandon his canoe and make the remainder of his journey on foot. Therefore he went up along the right bank of the creek for some miles, and then turned his steps southward, intending and

expecting to strike the trail over which he and his fellow captives had been led six months previously. When night came he had not yet found the trail.

Early the next morning he made a fresh start, and after traveling the whole day he found himself at night at the point from which he had set out in the morning. As the entire region was strange to him, and he had no compass, it was difficult for the fatigued and bewildered old man to decide what course to pursue. Overcome with exhaustion, he soon fell asleep.

On the following morning he started with a better prospect, as he thought, of finding his way out of the woods. All that day he tramped on and on but when night came he had to admit to himself that he hadn't the remotest idea where he was.

By this time hunger had begun to make loud demands upon his exhausted body. Before leaving the last of the Tioga River settlements through which he passed, he was given a small supply of provisions by some kindly disposed people whose aid he sought; but he had used up this food, and for twenty-four hours had eaten nothing.

After another night's rest he again started forth to attempt to find his way out of the wilderness. He had not gone far, however, when, from a slightly elevated ridge upon which he paused to look around, he saw through the trees the silvery glimmerings of a sheet of water at no great distance from where he stood. Hope and exultation succeeded to dejection and dismay in the breast of the old man, as he hurried down the declivity towards the gladsome sight which met his gaze.

Mr. Harvey soon found himself facing a wide expanse of water and as he stood at its edge and exclaimed "The Susquehanna! The Susquehanna!" the sun rose from behind the hills on the opposite shore, and lighted up a scene which even the half-starved, unsentimental Yankee, standing there lonely and lost was found to admire.

A while later, having reconnoitered the western shore for some distance, Mr. Harvey discovered that this body of water was not the river which he knew so well, but was a large lake, completely environed by high hills whose slopes, extending almost to the water's edge, were densely covered by a primeval forest. After some consideration he concluded that this unknown lake lay among the mountains which, at a considerable distance directly north of Wyoming Valley, skirted the west bank of the Susquehanna; and that if the lake had an outlet its waters, without doubt, were discharged into the Susquehanna. He determined to search for an outlet forthwith.

In the course of an hour's tramp along the shore of the lake, its outlet was found—the outflow forming a copious and rapid stream. Pursuing his way along this stream, Mr. Harvey had traveled a number of miles when he came to the opinion that the region through which he was passing had been visited by him at some previous time. This belief became more positive the farther he went, until, at length he concluded that he was traveling along Harvey's Creek. All doubts were settled a little later, when he came to the fire-blackened ruins of his mills.

Hastening up the highway in the direction of Plymouth, he learned from people whom he met that during his absence his daughter Lucy had been living with friends in Wilkes-Barre. Thither he hastened, therefore, and just as the day was closing he was reunited with his daughter, after a separation of almost seven months. It was then the 4<sup>th</sup> day of July and Mr. Harvey had been more than five weeks in making the journey from Fort Niagara.

## Chapter 5

### Harvey's Son, Elisha, Sold for Rum

Shortly after Benjamin Harvey was released on parole at Fort Niagara, Elisha Harvey, George P. Ransom and young Frisbie of the Plymouth party of prisoners were removed to Montreal, Canada. From there Ransom, known to be a Continental soldier, was sent to a prisoner' island, forty-five miles up the St. Lawrence River, where there were 167 Americans captives, guarded by Loyalist refugees, who belonged to Sir John Johnson's regiment.

About the time of the arrival of Elisha Harvey and his comrades at Montreal, the British authorities there settled, according to custom, for the services of the Indians who had aided to capture the Plymouth people and convey them prisoners to Fort Niagara. The old Seneca chief, who had been a member of the marauding party, determined, however, that instead of accepting a money consideration for his services, he would take possession of Elisha Harvey. This was in accordance with a custom which, at this period was much in vogue among the Indian allies of the British and was unquestionably recognized and countenanced by the latter.

In the latter years of the Revolutionary War many of the Six Nation Indians, who, as allies of the British, went out on the warpath in the winter and spring months, spent the summer and autumn in the western and northwestern regions of British-American territory shooting and trapping fur-bearing animals. In 1665 a Jesuit mission was founded on the shore of Green Bay, in what is now Wisconsin, and French fur-traders soon established in that locality a trading-post, which continued to prosper for many years. Upon the conquest of Canada in 1763 the Wisconsin region passed under British control, which lasted practically until 1815.

Immediately upon gaining possession of Elisha Harvey, the Seneca chief set out with a large party of Indian hunters and trappers for Green Bay, distant more than 700 miles west by south from Montreal. Of course, the young American prisoner was compelled to accompany the party, and to bear more than his share of the tolls and hardships incident to the expedition. Starvation and plenty alternated. Then, too, the fur trade often meant fighting with hostile Indians and out maneuvering rivals. Many natural obstacles had to be met and overcome also.

An Indian would kill 600 beavers in a season, but owing to difficulties of carriage he could dispose of only one-sixth of them. When sold for money to Europeans beaver skins brought 6s 2d per pound; wolf skins, 15s; bear skins, 16s; and deer skins, 2s. 2d. per pound. A current account of the standard of barter shows that one and a half pounds of gunpowder, or twenty fish-hooks, or a pair of shoes, or a blue and white shirt could be exchanged with an Indian for one beaver skin. Blackfeet Indians would exchange a woman for one gun but for a horse ten guns were demanded.

All these things and much more Elisha Harvey learned before he got back to the habitation of civilized men, which was not until the close of the year 1781. The expedition had been a very successful one and when the party returned to Montreal the Indians had a large quantity of furs and pelts which they soon sold, "but," says Colonel Wright in his "Historical Sketches of Plymouth", "in the course of a month they

had used up the proceeds in riot and dissipation. Our Seneca brave then began casting about for a market for his prisoner, which he found became necessary, as he had not the means of subsistence for himself, much less for poor Harvey. He finally stumbled on a Scotchman, who was a small dealer in Indian commodities, and, after a half day's bartering and talk, in which the good qualities of Harvey were highly extolled by the old chief, they at last settled upon the price to be paid for Elisha, which was a half a barrel of rum.

"He now went behind the counter of his new master, and was duly installed in the mysteries and secrets of an Indian trader. Among the first lessons he learned the important fact that the hand weighted two pounds and the foot four! Under this system of avoirdupois there never occurred and fractions. The weight always came out in even pounds. Our prisoner became a great favorite with his new master, who was a bachelor, and promised to make him the heir of his estate if he would assume his name and become his child by adoption. Elisha openly favored the idea, but his secret thoughts were centered on old Shawnee."

## Chapter 6

### Harvey and Son Reunited

In the Spring of 1782, Elisha Harvey managed to communicate with his father at Plymouth, and latter being thus informed as to his son's whereabouts, immediately took steps to have him restored to liberty and permitted to return home.

The surrender of Lord Cornwallis at Yorktown in October, 1781, was virtually the end of the war between England and America, and during the spring and summer of 1782 the main part of the American army lay along the Hudson river from Peekskill to Newburg (where Washington had his headquarters) watching Sir Guy Carleton to his British forces still in the occupancy of the City of New York and its vicinity.

Early in May, 1782, Maj. General Henry Knox, Chief of Artillery on the staff of General Washington, and Governor Morris, some years later United States Minister to France, were appointed commissioners on the part of the United States to arrange a general exchange of prisoners; but the difficulties in the way were so great that no satisfactory arrangements could be affected. In May, 1782, Col. Zebulon Butler, then in command of the 4<sup>th</sup> Regiment, Connecticut Line, stationed at 'Camp Highlands,' near West Point, on the Hudson, paid a visit to his family at Wilkes-Barre. Benjamin Harvey immediately consulted him with reference to procuring the release of Elisha Harvey, and the following plan was finally determined upon:

Capt. Alexander Mitchell of the New Jersey Line being at this time in command of Fort Wyoming, and Adam Bowman being still held a prisoner there under the sentence imposed by the court-martial in 1780 it was agreed by Colonel Butler and Captain Mitchell that Bowman should be delivered into the custody of Benjamin Harvey. He, carrying certain documents to be furnished by Colonel Butler, would convey the prisoner to Montreal and exchange him for Elisha Harvey, who, it will be remembered, had been one of the militiamen who captured Bowman.

What authority these officers had for making this arrangement is not known, but the fact remains that in the latter part of June, 1782, Benjamin Harvey set out from Wilkes-Barre on horseback, having in custody, mounted upon a second horse belonging to himself, the prisoner Adam Bowman. They journeyed over the mountains to the Delaware, and thence to Esopus (now Kingston) on the Hudson. Here they turned northward, designing to travel the direct route to Montreal, via Lake George and Champlain.

In due time the travelers reached Saratoga, which was one of the American outposts. Here they were stopped by the officer in command of the post, who took Bowman away from Mr. Harvey and sent him in charge of guards down to West Point, a distance of about 120 miles. The officer claimed that the authority by which the prisoner was being conducted to Canada was both too informal and insufficient, or was wholly illegal.

Benjamin Harvey accompanied Bowman and his guards to West Point, and then crossing the Hudson went in hot haste to the Connecticut camp, a mile and a half distant, to inform Colonel Butler as to the condition of affairs. Arriving at the camp of the 4<sup>th</sup> Regiment he found that the Colonel had set out for Wilkes-Barre the day before, on leave of absence. As soon as possible Mr. Harvey started for Wilkes-Barre, where he arrived on Sunday, July 21<sup>st</sup>. Colonel Butler had arrived there on the 19<sup>th</sup>.

Mr. Harvey attended to some necessary matters at his home, and on July 29<sup>th</sup> left Wilkes-Barre for West Point, bearing a certificate from Colonel Butler reading as follows:

“These certify the ADAM BOWMAN now a prisoner of War to the United States of America was taken by the inhabitants of Westmoreland and brought to the garrison sometime in 1780 when I commanded this post and upon application made to me by Mr. Benjamin Harvey for the prisoner to send him to Montreal and exchange for his son then and yet in captivity—which request I granted and Mr. Harvey at his own expense did take the prisoner from this place to Saratoga from the above purpose and I have been informed that he has for some reason been sent from there down to West Point or its vicinity—and should yet request that Mr. Harvey may be indulged with the prisoner for the purpose of redeeming his son.

(Signed) “Zebn. Butler.

Col. 4<sup>th</sup> Connect. Regt.

“Wyoming, July 29<sup>th</sup>, 1782,

“To the officer in whose custody the prisoner may be.”

When Mr. Harvey was nearing West Point, he determined that he would go on up the river to Newburg and present his case to General Washington. The General, after reading Colonel Butler’s “certificate,” and asking for fuller information concerning the case, sent Mr. Harvey in charge of an orderly with a note to General Knox. The latter ordered that Adam Bowman should not be redelivered into the custody of Mr. Harvey, who, the next day started for Canada provided with proper passports. The journey was made by the two men without further interruption, and Montreal having been reached, the exchange of Elisha Harvey was affected—not, however, without the unpleasant experiences and annoying delays. Father and son set out their homeward journey as soon as possible, Elisha riding the horse which had been used by Adam Bowman.

Capt. John Franklin, at his home in Wilkes-Barre, recorded in his diary the date of September 10, 1782: “Mr. Harvey returned from captivity. Sent home on parole.”