



## Judge John R. Reddick's Grave

Judge John R. Reddick, an early associate judge of Beaver County serving from 1804 to 1830, is buried on the edge of the West Virginia border near Hardin's Run Road in Hanover Township.

At the time of his burial the grave, enclosed by heavy sandstone walls, was located on the state line between Pennsylvania and Virginia.

By his request, he was buried with his face toward the East, his head in Virginia and his feet in Pennsylvania, so if the Devil came for him on one side, he could quickly flee to the other side.

Ironically, a resurvey when the state of West Virginia was created from Virginia in 1863, shows the grave to be entirely in Pennsylvania.

Judge Reddick was a man of means, and in addition to his judicial duties, he kept himself busy with his fine stable of fast horses. At his farm in Hanover Township, he had constructed one of the finest racetracks to be found anywhere in the newly settled west country. Fellow horse breeders would travel great distances to try their luck against the Judge's stable. Usually, as the story goes, they lost.

The Judge was reportedly not a modest man, and his continued success led to frequent boasting about the speed and stamina of his stock. In fact, the reputed abilities of the Judge's favorite horse, a big white stallion, reached the ears of Satan, who was not at all unfamiliar with the world of horse racing.

The Devil that he was, Satan recognized a sure way to capitalize on the Judge's overconfidence. He dispatched one of his ablest lieutenants to approach the Judge and negotiate a wager. The terms were simple, but the stakes were high.

Against the Judge's famed white stallion, the demon would ride a nag of his choice, on the Judge's own track or anywhere Reddick preferred. The Judge, if the winner would receive the power to accumulate fabulous wealth over the balance of his life. If he lost, the Judge was required to surrender his soul immediately.

Judge Reddick insisted on fair terms for the race and received assurances that his mount would not be tampered with before or during the race. Confident that the white stallion could not be excelled on the track, the Judge eagerly accepted the bet.

Unfortunately, Judge Reddick overlooked the possibility that the demon's horse might have unnatural talents. At the time of the race, at midnight of course, the Judge was totally unimpressed by the competition, for the demon showed up riding an old black mare that looked as if it had just been resurrected after a long rest underground.

As the race started, the mounts were about evenly matched, with the demon's nag showing surprising vigor. But, as the Judge attempted to pull ahead, the black mare snorted a breath of fire at the Judge's horse, and the stallion reared up and nearly threw his rider. This happened again and again, and though the white stallion was clearly superior in racing ability, the Judge just could not pass the black mare with her fiery breath, and the race was lost.

The Judge's heirs felt that Reddick merely wanted to pass into eternity in both of the states that he loved so well: Virginia, the land of his birth, and Pennsylvania, where he led a busy and successful life. But, the Judge had other ideas. When the soul collector showed up, Judge Reddick demanded the proper extradition papers be filed. When the legal formality had been resolved in the Pennsylvania courts and the devil again appeared to get his due, the Judge had crawled over into the Virginia side of his tomb. Only temporarily thwarted, the devil then filed papers in Virginia, only to find the Judge safe and secure in Pennsylvania. Legend has it that the Judge kept this up until the statute of limitations on the original agreement had expired, and Old Satan never did collect his soul.

After the Civil War, when West Virginia had become a state and was the new western neighbor, the state line was re-surveyed. Visitors to Judge Reddick's gravesite today will find it nearly intact, but fully ten feet east of the state line. It is located in a wooded area on private property and cannot be seen from the road.

For over one hundred and fifty years, the locals have reported seeing the image of a man on a white horse galloping along Hardin's Road near the state line. Could it be the Judge celebrating his victory over the devil?