

"A Common Dish: The Ohio Indian Confederacy and the Struggle
for the Upper Ohio Valley, 1783-1795."

by

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“A Common Dish: The Ohio Indian Confederacy and the Struggle for the Upper Ohio Valley, 1783-1795.”

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Abstract

Following the close of the American Revolution, the Federal Government, reeling from the strain of a massive war debt, looked toward the lands of the Old Northwest as a possible source of compensation for its war veterans. In response to the ensuing encroachments on to their native lands, which Great Britain had unjustifiably surrendered under the terms of the peace treaty of 1783, Indian nations of the Great Lakes Region and the upper Ohio Valley sought to reestablish what had proven to be a tenuous alliance.

This alliance will be traced from its roots in the mid 1750s, through its collapse following General Anthony Wayne's crushing victory at the battle of Fallen Timbers, 1794. Particular attention will be paid to the late 1780s and early 1790s, when the struggle for the Ohio Country brought the region's Indian nations a degree of unity which had long alluded them. United by the principles of common land ownership and a united diplomatic voice, the confederation nevertheless remained shrouded in local and regional concerns. It is the manner with which the tribes struggled to overcome these concerns while searching for the unity that they so desperately needed in the face of a rapidly expanding enemy that will be explored in depth.

Historians have long ignored the Ohio Indians' efforts. Portrayed as mere pawns of British diplomacy, the tribes remain shrouded under a veil of misperception. While more and more scholars are slowly beginning to reexamine the Indians' role, they have done so at the expense of limiting the tribes' motivations to those shared by their European counterparts. An "Indian perspective" of these events will serve to highlight the distinctions between Indian and European agendas, while demonstrating the extent to which the Ohio Indian Confederacy remained subject to its own divisive strains amid a struggle that would define a region.

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“We can retreat no further, because the country behind us barely affords food for its present inhabitants; and we have therefore resolved to leave our bones, in this small place to which we are now confined.”

-Chiefs of the Shawnee, Delaware, Miami, Wyandot, Ottawa, Chippewa, Potawatomi, Seven Nations of Canada, Mingo, Creek, and Cherokee Nations to the Commissioners of the United States,

August 13, 1793.

A Common Dish: The Ohio Indian Confederacy and the Struggle
for the Upper Ohio Valley, 1783-1795

Preface

The upper Ohio Valley of the eighteenth century, was as Michael N. McConnell has suggested, a “country between.” Only recently inhabited by various refugee tribes including the Delaware, who had found themselves crowded out of their traditional homelands, the region was witness to what would prove to be the final Anglo-French war for empire. The Ohio Indians confronted the challenges of living between these competing empires by exploiting both powers. This resulting “play-off system,” fueled in large part by the Indians’ dependence on European goods, as well as their desire to defend their new homelands, culminated in a sense of unity among the various tribes of the Ohio Valley, who in turn, cultivated a strong attachment to the region. Nevertheless, as both McConnell and Richard White have asserted, these Indian communities remained torn by factional disputes stemming from long-standing “ethnic and historical jealousies.” As a result, both local and regional concerns dictated the Ohio Indians’ actions, rather than any desire for pan-Indianism.¹

By the early 1770s, as the Shawnee stood virtually alone in their confrontations with the Virginians attempting to stake their own claim in the Ohio Valley, the region’s intercultural relations were forever altered. The colonialists, unlike the British and the French before them, did not seek to accommodate the natives of the Ohio Country out of any convergence of interests or

¹ Michael N. McConnell, A Country Between: The Upper Ohio Valley and its Peoples, 1724-1774, (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1992, 1-4. See also Richard White, The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

needs. Kentuckians and Pennsylvanians readily defied Crown authority by crossing into what the Indians considered unceded land, and were concerned only with the sole possession of the land. For the Ohio Indians, Dunmore's War proved to be a precursor for events surrounding the American Revolution, as scores of back country settlers immediately poured into the Ohio Country.²

Finding the colonists unable to supply their needs, and feeling confident in the Crown's ability to squelch the American revolt, the Ohio Indians abandoned the play-off strategy of years past and turned to the British, who appeared to be the lesser of two evils. By the close of the Revolution, the tribes found themselves isolated by their English "fathers," who, required by international politics to abandon the tribes, were unable to defend the western frontier openly. As a result the Ohio Indians sought a confederation in order to provide a unified front in opposition to American claims to the Ohio Country. According to the tribes, these lands had been unjustly ceded by the British and the Iroquois, neither of whom held legitimate claim to the region. This latest attempt at tribal unity, based on the principle of common land ownership and a united voice in diplomacy, at times reflected a movement toward pan-Indianism. Yet in the end, continued local and regional concerns prevented the Confederacy from ever coming to fruition.

For the most part, historians have ignored the era from the close of the American Revolution to the Treaty of Greenville, like the Ohio Valley as a whole. The Ohio Indians remain particular casualties of this trend. As Professor McConnell points out, the Shawnee, Delaware,

² Although the term is problematic, I will use the term Ohio Indians to apply to those tribes involved in the Confederacy. The Confederacy included a diverse mixture of Indian nations, with tribes located as far north as the upper Great Lakes. In addition, while the majority of the tribes spoke an Algonquian dialect, the Confederacy included groups of western Seneca and Mingo, both of whom spoke an Iroquoian dialect.

Miami, Piankashaw, Mingo, and other Ohio tribes have “lived in the shadow cast by the Iroquois Confederacy.” For instance, Robert S. Allen makes little distinction between the Ohio Indians and the Iroquois, while failing to recognize that the Ohio tribes did not fall under the same Covenant Chain alliance with the British that the Six Nations once practiced.³

This inability to recognize that the Ohio tribes saw themselves outside such networks has led to the perception that the Ohio Indians were somehow subject to British will. Historians, including Colin Calloway, Reginald Horsman, Wiley Sword, and Robert S. Allen have dealt extensively with the relationship between the Crown and its “Indian allies” following the American Revolution. Their focus, however, is limited to the manner in which the British attempted to manipulate and control the Ohio Indian Confederacy. These scholars effectively point to the Crown’s desires to prolong the northwestern fur trade and create an Indian “buffer state” separating its colonial possessions from the new American Republic, as the motivation behind the Ohio Indians’ alliance. While few would argue against the notion that the British desired Indian unity and sought to exploit it for their own ends, not taking the Confederacy’s motivations into consideration limits the Ohio Indians’ role to that of mere pawns locked in the shadow of the fleeting British empire.⁴

In addition, recent studies by Richard White and Colin Calloway have suggested that examining these events solely from the “Indian” point of view obscures the complex set of

³ McConnell, *A Country Between*, 2-3. Robert S. Allen, *His Majesty’s Indian Allies: British Policy in the Defense of Canada, 1774-1815*, (Toronto and Oxford: Dunburn Press, 1992).

⁴ See Colin G. Calloway, *Crown and Calumet: British-Indian Relations, 1783-1815*, (Normon and London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987); Reginald Horsman, “The British Indian Department and Resistance of General Anthony Wayne,” *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, Vol. 49, 1962; Wiley Sword, *President Washington’s Indian War: The Struggle for the Old Northwest, 1790-1795*, (Normon: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985); Allen, *His Majesty’s Indian Allies*.

relations between the Indian tribes and foreign powers who occupied the region. However, while it is important to consider the nature of relations within the Ohio Valley, any attempt to combine the motivations and interests of the various Indian nations, and their European counterparts, runs the risk of losing sight on the differing agendas that defined Ohio Valley history. While British fur traders and Crown officials shared the Ohio Indians' desire to hold onto the lands of the Ohio Valley, an unmistakable dispute over what specific lands to defend, and the manner with which to defend them, quickly arose. An "Indian perspective" of these events serves to highlight these distinctions, while demonstrating the extent to which the Ohio Indian Confederacy also remained subject to its own divisive strains.⁵

I hope to reveal the manner in which the Ohio Indians vigorously pursued consolidation in order to display a unified front in resistance to American encroachments into the Ohio Valley. These tribes further hoped to utilize the lingering British presence both for the continuing flow of supplies, as well as the threat that an Indian-British alliance offered the burgeoning American republic. In addition, I will expand on the notion offered by such historians as Richard White, that the Iroquois and Mohawk Chief Joseph Brant in particular, had long lost the tenuous grip that they once held over Ohio Valley politics prior to the close of the Revolutionary War. In doing so I will attempt to reflect the view of Indian participants. Essentially, I am concerned with the manner in which these tribes sought unity in the face of continued local and regional concerns, as well as how this inherently fragile alliance sought survival in the face of an expanding enemy, one armed with political, economical, and religious ideals that demanded the sole possession of the Ohio

⁵Colin Calloway, "Beyond the Vortex of Violence: Indian-White Relations in the Ohio Country 1783-1815," Northwest Ohio Quarterly, V.64, Winter 1992, 16-25; White, The Middle Ground.

Country and beyond.⁶

⁶ For diminished Iroquois role see Richard White, The Middle Ground; Michael N. McConnell, A Country Between; Dorothy V. Jones, License for Empire: Colonialism by Treaty in Early America, (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1982).

Introduction

The Search for Unity

As the summer of 1783 wore on, a cold chill swept into the Ohio Valley. Tension filled the air as the Shawnee huddled in their villages awaiting word on whether or not the appalling rumors were true. They had heard from their brothers the Delaware and the Mingo, but it was white traders who finally convinced them that something was terribly wrong. Perhaps out of sheer unwillingness to believe the allegations, the Shawnee initially chose to ignore the possibility that their English “fathers” had made peace with the Big Knives. Somewhat reluctantly, the Shawnee chiefs gathered and agreed to send out a small war party in retaliation against American horse thieves. When the victorious party returned, they found that their village leaders had been called to a council at Detroit. The Shawnees’ darkest fears came to fruition as British officials, including Lieutenant Colonel Arent Schuyler De Peyster, chastised the Shawnee for the affair, declaring that “the times are very critical - the world wants to be at peace and its time they should be so.” The final blow came as the Shawnee listened in bitter silence to a visibly distressed De Peyster, who warned them that he feared their retaliation against the Americans, for it “might bring on bad consequences, if so, it must be an affair of your own, as your father can take no part in it.” The Shawnee realized, like the Delaware and the Mingo before them, that they now stood alone in the

defense of their homelands and their very way of life.⁷

The Ohio Valley is a rugged terrain dissected by numerous rivers and tributaries. The Beaver, Muskingum, and Scioto river systems, which run from north to south before draining into the Ohio River, occupy the region which makes up the Allegheny Plateau. Beyond the Muskingum lies the plains of central Ohio, a land once rich in a wealth of game that included elk, turkey, bear, deer, and buffalo. The terrain varies between low, dry ridges and rich meadows which in earlier times supported an abundance of plant life.⁸

For generations, the Erie, an Iroquoian-speaking people also known as the “cat” or “raccoon” nation, came home to this bountiful land with its lush rolling hills and rocky thickets. Among the first peoples to inhabit the region, the Erie were organized into a loose confederacy of three to four villages centered along the Lake Erie shore. By the early 1650s the Erie were locked in conflict with the Five Nations Iroquois, who, spurred by their desires to secure a grip over the valuable European trade as well as the need to replace those they had lost to foreign diseases, pushed into the Ohio Valley. The Erie, themselves suffering from epidemics, and lacking the Dutch-supplied firearms that so enhanced the Iroquois cause, quickly yielded to the Five Nations’ onslaught. As a result, the Erie scattered into extinction, thus leaving the Ohio Valley open to the Iroquois League. The Iroquois’ reign in the Ohio Valley proved short-lived, however. During the 1660s the Ojibwa, or Anishnabe, of the northern Great Lakes, along with their local allies,

⁷ “Indian Council at Detroit, July 30, 1783,” in Clarence M. Burton (ed.), Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, (Lansing: Wynkoop, Hallenbeck, Crawford Co., 1912), V.20, 153-154.

⁸ For discussion of Ohio Valley topography see McConnell, The Upper Ohio Valley and its Peoples, 5-9.

decisively defeated a large Iroquois war party, driving the Five Nations from the northern Great Lakes.⁹

By the early eighteenth century the Iroquois further succumbed to the pressure from those western tribes, such as the Ottawa, who were allied to the French. As a result of the western tribes becoming more and more confident in their defiance of Iroquois superiority, the Ohio Valley witnessed the migrations of various independent bands who eventually reunited in the region under a new collective identity. The Delaware, or Lenape, sought solace in the lands east of the Muskingham River after the Iroquois had assumed dominion over them in their traditional homelands, thus forbidding them to make war or sales of land. After migrating north from early locations in present-day South Carolina, the Shawnee found themselves dislodged from the Ohio and Cumberland Valleys by Iroquois raids during the late 1670s. By 1730, after a period of wandering, the majority of Shawnee re-settled in western Pennsylvania before ultimately withdrawing down the Ohio River in order to avoid British and Iroquois interference. Other tribes, such as the Wyandot, or Wendat, ventured into the Ohio Country from the northwest following Iroquois raids into their former homelands during the mid 1640s. For whatever the reasons, whether it be to escape colonial or Indian enemies or to take advantage of the abundance that the Ohio Valley had to offer, various “refugee” bands ventured into the region together in order to preserve their cultural and political identities.¹⁰

⁹ Marian E. White, “Erie,” in William C. Sturtevant (ed.), Handbook of North American Indians, (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1978), V.15; Daniel K. Richter, The Ordeal of the Longhouse: The Peoples of the Iroquois League in the Era of European Colonization, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 51; Francis Jennings, The Ambiguous Iroquois Empire, (New York: W.W. Norton, 1984).

¹⁰ Helen Hornbeck Tanner, Indians of Northeast Ohio and Southwest Michigan (New York and London: Garland Publishing Inc., 1974), 27-41; C.A. Weslager, The Delaware Indians: A History (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1972); McConnell, A Country Between, 9-20.

Within decades of their arrival, these newcomers to the Ohio Valley realized that they had settled in a region that stood at the very crossroads of an imperial conflict between the British and the French. The Delaware, Shawnee, and Mingo, an amalgamation of Iroquois and Wyandot refugees, were initially loyal to the French. The French, who in addition to offering the cheapest trade goods, were more sympathetic to the Indians' needs for cultural sovereignty. Nevertheless, many of the tribes, such as the Wyandot, remained under British influence because the Iroquois had placed their claims to the Ohio Country under the protection of the Crown following their defeats in the Ohio Valley at the close of the seventeenth century. The Ohio Indians thus found themselves in a precarious position, as both the British and the French actively sought an alliance with them.

Throughout the "Great War for Empire" waged between the British and the French for control of the continent from 1754-1763, the Ohio Country tribes wavered between alliances with the two powers, based as much on who provided adequate supplies as on who seemingly held the upper hand militarily. Although the French convinced the Miami, who settled near present-day Fort Wayne, of their superiority after capturing and destroying every vestige of British trade in the Miami's country, the majority of the region's tribes practiced a tenuous neutrality. As it became clear that the Ohio Indians would no longer be able to exploit effectively the lucrative balance of power within the region, the Shawnee, Delaware, and others bided their time, all the while attempting to discern whether British or French forces would gain the ascendancy.¹¹

As British victories mounted and the flow of French provisions grew sparse, war leaders

¹¹ Randolph C. Downes, Council Fires on the Upper Ohio: A Narrative of Indian Affairs in the Upper Ohio Valley until 1795, (Pittsburgh: The University of Pittsburgh Press, 1940), 57; White, The Middle Ground, 223-268.

from the Delawares, Shawnees, Wyandots, Ottawas, Ojibwas, Kaskaskias, Miamiis, and Potawatomis converged on Fort Pitt during the summer of 1759. Led by the ambitious Delaware chief, Tamaqua, the Ohio Indians reached a peaceful agreement with the Crown based in part on a convergence of interests. The peace proved to be short-lived, however, as British policy in the Ohio Valley quickly eroded into one of unstable accommodation.¹²

Subject to land robbing, unpunished murders of tribesmen, unscrupulous traders, the forced return of captives, and insolent frontiersmen, the Ohio Indians were mystified by the Crown's notions of peace following the Great War for Empire. Lord Jeffery Amherst's decision, first announced during the winter of 1761, to "economize" by cutting down on gifts to the Indians in order to force their return to hunting, further enraged the Ohio Indians. As these ill feelings began to fester, a series of prophetic teachings burst forth from a small Delaware town along the Tuscarawas River. In the face of repeated efforts to forge a confederacy that would prevent British occupation of the Ohio Valley, Neolin, a Delaware prophet who espoused purging the Indians of all that they had learned from the white man, provided the spark that ignited a revolt.¹³

Popularly known as "Pontiac's Revolt," the revolt was in actuality, a series of loosely connected rebellions. These uprisings, which enveloped the Ohio Country during the early 1760s, can be concentrated into two major conspiracies. The first was centered around Detroit, where Pontiac, a capricious Ottawa war chief, led an unsuccessful attempt to surprise the British garrison. In the siege that followed, Pontiac transformed Neolin's anti-white message into anti-

¹² McConnell, A Country Between, 143. For overview of events surrounding the Great War for Empire see Francis Jennings, Empire of Fortune: Crowns, Colonies, and Tribes in the Seven Years' War in America, (New York: W.W. Norton, 1988).

¹³ Downes, Council Fires on the Upper Ohio, 118; White, The Middle Ground, 271.

English doctrine as he sought the return of his “French father,” who he fully expected to provide aid for the lingering assault.¹⁴

While Pontiac’s siege eventually failed without the expected aid of the French, the second conspiracy led by the Seneca, Delaware, Shawnee, and Mingo proved somewhat more successful. In a series of attacks that swept through the Great Lakes country into the Ohio River Valley, the tribes managed to capture a series of British forts including Fort Sandusky, Michilimackinac, Fort Venango, Fort Miamis, and Fort Le Boeuf, before ultimately being turned back at Fort Pitt. While the Ohio Indians failed in their ultimate goal of removing the British from the Ohio Country, the seeds for unity had been planted, and the tribes had proven that they would not be easily crushed under the weight of the Crown’s presence. Once again, both peoples viewed accommodation as the only answer.¹⁵

As the tribes began to slip away from the abandoned Fort Stanwix during the fall of 1768, they began to grasp the ramifications of the treaty that had just been completed, and it became increasingly clear that any hope for continued accommodation was futile indeed. In an effort to placate frontier violence and unchecked trade and settlement, the British sought to retain their authority over the west as well as to meet their treaty obligations to the Indians living there. As a result, Crown officials attempted to honor their pledge to negotiate a boundary line that could reduce future conflicts over land and resources. In the subsequent Treaty of Fort Stanwix, the Iroquois, who, as Michael McConnell points out, assumed the responsibility for negotiating on

¹⁴ White, The Middle Ground, 287-288; For discussion of Indian attempts at unity following The Great War for Empire see Gregory Evans Dowd, A Spirited Resistance: The North American Indian Struggle for Unity, 1745-1815, (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992).

¹⁵ White, The Middle Ground, 277; McConnell, A Country Between, 206.

behalf of the Shawnee and other Ohio Indians as “senior members of an extensive alliance system that secured them an influential voice in British councils,” opened virtually all of Kentucky to British America. The Ohio Indians reeled in disgust at having been betrayed by their “elder brother.” Already tenuous relations between the tribes and the Six Nations became unmanageable, as Virginians immediately poured into the ceded territory. It would not be the last time that an unjust treaty would bring the Ohio Indians together, nor would it be the last time that bloodshed ensued¹⁶

Both Dunmore’s War and the American Revolution found the Ohio Indians struggling to prevent further encroachments into the Ohio Valley. Dunmore’s War erupted in 1774, as the Shawnee challenged the Virginians’ claim to the Kentucky country. Characterized by brutal raids waged back and forth across the Ohio River, as well as countless depredations committed by both parties, the conflict culminated in a bitter defeat for the Shawnee. It was a defeat made all the more disheartening by the failure of the other Ohio Indians, aside from the Mingo, to come to the Shawnee’s assistance. Attributing the failure to procure Indian allies to British meddling, the Shawnee pulled back to their villages in the Ohio Country, patiently awaiting another opportunity to strike out at the seemingly endless stream of settlers, who were now beginning to gaze upon the lands beyond the Ohio.¹⁷

For the Shawnee, the American Revolution served as an extension of Dunmore’s War.

¹⁶ McConnell, A Country Between, 244-255. See also Dorothy V. Jones, License for Empire, 75-92.

¹⁷ Downes, Council Fires on the Upper Ohio, 152-157; White, The Middle Ground, 362; Allen, His Majesty’s Indian Allies, 41; Colin Calloway, The American Revolution in Indian Country: Crisis and Diversity in Native American Communities, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 161-162. See also McConnell, A Country Between, 268-279.

The raids across the Ohio River resumed as the Shawnee continued the struggle against Virginian aggression. While the Shawnee carried on a war of attrition along the Ohio River in virtual isolation, many Ohio tribes sought to reestablish the “play-off” system. Robbed of their traditional counterweight, the French, the Ohio Indians strove to forge diplomatic relations with both the British and the colonialists. Their designs quickly fell by the wayside, however, as the Americans, who in addition to having clear designs on the Ohio Country and beyond, also lacked both the capital and the willingness to meet the Indians’ demands. Offered little more than empty promises and visions of a “righteous struggle against tyranny,” the Ohio Indians turned to the open arms of the British, who readily maintained a steady flow of supplies from their posts in and around Detroit. Nevertheless, the alliance forged between the Crown and the tribes proved to be a tenuous one at best. As a result, British supplies remained of paramount importance. In fact, Ayouwainsh, a Seneca Chief, pointed out the unquestionable necessity of furnishing his warriors “with such things as they require,” for if the British failed to do so, “what effect will my advice have upon them to enforce what you may direct?”¹⁸

The threat of further American expansion, intensified by the colonies’ revolt, united the Ohio Indians, who hoped to use their connection to the British to create a unified opposition to the Americans. This tribal unity began to solidify as even local and regional concerns often exhibited signs of deterioration. For instance, when the Delaware, who were under heavy influence from Moravian missionaries, agreed to remain neutral, a leading Wyandot war chief, Half King, berated the Delaware for being detached from the other Ohio Country nations, for “all

¹⁸ “Indian Council,” in Burton(ed.), Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, Vol.11, 327.

the nations are of one mind but you.” This mounting sense of Ohio Indian solidarity translated into substantial victories over American armies crossing into the Ohio Valley. The same was true along the Ohio River shoreline, as the Shawnee, now joined by other Algonquian and Iroquoian allies, devastated the Kentuckians at the battle of Blue Licks during the summer of 1782, and participated in the rout of Colonel William Crawford’s expedition that same year.¹⁹

With shouts of joy accompanying the bright ceremonial fires that dotted the Ohio Valley countryside, there was little reason for the region’s tribes to expect anything but total victory. The Ohio Indians had withstood numerous expeditions led by the relentless George Rogers Clark, and with the sweeping victory over Crawford still fresh in their minds, the Algonquians reveled in their ability to defend their homelands. Ironically, their successes served only to make the Ohio natives more susceptible to the shock that was to follow.

The rumors slowly began to filter into the Ohio Valley. As the spring rains subsided and summer began, word had reached the villages and trading houses scattered throughout the region. The Crown, in clear betrayal of their Indian “allies,” had ceded the lands beyond the Ohio River to the Americans. Returning home from British council sites to villages nestled in the heart of the country they had spent decades defending from American encroachments, apprehension turned to anger.

For the next eleven years, the various Indian nations of the Ohio Valley continued the

¹⁹ For Half Kings quote see Louise P. Kellogg (ed.), Frontier Advance on the Upper Ohio, 1778-1779: Wisconsin Historical Collections, (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1916), V.23, 223; Colin G. Calloway, The American Revolution in Indian Country: Crisis and Diversity in Native American Communities, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 158-181.

search for unity, as the burgeoning American government boldly laid claim to the Ohio Country. Unlike “Pontiac’s Confederacy” of the mid 1760s, which had, in large part, been forged through religious doctrine, the Ohio Indian Confederacy had its roots in a number of causes that varied from diplomacy and economics to religion and racism. Nevertheless, in order for this alliance to survive the turbulent times that lay ahead, the Indian nations of the Ohio Valley would have to overcome the distrust, factionalism, differing agendas, and logistical concerns of a Confederacy that was already beginning to pull apart at the seams.

Chapter 1

A Determined Answer

As the summer of 1783 began, an already tense situation was further agitated as word of the terms of peace made their way into the Ohio Country. The previous spring, a Wyandot Chief had summed up the attitude of the Ohio Indians when he confronted Lieutenant Colonel Arent De Peyster, asking him to at least remember his children in the treaty, for “you in the name of our Great Father the King requested our assistance against your and our enemies.” It was anything but an unreasonable demand, but as the various tribes who converged on Detroit discovered the ramifications of the 1783 Treaty of Paris, very little was left to doubt. The Ohio Valley Indian nations, who in numerous victories over American forces, had engaged more warriors in the British cause than ever before, now found themselves forced to face the harsh reality that their British “fathers” had completely abandoned them.¹

If their common alliance with the British and their desire to defend the Ohio Country from American encroachment had united the Ohio Indians over the last nine years, their shared sense of abandonment at the hands of the British brought the tribes of the region a heightened degree of unity that had not been witnessed since the days of Neolin and Pontiac. The upper Ohio Valley was set ablaze with the open resentment of the tribes, a fact not lost on the minds of Crown officials such as De Peyster who was openly apprehensive of an Indian attack on the remaining

¹ “Indian Council,” in Burton(ed.), Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, Vol. 11, 354-355; White, The Middle Ground, 407.

British posts. In an effort to smother the flames of dissent, De Peyster attempted everything from elaborate ceremonies to “bury the hatchet” to preventing the Indians from holding councils by dramatically increasing the already copious flow of rum into the villages and trading centers. De Peyster’s deceitful tactics met with little success, however, as various enraged Indian leaders began to suggest that “in endeavoring to assist you it seems we have wrought our own ruin.” Other tribal leaders were equally quick to point out that while they were allies of the King of England they were not his subjects. It was an attitude shared by numerous tribes of the Ohio Valley, and one that would haunt British officials throughout the coming years.²

As the sachems returned to their villages during the waning months of the tumultuous summer of 1783, they had grown weary of British denials that they had abandoned the tribes through the recent peace treaty. The Indians abruptly turned their concerns to their own specific villages. Fall was rapidly approaching and little had been done to fill the invaluable food stores for yet another harsh Ohio Valley winter.

As Crown allies, the Ohio Indians had been compensated for their efforts with a constant flow of food and supplies out of Detroit. As the conflict lingered, this arrangement evolved into a virtual subsistence pattern for various Indian nations who watched as their young men abandoned the hunt in favor of war parties. Isolation would mean disaster for the tribes. Not only did the Indians lack sustenance and adequate clothing to get them through the coming winter, but scattered reports of American encroachments were already beginning to make their way into

² “Allan Maclean to Gen. Frederick Haldimand,” in Burton(ed.), Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, Vol. 20, 121; “De Peyster to Maclean,” Ibid.,128; “Maclean to De Peyster,” Ibid.,130; “Indian Council,” Ibid., Vol. 11, 370.

Indian country. Anger and thoughts of an assault on the remaining British presence within the Ohio Country quickly turned to concern over a possible British withdrawal. As the first cool winds began to cut across the Maumee River Valley, it became abundantly clear that in the years that lay ahead the tribes would need the British every bit as much as the British would need the tribes. Once again a system of unstable accommodation would prevail in the upper Ohio Valley.

Initially, the lingering British presence south of the Great Lakes had done little to appease the Ohio Valley Indian nations. Offers of asylum in British territory went unanswered as few tribes opted to make the move into Canada. By late August of 1783, however, an overwhelming need for supplies and specific reports of American surveying parties crossing the Ohio River led the Indians to the Lower Sandusky where a council was arranged to discuss the situation.³

It was at the Lower Sandusky that the Ohio Indian Confederation first began to take shape. In a grand meeting that lasted nearly two weeks and included a large contingent of Ohio Indian nations, Iroquois representatives, and Crown officials, the Ohio Indians listened cautiously to British calls for peace. While the tribes had heard these same pleas for peace before, a speech given by the principal British Indian agent Alexander McKee offered an added dimension. McKee, who deserted the Americans during the Revolution and later resided among the Shawnee, stated that the Indians “were not to believe, or even think that by the line that had been described, it was meant to deprive you of an extent of country, of which the right of soil belongs to you.” McKee further captivated the Ohio Indian delegation when he argued that the United States could not possibly “act so unjustly or impolitically” to deprive the Indians of any of their lands.

³For failure to remove to Canada see Allen, His Majesty's Indian Allies, 58; “McKee to De Peyster,” Burton(ed.), Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, Vol.11, 385.

Throughout the previous summer, the Ohio Indians had dealt with little more than evasive efforts on the part of the British to avoid the issue over whether or not the Crown had ceded Indian lands to the Americans. Now it appeared as if the British were not only outright denying that they had ever given up any Indian lands, but they readily admitted that they never had held the power to do so.⁴

Perhaps even more telling were the words of Sir John Johnson. Johnson, the British superintendent of Indian affairs, stunned the tribes with a proclamation that he would “take the tomahawk out of their hands, though he would not remove it out of sight or far from them, but lay it down carefully by their side, that they might have it convenient to use in defense of their rights and property if they were invested or molested by the Americans.” It was bold statements such as these that implied a degree of support for the Ohio Indian position in the face of repeated British calls for the tribes to come to peace with the Americans.⁵

The Ohio Indians next turned their attention to the Six Nations’ representatives. Still harboring a deep resentment for the Iroquois that dated back to the 1768 Treaty of Fort Stanwix, the tribes demanded that the Iroquois “never loose sight of what is incumbent upon us all to preserve.” The western Indians’ resentment and suspicions would only be heightened, however, as the Six Nations called for the release of the Ohio Indians’ prisoners.⁶

As the Council of the Lower Sandusky grew to a close, the Ohio Indians turned an indignant ear to Joseph Brant, a Mohawk sachem who often served as the Six Nations’ diplomatic

⁴ “Council of the Lower Sandusky,” Burton(ed.), Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, Vol.20, 177; see also Sword, President Washington’s Indian War, 20.

⁵ “Council of the Lower Sandusky,” Burton(ed.), Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, Vol.20, 175.

⁶ Ibid., 180.

voice, as he spoke of tribal unity and the importance of coming together for the benefit of the whole. Brant's eloquent words were far from influential. The Ohio Indians were well aware of the necessity of union. Throughout the mid eighteenth century the Ohio tribes had experienced first-hand the successes of tribal unity during the early years of Pontiac and the Revolutionary War. Also understood were the costs of failing to achieve tribal solidarity, as reflected by the disaster of Dunmore's War.⁷

If the past was not enough of a reminder of the necessity of union, the Ohio Indians needed little more than to assess their own situation at the close of the Sandusky council in September of 1783. Although the British and the Iroquois had for the first time spoken of the Ohio Country as belonging to the western tribes, neither offered any hope of direct assistance in the defense of these lands. As the disillusioned Ohio tribes returned to their villages, having only agreed to negotiate with the Americans over boundaries and cessions of land, they were frantically greeted with more disturbing reports of Virginia squatters who were already planning town lots along the Muskingum Valley. The obvious could no longer be masked by British denials. The Ohio Country had been ceded to the Americans, and they were wasting little time in staking their claim. Perhaps even more obvious was the prevailing sense among the Ohio Indian nations that they would have to face the American assault on their lands alone.

As a result of American aggression and the lack of any British or Iroquois overt military commitment, dangerous rifts were already beginning to appear in a confederacy that had until recently been little more than a product of theory. In a particularly ominous moment during the

⁷ Ibid., 179-180.

council of the Lower Sandusky, T'Sindatton, a chief representing the Lake Indians, advised those present that though "our tomahawks are now laid close to our sides....there are yet many of our young men who have their eyes fixed upon it, and they might steal it from our sides to make use of it unknown to us." Tribes such as the Shawnee were cast into intertribal debate as more and more hunting parties returned with accounts of Virginians moving into their hunting grounds and boasting of their countrymen, whom they argued would soon engross all of the lands beyond the Ohio River.⁸

At the head of these intertribal debates, stood the same young warriors that T'Sindatton had warned of. These increasingly militant factions were apprehensive, if not convinced, that the Americans were determined to acquire their homelands at any cost. In addition, the warriors remained convinced that the Crown had knowingly ceded the lands of the Ohio Country to the Americans.

The recent denials handed down from Crown officials had done little to stave off the Indians' lingering resentment. As a result, tribal leaders were quickly forced into a precarious position as rumors of Indian plots directed at British posts poured into the region. For instance, during the summer of 1784 the British post at Michilimackinac was nearly thrown into a panic following the chilling proclamation of an Indian who boasted that the Ottawa were "determined to cut off this place." While this rumor proved to be false, at least according to British officials, the Ohio Country remained witness to a continuous barrage of disturbing reports of possible Indian

⁸ "Council of the Lower Sandusky," in Burton(ed.), Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, Vol.20, 181; For reports of Virginians see "McKee to Johnson," in Burton(ed.), Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, Vol.20, 183. The term "Lake Indians" refers to those who occupied the region along the upper Great Lakes. They included the Piankashaw, Ottawa, and Chippewa.

uprisings. One report in particular argued that the Delaware were conspiring with the Spanish against the interests of the Crown. While the British were equally quick to deny this report to the citizens of Canada, there could be no disputing the fact that numerous Delaware had crossed the Mississippi in order to settle under Spanish auspices.⁹

At the same time that the militants discussed the possibility of assaulting British posts, other factions within the tribes accepted roles within the emerging peace process. For instance, the Maquachakes, a Shawnee division that had struggled to remain neutral during the American Revolution, were among the first to take such action. In a gesture that signified their intentions to remain peaceful, the Mequachakes handed over their war belts to British officials during the summer of 1784. In addition, the Mequachakes returned to Shawnee council fires as intermediaries carrying messages of peace from the Virginians.¹⁰

Traditional tribal leaders embraced any hope for a lasting peace. As a result, village elders eagerly sought to placate the militants' bold intentions. Sachems urged their young warriors to remember their dire need for British goods and foodstuffs during the past winter. These arguments struck a chord with the Indians, whose hunts had once again been interrupted, this time by continued accounts of white encroachments onto their traditional hunting grounds. Also, with the American peace talks looming just over the horizon, the warriors began to look to a British alliance as a vital enhancement to the tribes' diplomatic position. Well aware that the Americans

⁹ For report of Ottawa plot see, "Captain Robertson to Secretary Matthews," in Burton(ed.), Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, Vol. 11, 413; For report regarding the actions of the Delaware see, "McKee to Johnson," in Burton(ed.), Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, Vol. 20, 229-230; see also Larry Lee Nelson, Cultural Mediation on the Great Lakes Frontier: Alexander McKee and Anglo-American Indian Affairs, 1754-1799, Kent State University Press(forthcoming), 269; Allen, His Majesty's Indian Allies, 62-63.

¹⁰ For Maquachake role see, Calloway, The American Revolution in Indian Country, 174.

remained overly concerned by Britain's refusal to abandon her possessions in the Northwest, the Ohio Indian nations realized that their bargaining position would be greatly enhanced if they could at least suggest the existence of an alliance with the British. While these revelations served to dismiss any overt hostility of the militants towards the British, the divisions within the tribes would only grow deeper as the treaty negotiations began amid a storm of controversy.

Chapter 2

To Act as One

As the last autumn leaves fell to the ground in late October of 1784, a stunned group of Shawnee watched in disbelief as the council fire at Fort Stanwix was extinguished. They had come to observe what had been the first formal treaty negotiation between the victorious “thirteen fires” and the surrounding Indian nations. Patiently awaiting the close of approximately two weeks of negotiations held between the United States and the Six Nations, the Shawnee onlookers were shocked by the final result.

Council fires sprang up across the Ohio Valley as word of the treaty spread. It was yet another blow that the Ohio Indians had been ill-prepared for. After all, was it not their elder brothers, the Six Nations, who had urged their western brethren to “speak as one voice?” In clear defiance of this agreement, the Iroquois had brazenly assumed the authority of individual delegates holding the power to speak for all Indian nations.

It was an attitude that proved disastrous, as American commissioners successfully intimidated and stunned the Iroquois by refusing to negotiate. The Americans, who claimed the rights of conquerors, ventured to Stanwix, burdened only with articles of surrender with which they fully expected the Six Nations to comply. American commissioners insisted on the return of Iroquois prisoners and chastised the Six Nations for taking up arms against their brothers, the Americans. Nevertheless, the Americans’ principal demands remained that the Iroquois recognize the United States as “sole and absolute sovereigns of all the territory ceded to them” by the 1783

Treaty of Paris. The Iroquois promptly met the American demands, which included all Iroquois claims to lands west of New York and Pennsylvania. As the sachems slowly came forward to make their mark upon the treaty, they passed by the American commissioners, whose haughty demeanor and open arrogance betrayed the difficult challenges that lay ahead for the western Indians, who were to be viewed as little more than conquered nations.¹

While the peace process was already proving disheartening for most, some tribal leaders viewed the treaty system as a golden opportunity. Since the days of the American Revolution, sachems and other village elders looked on with disdain as young warriors began to challenge their traditional leadership roles. Eager to defend their lands and their way of life, the warriors championed an alliance with the British that they hoped would stave off the aggressive actions of the colonists. These actions, as well as the inability and unwillingness on the part of the Americans to offer adequate supplies to the tribes, undermined the sachems' efforts to implement the "play-off" strategy of years past. For instance, Delaware chiefs such as Captain Pipe, who had a long history of accommodation with traders and colonists residing along the Ohio River shoreline, attempted to sway their villages toward neutrality, only to be ridiculed by other Ohio Indian nations for being attached to such individuals "who cannot even furnish us with a pair of stockings or a blanket." According to the Reverend David Zeisberger, who established a Moravian mission among the Delaware, leadership was relegated to "those who had made themselves chiefs." In the midst of the chaos, neither warriors nor chiefs could restore order.

¹Wilcom Washburn, The United States and the American Indian; Thomas S. Abler, Chainbreaker: The Revolutionary War Memoirs of Governor Blakesnake, (Lincoln and London: The University of Nebraska Press, 1989), 153-162; Sword, President Washington's Indian War, 26.

The effects of the Revolution would linger, and with their power significantly diminished, the chiefs sought frantically for a way to reestablish themselves.²

The peace process provided the opportunity for Captain Pipe and other traditional tribal leaders to gain some degree of preeminence over their rivals by resuming their roles as chiefs in negotiations with the Americans. The chiefs were well-aware that American negotiators did not seek out warriors for treaty discussions. As a result, Pipe and others realized that their decisions would once again carry a great deal of weight. In addition, the chiefs discovered that not only could their rediscovered powers be used to promote the interests of their own particular villages, but their efforts could possibly undermine what they perceived to be a dangerous trend in tribal leadership.³

Armed with these personal ambitions, Captain Pipe, representing the Delaware, and Half King, representing the Wyandot, converged on the mouth of Beaver Creek approximately thirty-five miles northwest of Fort Pitt. Amidst the bitter cold of the winter of 1785, a contingent of Delaware and Wyandot, along with a few bands of Ottawa and Chippewa, met the American commissioners at Fort McIntosh. As the Iroquois had discovered at Fort Stanwix, the tribes present quickly realized that there was to be little in the way of negotiation. Protesting that the lands which the British had transferred to the United States still belonged to them, the tribes waited patiently for an American response, only to be answered in a "high tone," as the

²Lois P. Kellogg(ed.), Frontier Advance on the Upper Ohio, 1778-1779, Wisconsin Historical Collections, Vol.23, 80; For Zeisberger quote see Eugene F. Bliss(ed.), Diary of David Zeisberger: A Moravian Missionary Among the Indians of the Ohio, (Cincinnati: R. Clarke), Vol.1, 115; See also White, The Middle Ground, 436; Calloway, American Revolution in Indian Country, 38.

³ For discussion of the chiefs' personal ambitions see White, The Middle Ground, 436-437.

commissioners pointed an indignant finger at the assembled tribes. Arguing that the Indians were a defeated people, once again the Americans claimed the right of a conqueror.⁴

On the morning of January 21, 1785, after less than two weeks of “negotiations,” representatives of the Delaware, Wyandot, Ottawa and Chippewa slowly came forward to acknowledge American claims to the region. In clear defiance of the other Ohio Indian nations, who specifically instructed Half King to do no more than “receive speeches or messages, and not to determine upon them,” the stunned Indian delegates ceded virtually all of the northwest, excluding only a small reserve along the southern shore of Lake Erie between the Cuyahoga and Maumee Rivers to the United States.⁵

In their efforts to regain standing by acting as mediating chiefs, both Half King and Captain Pipe could only hang their heads in disgust. The power to back their words, long established by their ability to acquire gifts and supplies from the Crown, was lost. The Americans, unlike the British before them, sought land for any gifts they offered the tribes. While Half King and Captain Pipe had reacquired the right to speak on behalf of their respective nations, they quickly realized that they spoke for what the Americans perceived to be a conquered people subject to the will of the United States. Nevertheless, as their marks dried upon the treaty and they began the long journey home, both the chiefs and the American commissioners understood

⁴ For copy of the treaty see Washburn, The American Indian and the United States, Vol. 4, 3; Military Journal of Major Ebenezer Denny, (New York: Arno Press, 1971), 55; for “negotiations” see American State Papers, Documents Legislative and Executive of the Congress of the United States-Indian Affairs, (Washington: Gales and Seaton, 1832), Vol. 1, 11; Calloway, The American Revolution in Indian Country, 282-283; Sword, President Washington’s Indian War, 28-29.

⁵ Washburn, The American Indian and the United States, Vol.4, 3; “Indian Council,” in Burton(ed.), Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, Vol.11, 465-467; Nelson, Cultural Mediation on the Great Lakes Frontier, 271-272; Dorothy V. Jones, A License for Empire, (London and Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982), 156.

that the treaty could never endure, for the Americans had yet to deal with the remaining western Indian nations, whose militant factions grew with each diplomatic failure.⁶

Council fires continued to rage along the Ohio River Valley as news of the Treaty poured into the region. The tribes were outraged at the Delaware and the Wyandot for failing to consult with them. While the western Indians could almost expect such actions from the Iroquois, it was unthinkable that an Ohio Indian nation would agree to cede so much of their country solely on the basis of American demands. Looking over the provisions, the motivations of Half King and Captain Pipe became readily apparent. The chiefs' efforts to acquire American annuities for the benefit of their own tribes came at the expense of the remaining Ohio Indian nations. The Shawnee and other Ohio tribes looked upon those who had attended the treaty with the utmost disdain, for they had "sold their lands and themselves with it."⁷

Throughout the spring of 1785, council fires blazed well into the night as the tribes proceeded to discuss the ramifications of the previous two treaties. As spring turned to summer, couriers began arriving bearing dispatches that would significantly alter the deliberations. Shawnee, Miami, Potawatomie, and Wyandot villages received urgent requests from American commissioners to meet in October at the confluence of the Great Miami and Ohio Rivers for the purpose of "negotiating a general peace." The Ohio Indians' response revealed the extent that the militant factions were rapidly coming to lead the tribes.⁸

Captain Johnny, a Maquachake war leader, revealed the sentiments of the emerging

⁶ See Calloway, The American Revolution in Indian Country, 283; White, The Middle Ground, 496.

⁷ "A letter from the Shawnee to Col. McKee," in Draper Manuscripts, "Frontier Wars," 23u 16-21.

⁸ "Clark and Butler to the Wyandot Nation," in Burton(ed.), Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, Vol.24, 22; see also Sword, President Washington's Indian War, 29.

militant factions when he rose in defiance of American officials declaring that “You are drawing so close to us that we can almost hear the noise of your axes felling our trees and settling our country.” He continued, warning that if settlers continued to cross the Ohio, “we shall take up a rod and whip them back to your side.” Nevertheless, at a council held during the fall of 1785, the assembled Lake Indians, including the Huron, Ottawa, Chippewa, and Potawatomie, offered a much less hostile response to the American commissioners. Citing a dire need to continue deliberating upon the previous treaties and the “precipitate” nature of the Americans’ call for negotiations, the Lake Indians requested a postponement of any treaty discussions.⁹

With winter beginning to take hold of the Ohio Country, the western nations grew increasingly indignant. In a speech delivered to American messengers from the heart of Shawnee country, Peteasura, a Shawnee speaker, berated the United States for its actions during the previous negotiations. Peteasura forewarned the Americans that “this is not the way to make a good or lasting peace to take our chiefs prisoner and come with soldiers at your backs.” The Shawnee speaker went on to boldly accuse the American commissioners of harboring designs to divide the Indians’ councils. After establishing Detroit as “the ancient council fire of our forefathers” and thus the “proper place” with which to hold a treaty, Peteasura reminded the Americans, in what was one of the first signs of an emerging Ohio Indian Confederacy, that “nothing can be done by us, but by general consent, as we act and speak like one man.”¹⁰

⁹ Captain Johnny quoted in Calloway, The American Revolution in Indian Country, 174; For the Lake Indians’ response see “Indian Council,” Burton(ed.), Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, Vol.11, 465-467; The Maquachake were a division of the Shawnee who resided along the Scioto River in southern Ohio.

¹⁰ “Speech of Peteasura, speaker of the Shawnee, delivered to the American messengers,” in Burton(ed.), Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, Vol.24, 24-25.

Although Peteasura represented the feelings of the majority of the Shawnee, there remained significant factions, such as the Maquachake, who still hoped for some form accommodation with the Americans. A fraudulent account of the McIntosh treaty, circulated by Half King and Captain Pipe, aided in the development of this wishful thinking on the part of the Maquachake. Unwilling to admit that they had been intimidated and had turned their backs on their Ohio Indian brethren, Pipe and Half King spun a dubious tale of American commissioners begging for the Indians to “take pity” on them. While Half King and Pipe failed to mention that the Americans had laid claim to British surrendered lands, both went to great lengths to point out the lavish annuities paid by the Americans for the land. The two chiefs even went as far as suggesting that the Americans would “give your children what they want, and will always continue giving them.” The Maquachakie were flabbergasted by this interpretation of the treaty. In dire need of provisions and perceiving the proposed negotiations as an opportunity to achieve a beneficial peace, the Maquachakie readily responded to the Americans’ call for representatives of the Shawnee to meet along the banks of the Great Miami.¹¹

The Maquachakie would serve as the only Shawnee representatives as the first formal negotiations began at the newly constructed Fort Finney on the morning of January 26, 1786. In fact, aside from a few Wyandot and Delaware representatives, including Half King and Captain Pipe, who had been invited by American commissioners to serve as mediators, the Maquachakie

¹¹ For description of Pipe and Half King’s interpretation of the Fort McIntosh Treaty see White, The Middle Ground, 438; see also “Message from the Shawnees,” in Draper Manuscripts, 23U; Sword, President Washington’s Indian War, 29.

sat entirely alone amidst the council fire. With the words of Half King and Captain Pipe still fresh in their minds, the Maquachakie eagerly awaited the Americans' offer of accommodation. Instead, the Shawnee representatives were stunned into silence as the American commissioners informed the Indians that since their former allies the British had ceded the whole of the Ohio Country as a result of their defeat at the hands of the United States, the tribes "must now look up to the Americans, and ought to be thankful if allowed to occupy any part of the country."¹²

The following morning the Maquachakie made a desperate attempt to reassert themselves. Still reeling from the lingering effects of the previous day's shocking discovery, Captain Johnny, or Kekewepelethe, the Maquachakie war leader, made a desperate attempt to reassert the Indians' position. Kekewepelethe rose to his feet and challenged the Americans' assumed rights and powers. In a bold move, Kekewepelethe astounded his Maquachakie counterparts by contending that the Ohio River, and "nothing short," would be the only boundary that the Shawnee would agree to. What the Americans required, argued the Maquachakie war leader, would limit the Shawnee to "mere ponds with no land to live on or raise corn." Backed by many of the young warriors who were present, Kekewepelethe refused American goods and drew forth a belt of black wampum, indicating hostility, and placed it across a table that was centered within the council house. In a telling gesture, General George Rogers Clark, the aging American general who had led numerous raids into the Ohio Country during the American Revolution, and who now sat at the table of the United States Commissioners, calmly pushed the belt off the table

¹² Denny, Military Journal of Major Ebenezer Denny, 52.

with his cane and stepped on it.¹³

That same afternoon, Moluntha, a Maquachakie sachem who had long preached peace and accommodation, called another meeting with the Americans. Moluntha replaced Kekewepelethe's wampum belt with a white string before requesting that the commissioners forget all that his head warrior had said, and "have pity on the women and Children." Two days later on February 1, 1786, the council fire was formally extinguished and the Maquachakie sachems grudgingly came forward to place their marks upon what was to be known as the Treaty at the Mouth of the Great Miami. The chiefs had done so at a devastating cost, for the treaty restricted the Shawnee to little more than a parcel of land adjacent to the Wyandot and Delaware reservation in the northwestern corner of Ohio and the northern portion of Indiana.¹⁴

Almost as disturbing as the land cessions were the actions of the precariously ambitious Wyandot chief Half King. In convincing the Maquachakie to attend the Fort Finney treaty, Half King had been motivated by more than an unwillingness to admit any illegitimate sales of land at McIntosh. Half King believed that if he could bring the Shawnee to the negotiations, as the Americans desired, he would have an opportunity to expand on the mere parcel of land granted to the Wyandot in the Treaty at the Mouth of the Great Miami. Half King's plan met with disaster, however, as the Maquachakie, in the face of the Wyandot chief's protests, signed a treaty that did not provide for any increase in Wyandot lands or annuities. Enraged, Half King approached the

¹³ Ibid., 73; Nevill B. Craig, The Olden Time, (Pittsburgh) Vol.2, 488,512; Kekewepelethe revealed as Captain Johnny in Calloway, The American Revolution in Indian Country, 174.

¹⁴ Denny, Military Journal Of Major Ebenezer Denny, 73; Sword, President Washington's Indian War, 30; Jones, A License for Empire, 152; for copy of the treaty see Washburn, The American Indian and the United States, Vol.4, 7-8.

American commissioners and demanded that they enlarge the country granted to the Wyandot and the Delaware. The commissioners refusal only added to the Wyandot chief's anger. As the situation grew hostile, Captain Pipe, who may have previously harbored similar motivations in regard to the Delaware, intervened to prevent any further confrontation. A thoroughly confused Half King hung his head and listened in silence as Pipe informed the Americans that the Delaware were "perfectly contented," and that they, along with Half King, would even assist the surveyors in plotting the lands.¹⁵

The treaty process had proven to be a miserable failure for the tribes. The talk of unity that had been so prevalent following the Sandusky conference seemed a world away. The American attempts at dividing the various tribes into "significant" numbers capable of ceding away vast tracts of land had been so successful only because the Ohio Indian nations could not possibly control the actions of specific villages, let alone specific individuals. In addition, the lines separating those factions that supported peace and accommodation and those that supported an armed response to American claims to the region had only grown deeper. In the face of village politics and personal ambition, Petesura's demand that the tribes "act and speak like one man" had been ignored.

¹⁵ Denny, Military Journal of Major Ebenezer Denny, 75-76.

Chapter 3

A Common Dish

A punitive expedition of Kentucky frontiersmen marching out of Jefferson County during the summer of 1786 came upon a ghastly sight. Very little could be identified among the charred bodies and homes of the latest settlement to feel the fury of the Ohio Indians. News of Indian depredations seemed endless, and scarcely a day went by when there was not a report of “skulking” Indians along the horizon. Many of the pioneers, who had ventured to the lush lands bordering on the Ohio River to establish homesteads, only to have their faith in the burgeoning American government’s power to defend their “just” claims severely challenged, began to pack what little they had in an attempt to flee the area.

These raids on the back country, which racked the Ohio Country throughout the spring and summer of 1786, resulted from the warriors’ uncontested rise to prominence. The failure of the accommodationists to achieve some form of beneficial peace opened the door for the militant factions. The warriors had watched helplessly as the sachems, out of motivations ranging from personal ambition to intimidation, signed away vast tracts of the Ohio Country. As a result, the warriors took action and prevented the sachems from calling councils or receiving any further American dispatches. Amidst the chaos, both Half King and Captain Pipe reneged on the treaties. In a statement that reflected the precarious position of the treaty chiefs, a frantic Half King informed the Americans that he was “between two fires for I am afraid of you and likewise the back nations.” Pledging resistance independent of the treaty chiefs, the war leaders chillingly

proclaimed that they had not given their consent to the treaties and “if the surveyors come to survey the land or if any of the white people come to set down on it we will putt our old men and chiefs behind us.”¹

The surveyors and white settlers would indeed make their way across the Ohio River, and the war leaders remained true to their word. In a series of expeditions, warriors from the Wabash villages and the Great Lakes struck terror into the frontier. War belts passed from the hands of the Ottawa, Chippewa, Sauk, Mascouten, Piankashaw, and Kickapoo to the Shawnee, Miami, Wea, Mingo, and Cherokee. In an effort to send a clear message to the Americans that they would not recognize the actions of a few individual chiefs who had taken it upon themselves to speak for the nations as a whole, the tribes set aside their tendencies to take prisoners in favor of torture and mutilation. For instance, after taking a mother and daughter prisoner, a party of Cherokee reportedly scalped both of them alive, cut off their ears and arms and threw them into a fire. Following a series of grisly attacks that left numerous border settlements in ashes, and families devastated, the Ohio Indian nations braced themselves for an American response to their “message.”²

Those Kickapoos, Mascoutens, Piankashaws, Weas, and Miamis who resided along the Wabash River and its tributaries were the first to face the threat of American retaliation. The Wabash villages had experienced nothing less than utter turmoil over the last three decades. Tribal chiefs, in their efforts to chose what alliances would be the most beneficial to their own

¹ “Message from the Shawnee,” in Burton(ed.), Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, Vol.24, 26; Quoted in White, The Middle Ground, 439.

² For accounts of depredations see Denny, Military Journal of Major Ebenezer Denny, 79; White, The Middle Ground, 440.

particular tribes, had shifted their loyalties for the last time. While the French had long served as “fathers” for the Wabash tribes, their withdrawal following the close of the Great War for Empire left the region’s tribes isolated and confused. Initially, the village elders convinced their people to accept the advice of the remaining French traders and settlers, and side with the Americans. This tenuous American alliance, based in large part on rumors that the Americans had captured Detroit and would now be the only source of supply, would fail with the arrival of the then British governor of Detroit, Henry Hamilton. Hamilton’s bold predictions of total victory, and a willingness to adopt tribal ritual and ceremony to secure the approval of the Wabash villagers, convinced the tribes that a British alliance would prove most beneficial. It was only after General George Roger Clark’s defeat of Hamilton and triumphant march into Vincennes in 1779 that many of the Wabash villages defiantly turned to the Spanish in favor of the Americans. Others, such as the Wea, remained loyal to the British, only to have their lands threatened by the peace of 1783.³

By the summer of 1786, the Wabash Indians discovered a new sense of unity both in their unwillingness to seek allies among either the British or the Americans, as well as the desire to defend their lands. At the head of this movement stood the warriors. Unlike the chiefs, the warriors did not argue for tribal unity based on accommodation or the common support of a foreign power. Looking on as American families ventured into the region, often armed with little more than a claim of conquest, the Indians’ anger and mistrust reached a fever pitch. As early as

³ John D. Barnhart (ed.), Henry Hamilton and George Rogers Clark in the American Revolution with the Unpublished Journal of Lieutenant Governor Henry Hamilton, (Crawfordeville, Indiana: R.E. Banta, 1951), 132-138; “Hamilton to Haldimand,” in Burton(ed.), Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, Vol.9, 486-487; For discussion of the shifting loyalties see White, The Middle Ground, 424.

May of 1786, a British trader frantically reported that the Wabash tribes, still incensed over the recent dubious treaties, “seldom pay little difference between Americans and English as they make mighty complaints against the English for having abandoned them.” The tense situation would only worsen as a party of Piankashaws attacked and killed two Americans who were among a group tending to their cornfields. Following the murder of a Wabash villager by an enraged party of Americans seeking revenge, between 450 to 700 warriors stormed Vincennes. Although cooler heads prevailed and the Indians eventually withdrew without incident, the Americans had recognized the threat and quickly sought out a solution.⁴

The villages of the upper Wabash were preparing for the worst. For what must have seemed like an eternity, the Indians of the region came together to discuss the reports of an impending American advance into their country. Adding to the dismal atmosphere that accompanied the council fires, was the rumor that this expedition was to be led by George Rogers Clark, the conqueror of Vincennes. Knowing full well that Clark’s ultimate goal would be to strike at their villages along the upper Wabash, the tribes agreed to converge on the region. There would be no treaty talks or negotiations of any kind, for the warrior factions had clearly come to the forefront. Dispatching scouts to observe Clark’s advance, the tribes stood determined to protect their lands.⁵

It would not be long before the scouts returned, bearing information that astounded the

⁴ “Letter from Mr. Park,” in Burton(ed.), Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, Vol.24, 30-31; see also White, The Middle Ground, 427; For discussion of Wabash depredations see, Denny, Military Journal of Major Ebenezer Denny, 85.

⁵ For source of the reports warning the tribes of an American advance see “Indian Speech,” in Burton(ed.), Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, Vol.24, 33; For discussion of Clark’s plans to strike the upper Wabash see, Denny, Military Journal of Major Ebenezer Denny, 85.

Wabash villagers. Clark, it seemed, had advanced to Vincennes, but apparently could go no farther. According to the scouts, Clark's army was in dire straits. Lacking provisions, and perhaps incentive, many within Clark's ranks began to slip away and return to Kentucky. Nevertheless, the tribes' scouts were soon followed by an American messenger bearing a dispatch in which Clark "warned" the Indians of his presence. Amused, a Wea war chief replied, "thou American, I am charmed to hear thee speakst so ill....Hope to hear from thee soon." With that, the threat of an American retaliation on the Wabash country had ended. For the tribes who had come together to defend their lands, the call of the warriors to resist all efforts at negotiating a peace in favor of armed resistance had proven successful. Those chiefs, who agreed to meet with Clark in the spring in order to negotiate a treaty, returned home to the Wabash villages only to be chastised for their actions. If there had been any lingering doubt over whether or not the warriors now dictated policy in the Wabash Country, it was lost amidst the celebrations of Clark's retreat.⁶

At approximately the same time that the Wabash villagers came together in order to oppose Clark's advance, Moluntha's efforts to force accommodation were meeting with disaster. Moluntha, the Maquachake chief who had led his people to the treaty negotiations at Fort Finney, desperately attempted to clear the Shawnee division of any charges of treachery. For instance, although Moluntha appealed to the Crown for aid, claiming that the Americans had deceived them as to the real purpose of the treaty, the Maquachake chief made every effort to carry out the

⁶ "Clark to the Wabash Indians and Replies, in George Rogers Clark Papers, Draper Manuscripts, 11J, 110-116; "Girty to McKee," in Burton(ed.), Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, Vol.24, 34-35; Denny, Military Journal of Major Ebenezer Denny, 103; "Letter from W. Ancrum," in Burton(ed.), Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, Vol.24, 36-39; Wea Chief quoted in White, The Middle Ground, 426.

commitments he had made upon signing the Treaty of the Great Miami. In addition, Moluntha offered consistent professions of friendship to the Americans, even going as far as providing detailed information regarding a Cherokee war party that was within the vicinity. Nevertheless, as pressure from those Shawnee who had refused to attend the treaty and other tribes within the region began to mount, Moluntha realized that time was running out.⁷

The divisions within the Shawnee grew even deeper as the Chillicothe Shawnees steadfastly refused to hand over their white captives to the Americans. An already tense situation turned hostile when a large war party occupying both sides of the Ohio River shoreline fired on four boats passing Fort Finney. Although no Americans were harmed, Moluntha himself brought in reports of Mingo warriors attacking and murdering four surveyors along the Muskingham shore. In a last-ditch effort to avoid conflict, Moluntha urged the Mingo and the Cherokee to end their raids. Moluntha's call for peace went unanswered, leaving the elderly Maquachake chief to plead with the Americans to be more patient. For as Moluntha explained to American officials, "It is not with us as it is with you, for if you say to a man do so why it must be done, but consider we are a lawless people and can do nothing with our people only but by fair words and likewise our people is very much scattered and our business cannot be done as soon as you would expect...." Moluntha's calls for peace once again fell on deaf ears, however, as American preparations for an expedition into the Shawnee country were already well underway.⁸

⁷ For Moluntha's appeal to the Crown for aid see Calloway, The American Revolution in Indian Country, 176; For charges of treachery and mounting pressure see, "Message from the Shawnee," in Burton(ed.), Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, Vol.24, 26; For Moluntha's information regarding a Cherokee war party see, Denny, Military Journal of Major Ebenezer Denny, 81.

⁸ Attack on boats see, Denny, Military Journal of Major Ebenezer Denny, 84-85; For Mingo attack on the surveyors and Moluntha's call for patience see, *Ibid.*, 87; Moluntha quoted in, Calloway, The American Revolution in Indian Country, 176.

Clustered along the upper Mad River near present-day Bellfontaine, Ohio sat a number of Shawnee villages. At the village of Mackachack, the home of Moluntha, preparations were underway for what was hoped to be a grand council encompassing representatives from the Ohio Indian nations in an attempt to forge a permanent confederacy. Deputies from the Six Nations, including Joseph Brant, the Delaware, and other Ohio Valley nations converged on the Shawnee town in October 1786, just as Benjamin Logan and a force of 790 Kentucky militiamen crossed into the Ohio Country. On the morning of October 6, with Brant and nearly 400 warriors out hunting, Mackachack awoke to the muddled cries of a lone white rider frantically waving a white handkerchief. The rider, a deserter of Logan's force warned the astonished villagers that the Kentuckians were fast approaching. Moluntha, refusing to believe that the Americans would attack a town that had done so much to prevent the Shawnee from going to war, raced to his lodge and hoisted an American flag. Clutching a copy of the Great Miami peace treaty, the Shawnee chief made his way to a prairie separating two large villages and awaited Logan's appearance.⁹

Moluntha could only watch in horror as the Kentuckians thundered into Mackachack with their swords held high. A panic swept the village as the Shawnee scattered in all directions. The strike was cold and uncalculated, as both women and children fell to the Kentuckians' blows. Moluntha turned and attempted to flee, but his tired legs could not take him far. The onrushing Kentuckians quickly gathered around the Shawnee chief, who pointing to the American flag flying

⁹ "Girty to McKee," in Burton(ed.), Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, Vol.24, 34-35; "Letter from Mr. Ancrum," in Burton(ed.), Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, Vol. 24, 35-36; Account of Moluntha's death, Frontier Wars, Draper Manuscripts, 23U 39; See also Nelson, Cultural Mediation on the Great Lakes Frontier, 273-274; Sword, President Washington's Indian War, 38.

from his lodgepole, offered up a large peace pipe and his copy of the Great Miami treaty. Shoving his way through the crowd was Captain Hugh McGary. McGary, who had played a major role in the Kentuckians' rout at the hands of the Shawnee during the battle of Blue Licks, approached Moluntha and asked him if he had taken part in the battle. The aged Moluntha, who could not understand English very well, smiled and nodded as if to pacify the enraged McGary. In turn, McGary promptly seized a small belt axe and drove it into Moluntha's skull. Amid the furor that resulted, in which McGary was beaten to the ground by an angry crowd of Kentuckians appalled by his heinous act, the Shawnee chief lay motionless, still clutching a copy of the peace treaty.¹⁰

Those who could, fled to the nearby village of Wapatomica. What warriors remained hysterically gathered together their women and children and sent them out of the region. Determined to make a stand in order to allow their families ample time to make their escape, a handful of warriors fought desperately, wounding several of the charging Kentuckians. As the smoke cleared, ten warriors lay dead, and Logan's force commenced with the burning of Wapatomica. Although the warriors had succeeded in allowing their families the crucial time to evacuate, Logan's raid would claim eight Shawnee towns.¹¹

Returning to the scene of the carnage, the Shawnee had yet to overcome the shock over what had transpired. Once the bodies of their women and children were gathered for a proper

¹⁰ Account of Moluntha's death, *Frontier Wars*, Draper Manuscripts, 23U 39; "Letter from Mr. Ancrum," in Burton(ed.), Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, Vol.24, 37-39; Denny, Military Journal of Major Ebenezer Denny, 93-94; See also Sword, President Washington's Indian War, 39; Calloway, The American Revolution in Indian Country, 175.

¹¹ "Letter from Major Ancrum," in Burton(ed.), Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, 37-39; See also Sword, President Washington's Indian War, 40.

burial, the villagers scavaged through what little remained in the hopes that something could be salvaged for what was sure to be an unbearable winter. Their efforts were in vain. Logan's raiders had destroyed over fifteen thousand bushels of corn, and driven off all of the Indians' livestock, leaving little in their wake. Gathering what little they could before departing for the relative safety of the Maumee River Valley, the Maquachake paused amid the ashes of where their beloved homes had recently stood, and fixed their gaze upon what remained of their elderly chief, Moluntha. The man who had convinced them that peace and accommodation were the only answers, for they were "included among the friends of the United States," lay dead, his body burned almost beyond recognition.¹²

News of Clark and Logan's expeditions spread quickly. Infuriated, the Ohio Indian nations sought action. Joseph Brant and the other visiting delegates, who narrowly avoided involvement in the confrontation with Logan, agreed to move the much anticipated council meeting to the Huron village of Brownstown. It was there that the Ohio Indian nations desperately hoped to reassert their efforts at establishing a meaningful union.¹³

On the morning of November 28, 1786, the council fires were ablaze as delegates from the Shawnee, Delaware, Miami, Cherokee, Ottawa, Chippewa, Potawatomi, Iroquois, Huron, Wyandot, and Wabash tribes converged at the mouth of the Detroit River. Much had changed in the three years since the nations had last met at the Lower Sandusky. Fraudulent treaties in which small factions, intimidated and self-interested, spoke for the whole of the Ohio Indian nations,

¹² For destruction of crops and livestock see, "Letter from Mr. Ancrum," Burton(ed.), Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, Vol.24, 37-39; Sword, President Washington's Indian War, 41; Denny, Military Journal of Major Ebenezer Denny, 81.

¹³ White, The Middle Ground, 443.

Clark's ill-fated expedition, and Logan's vicious attack on villages known for their desires for peace, had severely loosened the already tenuous grip of tribal chiefs and elders. In a gesture that reflected how far the pendulum of tribal politics had swung, many war leaders took their place at the council fire in front of civil leaders.¹⁴

Nevertheless, neither the chiefs or the war leaders could assert uncontested leadership, and the discussions turned toward achieving a common ground among the factions. While many within the tribes were unwilling to commit to war, all agreed that no single faction or tribe could speak for the nations as a whole. Any decision would have to be considered by all of those concerned. This unity would be essential if the tribes were to offer a significant resistance to American claims to the region. Also viewed as essential to the defense of their lands were the Six Nations and the British. The Six Nations, who stubbornly withheld their claims to the Ohio Valley, would have to be included in any discussions of political unity, for they had already attempted to speak for the western nations with their recent cessions at the Treaty of Fort Stanwix. In addition, the British, whose mere presence within the region only strengthened the tribes' diplomatic position, would have to be questioned as to what the Indians could specifically expect from them.

Over the next three weeks, the assembled nations were pleased to find that many of their desires had been answered. Brant, who was well-aware of the lingering mistrust harbored by the western Indians toward the Six Nations, reiterated the Ohio Indians' call for unity with an eloquent speech that signaled the birth of the Ohio Indian Confederacy. Drawing on his own

¹⁴ "Indian Speech to the Congress of the United States," in Burton(ed.), Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, Vol.24, 467-469.

experiences with the Iroquois Covenant Chain, Brant, who thus served as somewhat of a political theorist, insisted that past attempts to oppose the advances of the Europeans failed as a result of the “divided efforts of our ancestors.” It was a fact not lost on the minds of the western nations, whose divided efforts had already resulted in the cessions of vast tracts of Ohio Country lands. Brant went on to argue, as the Ohio Indian nations had already discovered, that “the interests of any one nation should be the welfare of all the others,” for “whilst we remain disunited , every inconvenience attends us.” Brant continued, referring to an ancient time when a “Moon of Wampum was placed in this country with four roads leading to the center for the convenience of the Indians from different quarters to come and settle or hunt here. A dish with one spoon was likewise put here with the Moon of Wampum.” To eat from a common dish, a standard metaphor of peace, alliance, and friendship, would serve as a symbol of the confederacy’s vow that the land belonged to all the nations, a view that would eventually expand to include the disavowal of tribalism in favor of race.¹⁵

Following the close of the council, Joseph Brant, speaking for the Confederacy, called a meeting with British officials at Detroit in order to discover the Crown’s intentions. Realizing that any sign of outward British support would clearly enhance the Indians’ bargaining position in any negotiations with the Americans, Brant appealed to the officials’ consciences, arguing that it “was from an attachment to your interests that we made enemies of the Americans, and we are still involved in hostilities, whilst you are enjoying the blessings of peace.” Hoping desperately for

¹⁵ “Speech of the Five Nations to the Western Indians, Frontier Wars, Draper Manuscripts, 23U 48; “Indian Speech to the Congress of the Unites States,” in Burton(ed.), Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, Vol. 24, 467-469; Isabel Thompson Kelsay, Joseph Brant, 1747-1807: A Man of Two Worlds, (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1984), 410; For common dish see White, The Middle Ground, 441-442.

some type of response, Brant pleaded with the British for a “determined answer.” In keeping with the ambiguous relationship that existed between the Crown and the tribes since the close of the Revolution, Major Ancrum, the Commander at Detroit, offered little more than the vague response that he would “always be happy to promote that ancient friendship which had subsisted between them.”¹⁶

Annoyed by Major Ancrum’s response, the tribes pledged to hold their lands in common and to defend the Ohio River as the boundary between Indian and American settlement. Before leaving the council grounds, the confederacy sent runners bearing a firm message to the Americans. Repudiating the cessions made at the treaties of Fort Stanwix, Fort McIntosh, and Fort Finney, as these were considered “illegal and of no effect,” the tribes suggested that a new council be held in the Spring, one in which the Indians are dealt with as “one mind and one voice,” for “unless it is transacted with the unanimous consent of the whole, it can never stand good.” Proposing that the Americans and the Confederacy meet “half way” and “pursue such steps as become upright and honest men,” tribal officials boldly proclaimed that if the Americans would prevent their surveyors and soldiers from crossing the Ohio until the proposed council meeting, they would control their warriors from taking part in any hostile actions. It would prove to be a promise that neither the Americans nor the tribes could ever possibly hope to keep.¹⁷

¹⁶ “Indian Council,” in Burton(ed.), Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, Vol.24, 470-472.

¹⁷ “Indian speech to the Congress of the United States,” in Burton(ed.), Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, Vol. 24, 467-469.

Chapter 4

Eyes Wide Shut

As the warm glow of the council fire was formally extinguished, shouts of celebration filled the air. Although their calls for an overt British commitment of support fell on deaf ears, the confederated tribes reveled in their success at establishing a unified position. The elders and village chiefs breathed a collective sigh of relief as the warriors could not help but show their support of the council's repudiation of previous land cessions. Nevertheless, as the celebrations continued well into the night, it became readily apparent that the surface belied the reality.

While the Ohio Indian nations could celebrate agreements on principle, the basic political unit within each of the tribes remained the village. As a result, agreements over the common ownership of Ohio Country lands did little to stave off any factional disputes or rivalries. Few could deny the tension that resulted from the confederacy's commitment to defend the Ohio River as the boundary separating American and Indian settlement. Factions within the Delaware and Wyandot, still heavily influenced by Pipe and Half King, felt that their close proximity to existing white settlements along the Ohio left them exposed to American attack in the event of war. For these factions, conciliation with the United States remained an option. In addition, while the warriors supported the retraction of former land cessions, they pledged to resume their raids if negotiations with the Americans did not take place by spring. Nevertheless, many Shawnee militants, refusing to support the commitment of the other warriors, struck the frontiers within weeks of the grand council's close in December of 1786. The Wabash tribes also made little

effort to conceal their own misgivings over the confederacy's decision to meet with the Americans. Refusing to enter into any negotiations respecting the land, the Wabash tribes, joined by the Cherokee and the Mingo, set their sights on American settlements bordering the Ohio River.¹

As the spring rains took hold of the upper Ohio Valley, and the tribes returned from their winter villages, the chiefs resigned themselves to the harsh reality that time was running out. Amid the tedious preparations for the start of the planting season, few remained optimistic as a response from the American commissioners had yet to make its way into the region. Any lingering hope dissipated by the summer of 1787. Still lacking an American response, the warriors, staying true to their words, joined the Cherokee, Wabash tribes, and Mingo in attacks along the Ohio Valley frontier.²

A revolving cycle of raids and counter-raids racked the Ohio Country throughout the summer of 1787. By the following December, as word of an impending conference with the Americans at the falls of the Muskingum arrived, the warriors were in the midst of yet another bid for leadership within the confederacy. The long overdue American response and subsequent hope for a peaceful resolution fueled the chiefs' own efforts to gain control, however. The ever-intensifying tribal divisions came to a head as the confederacy agreed to rekindle the council fire to the mouth of the Detroit River at Brownstown during the Spring of 1788. The tribes, who just two years earlier had celebrated the birth of a confederacy based on common ideals, were

¹ For Shawnee raids see, William P. Palmer(ed.), Calender of Virginia State Papers, (Richmond, 1884), Vol.4, 191-192; For Wabash, Cherokee, and Mingo dissent see, "McKee to Johnson," in Burton(ed.), Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, Vol.11, 482-483; See also White, The Middle Ground, 442-443.

² For raids see, Burton(ed.), Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, Vol.20, 287.

hopelessly divided. With the chiefs suggesting that the Indian nations compromise and cede the lands east of the Muskingum River to the Americans, and the warriors holding fast to their unwillingness to discuss any land cessions, the confederation's fragile unity was threatened.³

Growing increasingly restless while waiting for Joseph Brant and the Six Nations' arrival, the council reconvened at the Miami Towns. The subsequent conference, attended by between 1,000 and 2,000 Indians resolved little. Failing to establish an agreement on what stance to take during the upcoming negotiations, the conference broke up as a band of Ottawas and Chippewas took matters into their own hands. In an effort to force their position regarding negotiations with the Americans, Ottawa and Chippewa militants ignored British Indian agent Alexander McKee's pleas to desist, and attacked a party of American soldiers erecting blockhouses at the proposed council grounds along the Muskingum River. The assault, which commenced in July 1788, resulted in the deaths of two Americans. Shortly thereafter, warriors from the Wabash nations struck and killed or wounded nearly half of an American detachment of thirty-six men carrying supplies to Vincennes.⁴

Although the militants had dramatically illustrated their position, they could not prevent a new council from commencing at the Miami towns in October 1788. Nevertheless, the warriors remained confident that Brant and the Six Nations, who arrived as preparations for the conference were well underway, would continue to support their previous agreement that the Ohio River remain the boundary line. The Shawnee, Miami, and Kickapoo, whose leadership now rested

³For American response and call for peace see, "Butler to the Wyandots," in *Frontier Wars*, Draper Manuscripts, 23U, 57-58; White, The Middle Ground, 443-444; Brownstown was a Huron village located just south of Detroit.

⁴"St. Clair to Secretary of War," in Smith(ed.), St. Clair Papers, Vol. 2, 49-51; For attack along the Wabash see, Denny, Military Journal of Major Ebenezer Denny, 124; see also White, The Middle Ground, 444.

almost solely in the hands of their warriors, were appalled to find that the Iroquois had joined the Delaware and the Wyandot in their push for modifications of the boundary. Hoping to lure the Miami to their position, the Wyandot approached the principal Miami war chief, Little Turtle, with a large string of wampum and placed it on his shoulder urging the Miami “to be at peace with the Americans, and to do as the Six nations and the others did.” In a telling gesture, Little Turtle, whose countenance reflected his nation’s sense of betrayal, remained still and tilted his shoulder, allowing the wampum to fall to the ground.⁵

As the Wyandot stormed out of the meeting, an awkward silence gripped the council. With neither side willing to yield, the fragile confederation was on the verge of collapse. Fearing the worst, Brant quickly rose to his feet and sought a compromise that he hoped would at least temporarily appease both the moderate and militant factions. Arguing that since the Americans had already established a burgeoning settlement north of the Ohio River at Marietta, Brant hoped to convince the belligerent Shawnee and Miami that by yielding a portion of these specific lands, the Indians would greatly enhance the possibility of reaching an agreement with the Americans respecting the remaining lands. Brant’s pleas fell on deaf ears. Delegates from the Shawnee, Miami, and Kickapoo ignored the Mohawk chief’s request and abruptly stalked out of the meeting. Those who remained could not help but notice that the now familiar silence had returned.⁶

⁵ William Henry Smith(ed.), The St. Clair Papers: The Life and Public Service of Arthur St. Clair, (Cincinnati, 1882), Vol.2, 95; See also Sword, President Washington’s Indian War, 61.

⁶ For Brant’s plea see, “Address of the Six nations and Western Confederacy to Governor St. Clair and answer of Brant, Frontier Wars, Draper Manuscripts, 23U, 66-68; See also Nelson, Cultural Mediation on the Great Lakes Frontier, 279.

Although disheartened by the Shawnee, Miami, and Kickapoo refusal to take part in the upcoming negotiations, Brant remained optimistic that the remaining tribes of the confederation would succeed in achieving what he viewed as a beneficial compromise. His hopes were dashed as a disheveled Mohawk chief returned with the American response to the confederacy's request that the upcoming treaty be moved from Fort Harmar back to their original location at the Falls of the Muskingum. Arthur St. Clair, the newly appointed governor of the Northwest Territory, had declared in July, following the Chippewa and Ottawa attacks along the Muskingum, that "if the council was to convene it would be beneath the guns of Fort Harmar." The response handed to Brant revealed that St. Clair had done little to change his position. Brant, refusing to admit to himself that a calculated assault orchestrated by a small band of warriors could have such dire consequences, repeated his request to St. Clair, arguing that "from the misconduct of a few individuals who live at a great distance and are little concerned with a union with you, you have extinguished the council fire." The Mohawk chief's efforts to convince the Americans of his peaceful intentions were in vain. St. Clair, who was totally oblivious of the hard-wrought compromise that Brant had forged among the moderate factions, arrogantly refused any compromise in relation to the location or substance of the proposed negotiations. Disgusted by St. Clair's latest reply, Brant urged his companions to turn back for "nothing more can be done than what we have offered." In a final message to St. Clair, Brant forewarned against any more "little treaties," for "no business of consequence is to be transacted without the unanimous

consent of all concerned.”⁷

The weather was excessively cold on the morning of December 13, 1788. With final preparations for the Treaty of Fort Harmar underway, nearly two hundred Indians appeared along the horizon. Braving the bitter cold were delegates from the Wyandot and Huron nations, as well as stray groups from the Ottawa, Chippewa, Delaware, Sac, and Seneca nations. Unwilling to concede what could possibly be the tribes’ last opportunity to establish a peaceful solution, the majority of Hurons and Wyandots refused to heed Brant’s call that the nations abandon the negotiations. In addition, the village chiefs, who championed the delegation’s attempts to reach an accommodation with the Americans, perceived the treaty as yet another opportunity to reestablish themselves.

By December 15 the council proceedings were well underway. The Huron-Wyandot chiefs Dyentente and T’Sindatton spoke on behalf of the delegation. Facing American commissioners who showed little sympathy for his appeal to a common God or his plea for Indian rights, T’Sindatton desperately clung to the position that had been agreed upon at the Miami towns. Laying forth what he hoped would be an intriguing compromise in the form of a large tract of land east of the Muskingum River, T’Sindatton promoted Wyandot claims to the region. In hoping to establish the Wyandot-Huron claims, as well as the Wyandot-Huron ability to speak for the whole of the confederacy in developing a lasting peace, the elderly chief went to great

⁷ For St. Clair’s call for the proceedings to move to Fort Harmar see, “St. Clair to Indians in Council,” in Clarence E. Carter(ed.), The Territorial Papers of the United States, (Washington, D.C. 1934-1975), Vol. 1, 127-128; “Address of the Six Nations and Western Confederacy to Governor St. Clair and Answer of Brant,” Frontier Wars, Draper Manuscripts, 23U 66-74; Brant’s refusal to meet at any other site, “Dorchester to Sydney,” in Burton(ed.), Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, Vol. 12, 2; See also White, The Middle Ground, 444-445; Sword, President Washington’s Indian War, 65-66.

pains to discredit Iroquois ties to the region.⁸

It was an effort that St. Clair used to his own advantage. In bringing Brant's worst fears to fruition, the Governor recognized the Huron-Wyandot claims to the region, and thus their ability to speak on behalf of the confederacy. By doing this, St. Clair felt that a certain degree of legitimacy would accompany both his refusal to accept their proposals and the resulting treaty which validated the earlier cessions.⁹

Of the twenty-seven chiefs and elders who came forward to sign the treaty, only four could have been considered legitimate chiefs. Conspicuously absent from the signing was T'Sindatton. In a final council the day before, the Wyandot chief responded to St. Clair's admonitions of possible war with sincere regret. Revealing his principle motivation for attending the negotiations in blatant disregard of the confederacy's advice, T'Sandatton slowly approached St. Clair and implored the governor to consider that his people were sorry that the Americans spoke of war, for they were willing to do "everything in their power to accommodate them for the sake of peace, only hoping that the line would be removed a little way." Lacking a response, T'Sandatton, one of the few chiefs present who was not making his first appearance in negotiations with Europeans, stormed out of the meeting refusing to agree to the treaty's terms. Ignoring his departure, the remaining "sachems" came forward on January 11, 1789 to place their

⁸ Denny, Military Journal of Major Ebenezer Denny, 128-129; "Proceedings between a part of the Six Nations Indians and a part of the Western Confederate Indians and Governor St. Clair at Fort Harmar on the Muskingum River to the treaty made at that place on the 9th of Jan. 1789, Frontier Wars, Draper Manuscripts, 23U, 75-175; see also White, The Middle Ground, 445-446.

⁹ Denny, Military Journal of Major Ebenezer Denny, 129-130; "Treaty of Fort Harmar proceedings," Frontier Wars, Draper Manuscripts, 23U, 75-175; "Dorchester to Sydney," in Burton(ed.), Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, Vol.12, 10; For copy of the Fort Harmar treaty see Thomas C. Cochran(ed.), The New American State Papers 1789-1860 - Indian Affairs, (Wilmington, Delaware: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1972), Vol.4, 14-15.

mark upon the Treaty of Fort Harmar, in what an American army officer who observed most of the proceedings disgustingly termed a “last act of farce.”¹⁰

With a tremendous roar the heavy ice that had choked the Ohio River throughout the first week in March began to break away in the midst of the sun’s warming rays. The moment that immigrants stationed at Fort Pitt had eagerly awaited was upon them. Within moments the river was congested with numerous flatboats and keelboats racing down river toward the Ohio Country. Set to greet these undaunted settlers, who braved swirling waters and drifting masses of ice, stood scores of Shawnee and Miami warriors who lined the Ohio River’s shores.

Unrepresented at Fort Harmar, the confederacy’s militant factions sought to discredit the actions of the Huron, Wyandot, and Iroquois. Proclaiming that “the lands belong to us all equally, and it is not in the power of one or two nations to dispose of it,” the Shawnee and others thus dismissed the Fort Harmar proceedings. Nothing more needed to be said, for the Americans had been adequately forewarned by Brant that unless the negotiations took place with those representing the confederacy as a whole, any agreements would be viewed as invalid. With all hope for a peaceful solution lost amid the joyous shouts of settlers pouring into the region, the Shawnee promptly dispatched war pipes to the surrounding nations before venturing to Detroit in order to demand supplies of ammunition and provisions from the British. Their demands met, the

¹⁰ For description of the chiefs see, Sword, President Washington’s Indian War, 74; “Treaty of Fort Harmar Proceedings,” Frontier Wars, Draper Manuscripts, 75-125; For those who signed see, “Abstract of Treaty at Fort Harmar,” in Burton(ed.), Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, Vol.24, 41-42; Denny, Military Journal of Major Ebenezer Denny, 130.

Shawnee, joined by bands from the Wabash and the Miami, struck the frontier.¹¹

The summer of 1789 was characterized by brutal raids orchestrated by warriors determined to prevent American settlement northwest of the Ohio River, and vengeful Kentuckians espousing what they believed to be just claims to the region. The killing was indiscriminate. Indian forays, characterized by vicious murders and the theft of horses and livestock, left close to seventeen settlers killed, fifteen wounded, and five taken captive within the span of three months. Responding to the depredations, the Kentuckians organized a punitive expedition under Major John Hardin, a veteran Revolutionary War officer and prominent frontier leader. On August 3 Hardin pursued a Miami war party returning from a recent attack. On their march, however, Hardin's force stumbled upon a hunting camp of peaceful Shawnee. Lacking orders to do so, the Kentuckians impetuously fell upon the startled party, leaving behind three Shawnee men, three women, a boy, and an infant in their wake.¹²

As the cries of captives tortured at the hands of the Shawnee filled the night air and Hardin's men approached Vincennes waving the blood soaked scalps of their victims, many came to the horrible realization that neither the Americans or the confederated Indian nations wielded the power to control their own, for backcountry settlers and war parties now seemed to dictate policy in the Ohio Country. For instance, in a message sent to the Americans in September 1789,

¹¹ "Proceedings between a part of the Six Nations Indians and a part of the Western Confederate Indians and Governor Arthur St. Clair at Fort Harmar on the Muskingum River to the treaty made at that place," *Frontier Wars*, Draper Manuscripts, 23U, 172-175; For distribution of war pipes see, "Dorchester to Sydney," in Burton(ed.), Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, Vol.12, 10.

¹²For depredations see, Denny, Military Journal of Major Ebenezer Denny, 131-133, 139; For use of captives to lure travelers along the river to the shore see, "A Narrative of the Incidents Attending the Capture, Detention, and Ransom of Charles Johnston," in Richard VanDerBeets(ed.), Held Captive by Indians: Selected Narratives, 1642-1836. (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1973), 243-319; For lengthy description of the raids see, Sword, President Washington's Indian War, 68-77.

a Miami war chief took it upon himself to return American hostages who had been brought into camp by “some of our foolish young men.” The war chiefs who had struggled to achieve the ascendancy, now felt helpless to control those factions within the villages that supported a heightened degree of militancy. In a plea that mirrored the recent efforts of the moderate factions to establish peace, the Miami war chief urged the Americans that his people sought peace, “but there are so many foolish young men that go to hurt the good we are making between us warriors.” It was a message the Americans could take to heart, as unauthorized raids such as Hardin’s severely threatened the authority of the United States.¹³

Returning from their winter hunts in March, 1790, the Piankashaw, Kickapoo, and Wea came upon a French resident bearing dispatches intended for the Wabash nations. Knowing the man as Antoine Gamelin, an Indian agent and trader at Vincennes, the Indians promptly questioned him as to his intentions. Their curiosity turned to anger as Gamelin relayed St. Clair’s request that the Wabash tribes return with the Frenchman to Vincennes for a treaty conference. Learning that the Miami had yet to be offered the same proposal, the Wabash tribes accused St. Clair of making yet another attempt to divide the confederacy. An infuriated Kickapoo “reminded” Gamelin that the tribes would not act without “the consent of our elder brethren the Miami.” In an effort to accommodate the Wabash villagers, Gamelin made his way to the Miami Villages. Blue Jacket, a Shawnee war leader, greeted Gamelin in a similar fashion, arguing that “from all quarters we receive speeches from the Americans, and not one is alike.” The council at the Miami Villages convened and decided to send Gamelin back to Vincennes, refusing to act

¹³ “Major Murray to Captain McKee,” in Burton(ed.), Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, Vol.12, 14-15.

until all of their neighbors had been notified. An exasperated St. Clair had only himself to blame, for he had taken a major role in a peace process that had left the Ohio Indian nations so leery of American intentions that peace was no longer an option.¹⁴

With fall approaching, preparations for the annual harvest were already well-underway at the village of Kekionga. Situated at the confluence of the Saint Marys and Saint Joseph Rivers which combine to form the Maumee, Kekionga served as the hub of six other villages. Known to the Americans as the Miami Town, Kekionga had become the seat of the confederacy. Chosen for its proximity to Detroit, the village rapidly developed into a commercial center. Home to numerous French and English traders, Kekionga supported six principal Shawnee, Delaware, and Miami villages. Despite the multiethnic, multiracial world that thrived along the banks of the Maumee, the tribes remained politically independent; thus the confederacy stood alone as word of an impending American expedition made its way to Kekionga.¹⁵

The rumors had been circulating for close to two months. The various reports seemed to suggest that the Americans, who were about 3,000 strong, had set their sights on Kekionga. War leaders frantically assembled runners who were to carry war belts to the surrounding nations. As the runners hastily made their way out of the village, scouts returned with accounts that placed the Americans within a few days march of the Miami Towns. Realizing that the other nations were much too dispersed to heed their request in such a short time, Kekionga's war leaders made

¹⁴ "St. Clair to President," Carter(ed.), The Territorial Papers of the United States, Vol.2, 245; See also Sword, President Washington's Indian War, 84-85; White, The Middle Ground, 447.

¹⁵ For description of Kekionga see, White, The Middle Ground, 448-453; Sword, President Washington's Indian War, 101-102; For reports of American advance see, "Letter from Major Smith," in Burton(ed.), Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, Vol.24, 103.

a painful decision. On October 15, 1790 the women and children were evacuated as the warriors set their beloved villages ablaze.¹⁶

Scattered throughout the surrounding woods, without the aid of the surrounding nations, the Indians - fewer than 600 men - could offer very little in the form of resistance. Reduced to driving off American cattle and packhorses, the Miami villagers were emboldened by the arrival of a party of Potawatomi from a nearby village along the Saint Joseph River. Congregating at a Miami village along the Eel River, the tribes prepared to make a stand. Although the Sacs and Foxes demanded that the assembled tribes await their arrival before launching a counterattack, the Miami war chief, Little Turtle, could not ignore the threat to his Eel River village. Using two lone warriors as bait, Little Turtle lured a column of 180 men under the Kentucky frontiersman, John Hardin, into an isolated area of underbrush. Awaiting Hardin was a scattered pile of trinkets and other plunder, which were immediately snatched up by the eager detachment. The trap was sprung. Almost instantly, scores of Miami, Shawnee, and Potawatomi warriors emerged from the underbrush leveling an intense fire. Within minutes twenty-two of the thirty regulars lay dead, while the militia scattered into a chaotic retreat failing to fire a single shot. Successfully thwarting Harmar's hope for an easy conquest of the Miami Villages, Little Turtle led the warriors on a triumphant march into what remained of Kekionga.¹⁷

¹⁶ For additional reports of an American advance see, "Extract from Private Letter from Detroit," in Burton(ed.), Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, Vol.24, 104-105; For burning of villages and call for assistance see, "McKee to Johnson," in Burton(ed.), Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, Vol.24, 106; Description of Harmar's advance into Kekionga, Denny, Military Journal of Major Ebenezer Denny, 145; See also, Sword, President Washington's Indian War, 103.

¹⁷ "Elliot to McKee," in Burton(ed.), Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, Vol.24, 108-109; Denny, Military Journal of Ebenezer Denny, 145-146; For detailed description see, Sword, President Washington's Indian War, 107-108.

On October 20 the tribes met in a general council. Despite their recent success, the Miami villagers faced a dire situation. Standing amid scorched fields that had flourished one week earlier, the Indians questioned their ability to continue the fight. Well aware of the villagers' distress, the newly arrived Sac and Fox sought to rally their allies. In a passionate speech that inflamed the villagers' will to resume the struggle, Sac and Fox war chiefs chillingly proclaimed that their enemies' bodies and horses would serve as provisions, for "we must eat them or they will eat us."¹⁸

Once again Little Turtle would lead the tribes into action. Learning from scouts that an American detachment was returning to the Miami Towns, supposedly to bury their dead, Little Turtle promptly devised another ambush. The plan commenced on the morning of October 22, when a lone warrior, stationed along the banks of the Saint Marys River, fled as the Americans came into view. Dodging the militia's gunfire, the warrior made a frenzied dash for higher ground. Wedged along the riverbank, Little Turtle's warriors watched as the pursuing troops splashed into the shallow waters. With the American column fully exposed, the riverbank erupted in a sheet of flame. Warriors emerged from their cover and plunged into the waters hoping to exact revenge on those who had destroyed their homes and threatened their families. The river ran dark with blood as the Indians met little resistance in cutting down the calvarymen. By midmorning the intense fighting subsided. Although many within the detachment managed to effect a desperate retreat, the blood-soaked battlefield, littered with close to 200 American soldiers, provided the assembled tribes with a shared sense of pride. Not only did they

¹⁸ "Information regarding actions of the Indians," in Burton(ed.), Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, Vol.24, 132.

successfully come together to defend their lands, but the assembled nations had inflicted a costly blow upon an enemy who expected nothing short of total victory.¹⁹

The celebrations carried well-into the evening. Elated by their victory, warriors boasted of their exploits while gathering together what valuables they had collected from the dead soldiers. Much of the attention was focused on an American prisoner, who surrounded by numerous villagers eager to see him pay for the cruel desecration of Indian victims earlier in the campaign, eagerly provided the Indians with candid information regarding Harmar's campaign. Upon discovering that Harmar's forces, prior to the recent engagement, had consisted of no more than 1,500 men with less than seven days worth of provisions, the Shawnee war chief, Blue Jacket, urged an attack on the dispirited American column. The Shawnee chief's hope for a decisive strike was dashed on the night of October 22, as a dark shadow crept across the face of the moon. The lunar eclipse proved to be an exceedingly foreboding event. The Ottawa, who had fulfilled their obligation to the neighboring tribes, perceived the event as an opportunity to return home. Arguing that their conjurers interpreted the eclipse as a sign that the Ottawas would lose great numbers of warriors, the tribe abruptly withdrew. Other tribal factions followed the Ottawas' lead. By daylight few of the close to 700 assembled warriors remained.²⁰

Awaiting the return of the few scattered war parties which had set out to harass the retreating American column, Blue Jacket and the other war leaders experienced mixed emotions.

¹⁹ Denny, Military Journal of Major Ebenezer Denny, 147-149; "Information of Captain Elliot," in Burton(ed.), Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, Vol.24, 132-133; For detailed description of the engagement see, Sword, President Washington's Indian War, 112-116.

²⁰ "Information of Blue Jacket," in Burton(ed.), Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, Vol.24, 135; See also Sword, President Washington's Indian War, 117-119.

Aside from the Wyandot, who had chosen to remain neutral, the tribes of the region came forward to defend their lands and each other in such a fashion that few could deny the confederacy's legitimacy. The united tribes had temporarily set aside their differences in the defense of the alliance's principle of common ownership. Nevertheless, the Ottawas' abrupt withdrawal from the Miami Towns ominously revealed the extent of the confederacy's limits. Upon lacking an immediate threat, many of the nations chose to return to their own villages. Their corn fields destroyed, and their cattle slaughtered, the Miami lacked adequate provisions for themselves, let alone to support distant nations. Seeking answers, Blue Jacket instantly assembled a delegation of Indian leaders and set out for Detroit.

Chapter 5

Mouthfuls of Dirt

Blue Jacket could do very little to hide his consternation. Pacing back and forth, the Shawnee war chief stared into the council fire, wondering if the British official with whom he was to meet would ever arrive. Blue Jacket, escorted by a contingent of war leaders, had reached Detroit within days of the American retreat from the Miami country. Aware of the tribes' successes and finally making his way to the council site, Major John Smith, the British commandant of Detroit, expected to greet a jovial delegation. Exasperated by Smith's haughty demeanor, Blue Jacket promptly delivered a poignant speech calling for a British commitment to the confederacy's efforts to defend their lands. Because British intentions had previously been vague at best, Blue Jacket's efforts to sway the Crown toward a direct commitment included a variety of angles. Pointing out that the victory over Harmar had been a costly one, the Shawnee chief requested deliveries of food and clothing. Optimistic that his need for provisions would be met, Blue Jacket, like Joseph Brant before him, appealed to the Crown's conscience. Reminding Smith that the tribes had aided the British during their war with the Americans, Blue Jacket contended that the Indians were thus entitled to compensation in return. Cognizant of the fact that the British had rarely put much stock into this argument, the Shawnee chief shifted his focus to the Crown's own specific interests. Turning toward Major Smith, Blue Jacket chillingly warned the commandant of Detroit that the Shemanthe "secretly aim at the destruction of your

trading posts.”¹

Believing that this latest appeal to the Crown’s interests would have the desired effect, the Shawnee chief resumed his position along the council fire and eagerly awaited Smith’s response. A disheartened Blue Jacket could scarcely hide his disgust as Major Smith completely disregarded the Shawnee’s desires. Although he had received promises of presents and a guarantee that the fur trade would continue, Blue Jacket listened in awe as the British commandant scolded the war leaders for their failure to restrain their young men from “going to war individually and without authority.” Struggling to retain his composure as a noticeably apprehensive Smith continued, now calling for a reconciliation with the Americans, Blue Jacket abruptly withdrew from the meeting. The following months would reveal the extent that the confederacy heeded their Great Father’s advice.²

On the morning of January 8, 1791, the weather was characteristically clear and cold, as a four-man surveying party set out along the western banks of the Great Miami River. Almost instantly, the calmness of the surveyors’ daily routine fell prey to a hail of bullets. Paralyzed with fear, one of the men was killed instantly, while another was taken captive. The remaining survivors managed to escape amid the panic. Upon reaching Dunlap’s Station, an outpost approximately seventeen miles north of Cincinnati, the two men relayed a hysterical warning to the area’s thirty-five residents. It was a warning that went unheeded, for the Americans assumed

¹ “Blue Jacket’s Speech and Answer,” in Burton(ed.), Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, Vol.24, 135-137; Shemanthe is a Shawnee term for American, see Sword, President Washington’s Indian War, 111.

² “The British answer to Blue Jacket’s request,” in Burton(ed.), Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, Vol.24, 137-138; for Smith’s apprehensions see, “Smith to Le Maistre,” in *Ibid.*, 139.

that the surveyors had fallen in with yet another small raiding party, intent on stealing horses.³

The war party that advanced to Dunlap's Station on the morning of January 10 had much more than the theft of horses on their minds. Angry over Britain's refusal to offer direct aid, and convinced that the Americans entered the Ohio Country armed with a premeditated design to uproot the Indian nations, the confederacy was in the midst of its first major offensive of the war. Led by Blue Jacket, who was acting in clear defiance of Major Smith's "instructions" to desist from committing depredations, the first of two expeditions had set its sights on the Symmes Purchase region in western Ohio. Aided by close to 200 warriors, the Shawnee chief surrounded the thirteen-man federal garrison. Lacking the artillery necessary to storm the fortification, Blue Jacket hoped that the presence of so many warriors would offer sufficient cause to effect the fort's surrender. Following a brief and somewhat uneventful siege, the war party withdrew upon the arrival of a 96-man contingent of federal troops and local volunteer militia from Cincinnati. Although they failed to take the fort, Blue Jacket's warriors had inflicted a costly blow. In burning the cattle, corn, and homes of the surrounding area, the Indians insured that the settlers would be forced to evacuate.⁴

The second expedition, also launched from settlements along the Maumee River, converged on the Ohio Company Lands in the vicinity of Marietta. On the afternoon of January 2, 1791, a small party of approximately twenty-five Delaware and Wyandot warriors descended the western bank of the Muskingum River, before climbing a ridge opposite Big Bottom, thirty

³ Sword, President Washington's Indian War, 126-127.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 128; See also Stephen Decater Cone, "Indian Attack on Fort Dunlap," Ohio Historical Society Quarterly, Vol.7, 1908.

miles north of the Muskingum's confluence with the Ohio. Splitting into two groups, the Indians waited until dusk when the thirty-six inhabitants of the recently constructed settlement sat down to dinner. With a loud cry the warriors plunged into the cabins, killing any who resisted. As the smoke cleared, all but five of the settlement's inhabitants lay dead.⁵

While both expeditions were small in scale, and the Indians suffered an embarrassing failure in their attempt to overrun the garrison at Dunlap's Station, the well-calculated raids served to temporarily contain the expansion of whites into the Ohio Country. With the principal white settlements north of the Ohio in flames, many settlers began to question their government's ability to offer protection and defend their claims to the region. As a result, many put their dreams of starting anew in the rich open lands of the Ohio Valley on hold.

With the American advance into the frontier successfully checked, numerous bands of Ohio Indian warriors crossed the Ohio River and struck settlements in Pennsylvania, Kentucky, and Virginia. Acting on behalf of the confederacy, these warriors participated in a war of revenge and plunder. Characterized by brutal killing, torture, and the taking of captives, the raids were unrelenting. Meeting little resistance, the warriors' forays continued well into the spring of 1791.⁶

In February 1791, a Seneca chief believed to be sympathetic to the American cause, returned from Philadelphia laden with presents. The visit, which lasted in excess of three months, had had a profound impact on Cornplanter's stance. In recognition of American sovereignty,

⁵ S.P. Hildreth(ed.), Pioneer History, (Cincinnati 1848), 429-439; See also Sword, President Washington's Indian War, 128-129.

⁶ For specific raid into the Virginia country see, "A True Narrative of the Sufferings of Mary Kinnan...", in VanDerBeets(ed.), Held Captive by Indians, 319-332.

Cornplanter, a veteran of the Revolutionary War, agreed to serve as a moderating influence in treaty negotiations with the western nations. Within a month of his visit, the Seneca chief received a visitor from Philadelphia. The man introduced himself as Colonel Thomas Procter, an American emissary who sought Cornplanter's influence in establishing the appearance of an Iroquois-American alliance that he hoped would bring the Ohio Indian nations to submission. To Procter's disdain, Cornplanter, who had been supportive of the American's initiative in March, was still reeling from an event that would serve to prevent the Seneca and the majority of the Six Nations from taking part in the peace process.⁷

While traveling from Pittsburgh to his village along the headwaters of the Allegheny River, Cornplanter and some of his Seneca companions were wrested ashore by a detachment of Pennsylvania militia. Fleeing into the woods, the Indians were forced to abandon their garrison boat, along with the large quantities of treaty goods and provisions acquired from Philadelphia. Facing tribesmen who had been somewhat reluctant to take part in the negotiations prior to suffering the attack, as well as angry threats from a Chippewa war party, who while venturing along the Cuyahoga River received word of the Six Nations' intentions, Cornplanter refused to accompany Procter. The politically divided Iroquois' withdrawal and subsequent decision to remain neutral cast severe doubt on the possibility that the western nations would receive offers of

⁷ "Knox to Procter(Instructions for Treaty)," in Burton(ed.), Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, Vol.24, 181-183; "Message from the Secretary of War to the Senecas," in Cochran(ed.), The New American State Papers: Indian Affairs, Vol.4, 32; Abler(ed.), The Revolutionary War Memoirs of Governor Blacksnake, 182-187.

peace. The events that followed would guarantee it.⁸

By April 1791, the Indians who gathered throughout the Miami villages had grown apprehensive. A message delivered to the congregated nations in March, on behalf of American Secretary of War Henry Knox, called for the western tribes to receive Colonel Procter and his appeals for negotiations. While the request appeared promising, Indian suspicions heightened amid reports that Procter was accompanied by three Senecas of Cornplanter's party. Harboring deep mistrust of the Six Nations' intentions, the confederated tribes resolved against meeting with Procter. The tribes' suspicions were further realized as a prisoner, brought in by a party of Delaware, informed the Indians of an approaching American army consisting of close to 5,000 men. The Shawnee and Miami instantly dispatched runners imploring the surrounding nations to proceed to Kekionga. Recognizing the immediate threat to the Ohio Country lands, over 1,000 warriors answered their calls, bringing the overall force at the Miami Towns to close to 2,000 men. Emboldened by the rapid response of the surrounding nations, Miami war leaders issued staunch demands to Crown officials for supplies. The British, disappointed in what they saw as a change in heart for those Indians whom they believed had once entertained hopes of peace, and fearing the large contingents of warriors who were daily "passing Detroit," felt compelled to respond to the tribes' demands for arms and provisions. Well-armed and determined to defend

⁸ "Knox to Procter(Instructions for Treaty)," in Burton(ed.), Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, Vol.24, 181-183; "Knox to the Six Nations," in Ibid., 184-186; "McKee to Johnson," in Ibid., 200-201; For Chippewa reaction see, "Butler to Johnson," in Ibid., 212; For Procter's speeches to the Iroquois, Iroquois responses, and Procter's diary, see, Cochran(ed.), The New American State Papers: Indian Affairs, Vol.4, 33-55; Abler(ed.), The Revolutionary War Memoirs of Governor Blacksnake, 182-187.

their lands, the imposing force awaited an American army that would never arrive.⁹

In a calculated move designed to isolate the assembled warriors, the Kentuckians, under General Charles Scott, veered off course and struck northwest for the Wabash region. The scene of numerous depredations dating back to the defeat of Harmar, the Wabash villages were deluged with reports of an impending American retaliatory strike. Wabash confederates, including the Wea, Ottawa, Huron, and Piankashaw had abandoned their winter villages six weeks earlier than usual out of fear that the Americans would profit from the high waters to attack their villages. With the advent of spring, their defensive stature had shifted to raids on American settlements along the Grand Rock River. Ignoring warnings from French traders to the contrary, the Wabash villagers assumed that the recently reported American advance would follow Harmar's route to the Miami Towns. In a rash decision, village chiefs responded to the Miamis' call for aid with close to 500 warriors.¹⁰

The principal Wea village of Ouiatanon was quiet on the afternoon of June 1, 1791, when the frantic shouts of a mounted villager pierced the calm. Captain Bull, the shocked warrior who discovered Scott's advancing column within a few miles of the village, led a desperate attempt to evacuate the town. With only a few fighting men remaining, the women and children climbed into canoes and raced across the Wabash to a Kickapoo village on the opposite shore. As Scott's

⁹ For the prisoner's account see, "McKee to Johnson," in Burton(ed.), Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, Vol.24, 200-201; For McKee's fears see, "McKee to Smith," in Ibid., 243; "McKee to Smith," in Ibid., 246; The Indians threatened Procter's life, see, "Narrative of Thomas Rhea," in Cochran(ed.), The New American State Papers: Indian Affairs, Vol.4, 95; For numbers of the assembled see Sword, President Washington's Indian War, 139.

¹⁰ For events along the Wabash prior to Scott's attack see, "Journal of What Happened at the Miamis and the Glaize with the Ouias and Piconns," in Burton(ed.), Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, Vol.24, 220-223.

men rounded a grove of timber, those who remained could offer little resistance. In all, thirty villagers fell victim to Scott's men. The greatest losses came as the occupants of a nearby village, mostly women and children responding to what they deduced to be a war party returning with prisoners, ventured into Ouiatanon. Spared as captives, the Wea could only watch as Scott's men burned several Indian villages and destroyed their crops.¹¹

The assembled warriors at the Miami Towns grew restless. The massive American column that had drawn them to the shores of the Maumee River seemed to disappear. Mounting impatience and an uncertainty regarding American designs led to considerable disarray within the Indian ranks. Holding out as long as they possibly could, Sauk and Fox warriors, joined the next day by most of the Wabash tribesmen who had raced to the aid of their Miami brethren, gathered their possessions and started back toward their villages. It was not long before the departed Indians came upon the ruins of Ouiatanon. While many of the warriors followed Scott's trail in an abortive effort to overtake the mounted column and retrieve their captive women and children, runners raced back to the Miami towns with news of the grisly attack.¹²

Enraged by the reports of Scott's expedition, as well as the insurmountable logistical burden of feeding the assembled warriors, the residents of the Miami Towns demanded that the British increase the flow of arms and provisions into their villages. Their demands unanswered by Crown officials who continued to push for peace, outraged warriors struck the inhabitants of

¹¹ "General Scott to the Piankashaws and other tribes residing on the waters of the Wabash," in *Ibid.*, 244-246; "Letter to McKee," in *Ibid.*, 261-262; See also Sword, *President Washington's Indian War*, 140-141.

¹² "Journal," in Burton(ed.), *Michigan Pioneer and Historical Society*, Vol.24, 251; "Letter to McKee," in *Ibid.*, 261-262.

Detroit and the surrounding areas, robbing their homes of food, clothing, and livestock. The sporadic raids continued until early July when British Indian Agent Alexander McKee called the tribes to council. In addition to recommending that the British fortify the Miami Rapids with a garrisoned post, McKee had succeeded in requisitioning additional quantities of corn for the Miami villages. Meeting along the rapids, the assembled nations, joined by the Mohawk chief Joseph Brant, sought to define the terms under which they would be prepared to negotiate a “reasonable” settlement with the Americans.¹³

The discussions were heated. Still reeling from the after-effects of Scott’s raid, the Lake Indians, joined by the Delaware and Huron, began to push for an adjusted boundary line. With white settlement already entrenched in eastern Ohio, these tribes contended that the Americans would be willing to exchange land cessions east of the Muskingum for undisputed tribal sovereignty in the west. The Shawnee and Miami remained defiant, however. Attributing the Delaware, Huron, and Lake Indians’ proposition to Joseph Brant’s tinkering, the Shawnee and Miami refused to consider any adjustment in the boundary. A resolution seemed hopeless when runners arrived carrying American speeches intended for the Huron and Delaware. The speeches, prepared by Arthur St. Clair, consisted of a blatant attempt to divide the Huron and Delaware from the interests of the Shawnee, Miami, and other “foolish nations who are joined to them.” Hoping to shield themselves from any perceived connection to American efforts to divide the

¹³ “Letter to McKee,” in Burton(ed.), Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, Vol.24, 261-262; For Indians’ call for increase in arms and provisions see, Ibid., 251; For raids on British settlements see, “Misc.,” in Ibid., 252-253; “Brant to Johnson,” Ibid., 263-264; “McKee’s Speech to the Indians,” in Cruikshank(ed.), The Correspondence of Lieut. Governor John Graves Simcoe, (Toronto: Ontario Historical Society, 1923-1931), Vol.1, 36; See also Nelson, Cultural Mediation on the Great Lakes Frontier, 284-285.

confederacy, the Huron and Delaware promptly resolved to continue to uphold a “general confederacy of all nations of their color to defend their country to the last.” To Joseph Brant and the Crown’s dismay, the confederacy also unanimously consented to the Ohio River as the only possible boundary separating American and Indian settlement.¹⁴

It would take less than a month for the reestablished determination to defend the Ohio River boundary to collapse. Following a speech by Lord Dorchester, in which the Governor of Quebec staunchly informed the confederacy that the Crown “will only help you procure peace,” representatives from the Ottawa, Huron, and Delaware joined Joseph Brant in a conference with British officials at Quebec. Free from the shadow of the Shawnee, Miami, and other militants, the assembled nations, hoping to gain the aid proposed by Dorchester, discussed the concessions they would be willing to make in achieving peace with the Americans. Yet at the very moment that these delegates sought to design what they perceived to be a beneficial compromise, events in the Ohio Country would challenge even the most pacific-minded sachems.¹⁵

On the morning of August 7, 1791, a fully mounted column under General James Wilkinson charged across the Eel River into the village of L’Anguille. Taking the village completely by surprise, the Kentuckians, who numbered close to 500, killed six warriors before hastily rounding up thirty-four prisoners. With most of the warriors dispersed to Quebec and others purchasing ammunition at the French Store near Vincennes, L’Anguille had been at the

¹⁴ “Brant to Johnson,” in Burton(ed.), Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, Vol.24, 269-270; For arrival of St. Clair’s speeches see, “Letter from McKee,” in Ibid., 280-281; see also Nelson, Cultural Mediation on the Great Lakes Frontier, 285.

¹⁵ “Dorchester to the Indians,” in Burton(ed.), Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, Vol.24, 309-313; “Conference with Indians at Quebec relative to Western Indians,” in Ibid., 318-319.

mercy of Wilkinson's men.¹⁶

By early September outrage over Wilkinson's attack and reports of an American army advancing out of Fort Washington had culminated in the gathering of the confederated tribes at the Miami Rapids. As war belts continued to circulate among the surrounding Indian nations, a steady stream of warriors poured into the region. Their differences over the establishment of a boundary line temporarily set aside by the common threat offered by an American advance into the Ohio Country, the warriors converged on the Miami Rapids by the end of the month. Within weeks what had originally been planned as a small gathering to greet Brant and his delegation upon their return from the conference with Dorchester, swelled to close to 3,000 warriors.¹⁷

Stepping from the British sloop, *Nancy*, Joseph Brant breathed a sigh of relief. Inordinate delays had plagued the Mohawk chief's return to the Miami Rapids. It was mid October before Brant, accompanied by delegates from the Delaware, Huron, and Ottawa, finally came upon the proposed meeting site. Bearing little more than a promise from Dorchester that the British would aid in the negotiation of a proper settlement, Brant came upon a shocking scene. The council grounds at the Miami Rapids, which a few days earlier had been teeming with a massive contingent of warriors, were barren. Only the British Indian agent Alexander McKee, who had sought desperately to overcome the strain of feeding such a gathering, remained. An American advance toward the Miami Villages had drawn the assembled warriors forward to defend their homes. Staring at the charred remains of the council fires that recently dotted the meeting site,

¹⁶ For detail of Wilkinson's attack see, Sword, President Washington's Indian War, 155-156; For dispersal of Indians see, Eugene F. Bliss(ed.), Diary of David Zeisberger: A Moravian Missionary Among the Indians of the Ohio, (Cincinnati, 1885), Vol. 2, 200-217.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 214-220; "Girty to McKee," in Burton(ed.), Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, Vol.24, 329-330.

Joseph Brant finally resigned himself to the fact that peace was an impossibility.¹⁸

Their calls for arms and provisions answered by a British government eager to defend its trading interests and settlements in the vicinity of Detroit, a combined force of 1,040 warriors advanced from the Miami Villages on October 28, 1791. Considering reports from deserters, prisoners, and scouts, Ohio Indian war leaders agreed to launch a counter attack against the approaching American column. Advancing approximately fifty miles in four days, the assembled force, led by Little Turtle of the Miami and Blue Jacket of the Shawnee, awaited St. Clair's approach in the vicinity of the upper Wabash River.¹⁹

Following a laborious night of attempting to restrain his impetuous young warriors from roaming through the woods to gather wandering cattle and packhorses within earshot of the American encampment, Little Turtle finalized an ambitious design for attack. With the Wyandot and a handful of Iroquois warriors who had chosen to join the expedition comprising the right flank, the Shawnee, Delaware, and Miami forming the center, and the Lake Indians encompassing the left flank, Little Turtle hoped to deploy his men in a half-moon formation that allowed for a rapid encirclement of the American camp. Eager to defend their lands and fully confident of success, the emotional warriors slept little on the night of November 3.²⁰

As streaks of the first bit of sunlight began to draw upon the morning frost of November 4, sentries gathered about the campfires that dotted the advanced militia camp. A militia ranger,

¹⁸ Ibid., 329-330; Bliss(ed.), Diary of David Zeisberger, 201-205; See also, Sword, President Washington's Indian War, 159.

¹⁹ "Girty to McKee," in Burton(ed.), Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, Vol.24, 329-330

²⁰ Ibid., 329-330, 334; Denny, Military Journal of Major Ebenezer Denny, 163-165; See also Sword, President Washington's Indian War, 176; Harvey Lewis Carter, The Life and Times of Little Turtle(Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 105-108.

perceiving what appeared to be several dozen Indians lurking along the tree line, leveled his rifle and fired into the woods. Within moments a horde of warriors arose from the thickets, answering the shot with a volley of gunfire. Scattering the militia, the warriors pursued the rangers before halting outside of the main encampment. Moving from tree to tree, the Indians fired with precision, even taking the time to aim at the officers. The thunderous roar of cannon situated along a high patch of ground fronting the eastern branch of the Wabash temporarily slowed the warriors' onslaught. Occupying the crest of the high ground, the artillery fire was too high to have any effect. As canister charges harmlessly shook the tree tops, the Indians surrounded the camp and cut off the outer guards, while relentlessly advancing under the cover of the smoke from the soldiers' guns. Eventually overcoming the cannoneers, who were without cover, the Indians raced after the retreating soldiers. That the warriors stopped to scalp their numerous victims and plunder the camp, now littered with the bodies of those brazen enough to offer resistance, was all that managed to slow the tribes' onslaught. A Seneca warrior was later to say that he had tomahawked so many men that his arm "got sick." It would be three long hours before the shattered remains of St. Clair's army managed to break through an opening for just enough time to effect some semblance of a retreat. Racing for safety, those who escaped reached Fort Jefferson within twenty-four hours, a distance that had taken ten days to cover on the outward march.²¹

²¹ Denny, Military Journal of Major Ebenezer Denny, 163-169; "Brant to Chew," in Burton(ed.), Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, Vol.24, 358; Arthur St. Clair, A Narrative of the Campaign Against the Indians Under the Command of Major General St. Clair, (Philadelphia, 1812), 181-220; Milo Milton Quaife(ed.), The Indian Captivity of O.M. Spencer, (New York: Dover Publications, 1995), 10-15; For description of the retreat see Ray Allen Billington, Westward Expansion: A History of the American Frontier, (New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1974), 219; For detailed description of the engagement see Sword, President Washington's Indian War, 176-187.

Little Turtle's bold plan to attack the encamped American army ended in the most one-sided Native American victory in history. The confederated tribes suffered just twenty-one dead and forty wounded, while handing the Americans losses mounting to 913 casualties out of a force of 1,400, with 630 having been killed. The victorious warriors turned the battlefield into a celebration. Setting aside their differences when challenged with an immediate threat to their lands and their very way of life, the Ohio Valley Indian nations had tasted victory once again. Feasting well into the night, the ecstatic warriors gathered together more bounty than they could carry. Reveling in the unity expressed by the assembly of so many diverse nations in the cause of defense, a Shawnee warrior approached the body of Richard Butler, the former American Indian agent who had taken a major role in such treaty negotiations as Fort McIntosh and Fort Harmar. Brandishing a scalping knife, the warrior ripped open Butler's chest and pulled out his heart. The heart was then divided into as many pieces as there were tribes present and eaten. In a gesture designed to mock the absence of the Six Nations, who formally refused to take part in the defense of the Ohio Country, the Shawnee warriors carefully dried and preserved Butler's scalp and had it delivered to Joseph Brant. Before finally leaving the battlefield, the Indians circulated among the carnage, and as a telling symbol to the white man's greed for their lands, the warriors stuffed the mouths of the American dead with dirt.²²

²² "McKee to Johnson," in Burton(ed.), Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, Vol.24, 335-337; Ibid., 358; Quaiife(ed.), Captivity of O.M. Spencer, 27-28; See also Sword, President Washington's Indian War, 191.

Chapter 6

An Impossible Dream

By the Spring of 1792 the Miami Towns were eerily silent. Their crops decimated by the strain of feeding such a large gathering for an extended period of time, the tribes residing along the Maumee River Valley had desperately sought for a way in which to support their families during the coming winter. A late autumn flood only added to the tribes' dilemma. The Miami Villagers found themselves in a precarious position, for they had been abandoned by their allies. In dire need of provisions, many warriors were forced to return to their distant villages in order to commence with their hunting. Although they had succeeded in retaining the services of most of the surrounding nations, who close to two months prior to the engagement with St. Clair had been forced to subsist on corn that was dug up before it was mature, the Miami tribes now lacked the immediate threat of St. Clair's presence to garner significant support. Nevertheless, while the withdrawal of their allies supplanted any hope for an expedition to reduce the forts constructed by St. Clair's army as it advanced throughout the previous summer, many villagers welcomed the removal of a gathering that had cast a severe strain upon the region's resources. Without question, the defeat of St. Clair came at a costly price.¹

The preceding winter had been a tumultuous one. Wabash villagers, who in their support

¹ For decimation of crops and flooding see, "Brant to Johnson," in Burton(ed.), Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, Vol.24, 365-366; "Message from the Chiefs at the Glaize," in Ibid., 401-402; "Speech of the Shawnee and Delaware to Captain Elliot," in Ibid., 421-422; Bliss(ed.), Diary of David Zeisberger, Vol.2, 205.

of the confederacy's stance to defend the Ohio River boundary had suffered unchallenged expeditions into their lands and the destruction of their crops, found little solace in the victory over St. Clair. War leaders faced mounting opposition from villagers who were steadily growing weary of the sight of their young men abandoning the hunt in favor of war parties. Those who fell in battle were not only warriors, they also served as providers. Men who chose to fight could not hunt or clear fields, while women who were forced to flee when invasion threatened could not plant and harvest. Fields lay fallow and trade routes became severed, as the war placed tremendous demands on the people's energy at the expense of normal economic and social practices. Aggravated over what they perceived to be a complete lack of commitment on the part of British officials to compensate the tribes for their losses, many of the Wabash nations believed that a continuation of the war effort would be in vain. Without British aid, the confederacy would not survive a lengthy campaign. Lacking the logistical capability to sustain large numbers of men in the field, the tribes could only remain concentrated for a short period of time. This notion, along with an ever apparent unwillingness of Crown officials to modify their neutral stance, forced the Wabash villagers to reassess their situation.²

Emboldened by Spanish proclamations that mirrored their perceptions of British deceit, many Wabash bands, including some Delaware and Miami, ventured to the Illinois River Valley. Convinced that the British were "as much their enemies as the Americans," for they "furnish us with weapons while they themselves sit spectators," the Wabash tribes denounced the Crown for

² For discontent of the Wabash tribes see, "Major Smith to Leith," in Burton(ed.), Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, Vol.24, 375; "Ironside to McKee," in Ibid., 376; "Simcoe to Dundas," in Cruikshank(ed.), The Correspondence of Lieut. Governor John Graves Simcoe, Vol.1, 112-114; For effect on the subsistence patterns see Calloway, The American Revolution in Indian Country, 56-57; See also White, The Middle Ground, 455.

its vain promises. Their discontent manifested itself in such a manner that it was not long before British officials were besieged with word of an impending strike on their posts.³

While the Wabash tribes were sincere in their desire to exact a certain measure of revenge, the Miami villagers remained opportunistic. With the Crown's apparent concern for its citizens and trading interests steadfastly increasing amid the threat of an Indian revolt, the Shawnee, Miami, and Delaware hoped to force the British to provide the provisions that were so desperately needed. Assembling en masse, the tribes abandoned their homes at the Miami Towns and converged near the confluence of the Auglaize and Maumee rivers, about fifty miles from Alexander McKee's trading post at the foot of the Miami Rapids. The large gathering, as the tribes had intended, found that British officials, distressed over the prospect of facing Indians "who will turn their tomahawks against us if they are not actually assisted," seemed more and more willing to comply with the confederacy's requests.⁴

Although the Miami villagers succeeded in presenting themselves as a possible threat to British interests if not adequately supplied, the tribes remained in dire straits. The decision to abandon their homes had been a difficult one. Notwithstanding, village leaders facing inexorable circumstances could think only of their starving women and children. Joined by the European residents of Fort Miami, who followed their Indian clientele down river, the tribes established a concentrated settlement that remained within ten miles of the confluence of the Auglaize and

³ "Ironsides to McKee," in Burton(ed.), Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, Vol.24, 376.

⁴ "Simcoe to Dundas," in Cruikshank(ed.), The Correspondence of Lieut. Governor John Graves Simcoe, Vol.1, 112-114; "Ironsides to McKee," in Burton(ed.), Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, Vol.24, 376; "Baubin to Major Smith," in Ibid., 378; For war belts regarding the English being sent to the Miami see "McKee to Johnson," in Ibid., 380-381; For location of Indian removal see, Helen Hornbeck Tanner, "The Glaize in 1792: A Composite Indian Community," Ethnohistory, 25, 1978, 15-39; Milo Milton Quaife(ed.), The Indian Captivity of O.M. Spencer, (New York: Dover Publications, 1995).

Maumee rivers. The settlement, which by the Spring of 1792 consisted of three Shawnee, two Delaware, and one Miami village, was known by its inhabitants as the Glaize.⁵

In what was truly a “composite community,” the Indians’ bark cabins, lush vegetable gardens, and extensive pasture lands were complemented by an extensive European trading town, whose residents included French settlers and British traders who often had Indian wives and families. Although diverse, the community at the Glaize was not unique. Men, women, and children of various European heritages, along with families from eastern and southern Indian tribes, often formed an integral part of any frontier society. The upper Ohio Valley was no exception.⁶

Nevertheless, although the Ohio Country’s social fabric consisted of multiple strands, it remained frayed by the conflicting interests of the region’s inhabitants. For instance, British traders desired a peaceful compromise between the Indians and the Americans. Ignorant of the confederacy’s principles, the traders heralded the Muskingum River boundary as an amicable solution. Not only would the Muskingum River boundary result in the retention of the trading posts within an adequate buffer zone, but with peace achieved, the Indians would be enabled to return to their hunts and thus bring in the valuable furs without the added expense of British provisions or “presents.” Consequently, the traders, who often had to answer for the lack of British action, remained in a vulnerable position. In times of crisis, as in the case of Harmar’s expedition, the tribes often turned on the traders, stripping them of their arms and robbing their

⁵ For the desire to uproot see “Brant to Johnson,” in Burton(ed.), Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, Vol.24, 165-166; Tanner, “The Glaize in 1792,” 16.

⁶ Tanner, “The Glaize in 1792,” 16-18.

homes of food and clothing. The resulting social framework between the tribes and the traders was thus bound by little more than their common need for one another. For the Indians who converged on the Glaize, the question remained whether or not this tenuous bond would be strong enough to fulfill the first step of their design to draw the British into the war.⁷

Drenched in sunlight, Vincennes sat majestically along the banks of the Wabash River. Unable to ignore the fair weather that greeted the late September afternoon, John Baptiste Ducoigne, an energetic young chief of the Kaskaskias, proclaimed that the clear skies were a good omen. A gathering of approximately 700 Indians representing the Eel River, Wea, Illinois Potawatomi, Piankashaw, Kaskaskia, and Kickapoo tribes, chose Ducoigne, who espoused pro-American sentiments, to represent the assembly as the council speaker. The Kaskaskia chief had ventured to the region with the hope that the tribes would be reunited with the women and children who had been held captive since Charles Scott's expedition against the principal Wea village of Ouiatanon in June, 1791. For many present, the gathering was somewhat reminiscent of the turbulent summer of 1786, when between 450 and 700 warriors stormed Vincennes in retaliation for a murdered tribesman. Now, an American emissary who graciously introduced himself as Rufus Putnam, and who bore enough blankets, shrouds, leggings, and shirts to supply all who were present, came forth to greet the assembled tribes. Few who were present could deny

⁷ For the trader's support for peace see "From the Merchants of Montreal to J.G. Simcoe," in Cruikshank(ed.), Correspondence of Lieut. Governor John Graves Simcoe, Vol.1, 91-94; "Conversation Upon the State of Affairs in the Western Country," in Burton(ed.), Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, Vol.24, 167-170; For support of the Muskingum River Boundary see "Memorial on Trade," in Ibid., 338-357; "Memorial of Merchants with Respect to Trade," in Ibid., 402-409; For robbing of traders see, "Baubin to Major Smith," in Ibid., 378; "Misc.," in Ibid., 252-253; "Major Smith to Leith," in Ibid., 375; See also Calloway, "Beyond the Vortex of Violence," 19.

the complexity of the past six years.⁸

The Wabash villagers, whose war leaders continued to face stiff opposition from those who remained weary of the lingering conflict, and had all but given up on the remote possibility of direct British assistance, readily accommodated Putnam's unique approach. Speaking on behalf of an American government facing adverse public opinion regarding a military solution, Putnam sought to incur a split within the confederacy by renouncing the Americans' claims of conquest. Following a conciliatory speech in which the American emissary discussed his intention to facilitate the release of the Indian prisoners, the Wabash villagers were ecstatic to find that in addition to an acknowledgment of Indian title, Putnam made no demands for land. Although they agreed to recognize American sovereignty, deliver any white prisoners held, and to notify the government of any impending attack by the hostels, the tribes had achieved more than could have possibly hoped for. Nevertheless, what appeared to be an American recognition of Indian land rights on the surface, remained subject to what American officials perceived to be "just claims." It would prove to be a moot point, however. Following a postponement in congressional action until the 1793-94 session, the United States Senate rejected the treaty on the basis that it failed to establish the exclusive right of the federal government to purchase Indian lands in the future.⁹

Establishing settlements within the shadow of the last vestiges of the British Empire on the continent, those Indian nations who remained loyal to the Ohio Indian Confederacy's ideals stood

⁸ Rowana Buell(ed.), The Memoirs of Rufus Putnam, (New York, 1903), 277-377; See also Sword, President Washington's Indian War, 215.

⁹ "Journal of the Proceedings at a Council Held with the Indians of the Wabash and Illinois at Post Vincets," in Buell(ed.), The Memoirs of Rufus Putnam, 335-367; R. David Edmunds, " 'Nothing Has Been Effectuated': The Vincennes Treaty of 1792," Indiana Magazine of History, 74, 1978, 25-35; For transformation in American treaty policies see Dorothy V. Jones, A License for Empire, (London and Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982); See also Sword, President Washington's Indian War, 218; White, The Middle Ground, 460.

unequivocally opposed to the Americans' efforts to achieve diplomatically what they had failed to do with force. The Maumee villagers, like the Wabash tribes, were growing increasingly impatient with the lack of British action, however. While the tribes were, for the most part, successful in concealing their lack of forbearance, obvious signs of distress began to manifest themselves in the Indians' dealings with Crown officials. For instance, when Matthew Elliott, a British Indian agent, overstepped his bounds and requested the business of a Stockbridge Indian delegation that met with the tribes during the summer of 1792, a Delaware chief replied, "Did you ever see me at Detroit or Niagara, in your councils, and there to ask you where such and such white man come from or what is their business: can you watch , and look all around the earth to see who come to us? or is what their business? Do you not know that we are upon our own business?"¹⁰

Although the British remained ambiguous in their dealings with the tribes, the Shawnee, Miami, and Delaware continued to cling to their hope that the Crown would eventually undertake an active role. Congregating within reach of Britain's commercial centers, as well as the gateway to Detroit, the Indians believed that an American strike on their villages would serve as enough of a threat to the Crown's security to warrant direct aid in the region's defense. This notion, coupled with the lingering mistrust of American peace initiatives, prevented the tribes from responding to any plea for negotiation. It was a mistrust painfully illustrated by the deaths of two American emissaries during the summer of 1792. Colonel John Hardin, the notorious Kentuckian who had led the raid on Mackachack in 1786, and Captain Alexander Trueman, a veteran of St.

¹⁰ For Delaware quote see "A Narrative of an Embassy to the Western Indians from Original Manuscript of Hendrick Aupaumut," in Memoirs of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, (1827), Vol.2, 103.

Clair's expedition, failed to reach their ultimate destinations in the Maumee River region, murdered by those who had no intention of being deceived again.¹¹

Watching as the council fire erupted into flames, Painted Pole could scarcely conceal his enthusiasm. The elocutionary Shawnee chief chosen by his people to speak on behalf of the Ohio Indian Confederacy, stood before a gathering of Indian nations whose numbers reflected the magnitude of the occasion. Aided in large measure by the daily reports of American forces proceeding with active preparations for an offensive at their advanced forts, the Shawnee succeeded in luring a massive assembly of tribes to the junction of the Auglaize and Maumee rivers. Accompanying the Shawnee, Miami, and Delaware residing at the Glaize, were Sauk and Fox from the northern regions; the so-called Seven Nations of Canada, who were British-allied dissidents nominally of the Iroquois Confederacy; Creek and Cherokee from the South; a large conglomeration from the Great Lakes, including the Ottawa, Wyandot, eastern Potawatomi; as well as a few Wea and Wabash tribesmen disaffected at the Putnam negotiations. Determined to establish a unified position in order to lend credence to the confederacy as an imposing force, the tribes commenced with eleven days of deliberations beginning on the morning of September 30, 1792.¹²

From the outset, the confederacy's attention focused on the Six Nations' representatives who had ventured to the Glaize from the Buffalo Creek region in present-day New York. Having

¹¹ American State Papers, Vol.1, 234-243, 337; "Colonial Records," in Burton(ed.), Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, Vol.24, 420; See also, Sword, President Washington's Indian War, 212.

¹² "Proceedings of a General Council of Indian Nations," in Burton(ed.), Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, Vol.24, 483-496; For reports of American aggression see, "McKee to Simcoe," in *Ibid.*, 466-467; "Journal of William Johnson's Proceedings from Niagara to the Westward," in *Ibid.*, 469; See also Sword, President Washington's Indian War, 223.

been absent from the Ohio Indians' general proceedings for the past four years, Iroquois chiefs faced a confederacy whose distrust of the Six Nations now teetered on the verge of hostility. Assuming the initiative, Painted Pole chided the Iroquois for their lengthy absence, reminding the Six Nations that when they last met all the nations agreed collectively to defend their country, "but we have never seen you since that time." Joined by Buckongahelas, a Delaware war leader who had urged resistance to American expansion since the early years of the Revolution, Painted Pole dismissed the Iroquois as messengers for the Americans, imploring them to "speak from your heart, and not from your mouth."¹³

Red Jacket, a Seneca political leader, responded on behalf of the Six Nations. Speaking in place of the conspicuously absent Joseph Brant, whose departure was delayed due to a severe illness, Red Jacket was visibly distressed at being subjected to such obtrusive accusations. The Seneca's rebuttal would only serve to enhance the viability of Painted Pole's allegations, however. Contending that the Americans had always dealt justly with his nation, Red Jacket urged the tribes to acknowledge the Americans' offer of peace, warning them not to be "too proud spirited and reject it, lest the Great Spirit should be angry with you."¹⁴

For Painted Pole and the Shawnee, who hoped to discredit both the Iroquois-supported peace process and the subsequent Muskingum boundary, which had found increasing favor among many tribes following St. Clair's defeat, Red Jacket's condescending speech appeared to have had

¹³ "Proceedings of a General Council of Indian Nations," in Burton(ed.), Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, Vol.24, 483-496; "Meeting the Western Nations at the Glaize," in Abler(ed.), The Revolutionary War Memoirs of Governor Blacksnake, 184-187, 193-200.

¹⁴ For Red Jacket's response see, "Proceedings of a General Council of Indians," in Burton(ed.), Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, Vol.24, 488.

the desired effect. Expecting to reiterate the necessity of union upon the minds of those present, who now shared a common sense of betrayal at the hands of the Six Nations, the Shawnee speaker adopted the concepts of race and spiritualism.

Throughout the proceedings, Painted Pole espoused religious expression, often tinged with nativist sentiment. Opening the conference with the proclamation that “this is the day which the Great Spirit has appointed for us all to meet together to consult on our general interests and the good of all nations of our color,” the Shawnee speaker quickly set the tone for what was to be a staunch expression of tribal unity. Painted Pole attributed the confederacy’s recent victories over American forces to “the Great Spirit who governs all things and who looks on us with as much or perhaps more compassion than those of the fairer complexion.” The Shawnee speaker even took the opportunity to attack the Americans’ promises to “civilize” the Indians by transforming the cultures of those who cooperated with them. Finding themselves unable to support such proclamations, and thus failing to distance themselves from the role of American mediators, the Iroquois lost what little remaining credibility they held prior to the council. Nevertheless, whether this loss of credibility would translate into a rejection of the peace process remained to be seen.¹⁵

A distraught Joseph Brant finally arrived at the Glaize on October 8, just after the council’s closing ceremonies. Much to his dismay, the Mohawk chief learned that the confederacy had, at least on the surface, decided to uphold the Ohio River as the principal

¹⁵ For concepts of race and spiritualism see *Ibid.*, 483-496; For role of spiritualism in the confederacy see Gregory Evans Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance: The North American Indian Struggle for Unity, 1745-1815*, (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 99-103.

boundary line. In addition, a raiding party under the leadership of Little Turtle was already in the midst of preparations for an attack on a supply line connecting Forts Hamilton and St. Clair, which would claim the lives of six Americans, along with the capture of close to one hundred packhorses. Finding some solace in the proposed negotiations with the Americans planned for the following Spring at the Lower Sandusky, Brant remained somewhat optimistic. Although he arrogantly perceived the Ohio Indians' unwillingness to support his proposed compromise as a result of British meddling, Joseph Brant was convinced that he could persuade certain factions within the confederacy that the western tribes' best means for obtaining an equitable peace lay in a negotiated settlement based upon the Muskingum River boundary.¹⁶

The Sandusky conference never took place. Following a brief stay at the home of John Graves Simcoe, the acting Lieutenant Governor of Upper Canada, an American delegation of Benjamin Lincoln, Timothy Pickering, and Beverly Randolph ventured as far as the mouth of the Detroit River. It was here, at the home of British Indian agent Matthew Elliott, that the commissioners waited for the confederation council at the Maumee to decide whether to receive them. Marked by suspicious meetings and political intrigue, the precouncil revealed the extent that the confederacy remained hopelessly divided over the boundary issue.¹⁷

Prior to the American delegates' arrival at the Detroit River on July 21, 1793, the

¹⁶ "Brant to Chew," in Burton(ed.), Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, Vol.24, 456; "Journal of William Johnson's Proceedings from Niagara to the Westward," in *Ibid.*, 472; "Simcoe to Clarke," in Cruikshank(ed.), The Correspondence of Lieut. Governor John Graves Simcoe, Vol.1, 383; See also Nelson, Cultural Mediation Along the Great Lakes Frontier, 282.

¹⁷ "Instructions to Benjamin Lincoln of Massachusetts, Beverley Randolph of Virginia, and Timothy Pickering, of Pennsylvania, Commissioners appointed for treating with the Indians Northwest of the Ohio," in Cochran(ed.), The New American State Papers: Indian Affairs, Vol.4, 120-122; "The Journal of the Commissioners of the United States, appointed to hold a treaty at Sandusky, for the purpose of making peace with the Western Indians," in *Ibid.*, 122-124; See also White, The Middle Ground, 461.

confederacy dispatched a deputation to determine why American troops were actively preparing for war when it had been agreed that in order for the confederacy to meet with American officials, all advanced posts in Indian country were to have been demolished. Perceiving the conference with the American Commissioners, held in Navy Hall, Simcoe's residence near Niagara, as an opportunity to pave the way for the establishment of a new boundary line, Joseph Brant seized the initiative. Blatantly disregarding the confederacy's instructions, the Mohawk chief failed to mention the destruction of the advanced posts, while requesting whether or not the commissioners had the authority to fix any new boundary. Well-aware of the confederacy's unwillingness to concede to any boundary other than the Ohio River, Brant nevertheless acquiesced to the commissioners' proclamation that concessions be made on both sides.¹⁸

Not surprisingly, Brant's formal report regarding the council at Navy Hall met with considerable indignation. Berating the Mohawk chief for "scandalous and shameful" behavior, the Shawnee accused him of intentionally deviating from the intended ultimatum. The Delaware, Buckongahelas, even attempted to prevent Brant from speaking in his own defense. In an act that revealed the extent that the militants assumed authority over the confederacy, Buckongahelas broke council ritual and challenged the Mohawk chief's decision to speak on behalf of the assembled nations, when "it was known that the Shawnees were the people who were to speak." In retaliation, Iroquois representatives, hoping to remind the militants that the land was held in

¹⁸ "Minutes of a Council," in Burton(ed.), Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, Vol.24, 560-568; "The response of the American Commissioners to Captain Brant's speech," in Cochran(ed.), The New American State Papers: Indian Affairs, Vol.4, 131-132; See also Sword, President Washington's Indian War, 241-242; Robert Allen, His Majesty's Indian Allies: British Policy in the Defense of Canada, (Toronto and Oxford: Dundurn Press, 1992), 80.

common, produced the confederation's symbol of a moon of wampum and a dish with one spoon. Ignoring the Iroquois' plea that the militants take into consideration the interests of all the nations present, Captain Johnny, a Shawnee chief, insisted that the Ohio River boundary of the 1768 Fort Stanwix Treaty be preserved. Convinced that the Americans were influencing Joseph Brant's efforts to divide the confederacy, the Shawnee and other militants refused to meet with the commissioners until they assented to the Ohio. Barely acknowledging the dish with one spoon and the moon of wampum that sat undisturbed adjacent to the council fire, a delegation of thirty men, headed by the Wyandot chief Sawaghdawunk, carried their emulous demands to the American Commissioners.¹⁹

As a point of contention separating the Indians and the Americans, the boundary line was virtually meaningless. The Americans would not have accepted a boundary based on the Muskingum River any more than they would have approved of one based on the Ohio. Nevertheless, the boundary remained a major source of factionalism within the confederacy. With the Wabash villages already detached from the alliance as a result of Putnam's treaty, many of the Lake Indians began to consider similar motivations.²⁰

Appalled by the lack of British aid in compensation for their losses, the Lake Indians, like the Wabash tribes before them, began to question whether or not they were fighting a losing

¹⁹ "Captain Brant's Journal of the Proceedings at the General Council Held at the Foot of the Rapids of the Miamis," in Cruikshank(ed.), The Correspondence of Lieut. Governor John Graves Simcoe, Vol. 2, 5-17; Simcoe to Clarke," in Burton(ed.), Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, Vol.24, 568-569; Council at the Foot of the Miami Rapids," in Ibid., 570-571; "Brant to Simcoe," in Ibid., 571-572; "McKee to Simcoe," in Ibid., 595-596; "In Council at Captain Elliott's house near the mouth of the Detroit River," in Cochran(ed.), The New American State Papers: Indian Affairs, Vol.4, 135-139; For use of the dish and wampum White, The Middle Ground, 462.

²⁰ For discussion of the boundary issue see Ibid., 462.

battle. As early as the summer of 1792, certain tribes within the region openly revealed a distinct lack of enthusiasm for the war effort. Forced to counter mounting criticism for their advocacy of peace, the Lake Indians criticized those who “almost eat your own dung this summer for reason of war.” Putnam’s treaty, along with the Americans’ abandonment of their claims of conquest, only added to the Lake Indians’ willingness to discuss the possibility of an amicable compromise. As a result, Joseph Brant’s proposal of the Muskingum boundary, which would not offer an immediate threat to the Lake Indians’ territory, struck a chord. The Maumee villagers’ increasing assertiveness and unsanctioned domination of the confederacy, revealed by their refusal to consider the Lake Indians’ interests in their push for the Ohio River boundary, served as the final incentive. At the very moment that Sagwaghdawunk’s delegation departed to meet with the American commissioners, the Ottawa, the Saint Joseph Potawatomi, the Saginaw, the Chippewa, and remaining Detroit villagers made the final decision to side with Brant.²¹

Those who ventured to Matthew Elliott’s farm following the council at the Miami rapids could not possibly have been prepared for the ramifications of their actions. Having already lost its western flank with the detachment of the Wabash villages, the confederacy suffered a severe blow in the Lake Indians’ alienation. By the fall of 1793 the alliance appeared to be on the verge of total collapse. Almost simultaneously, reports of an American advance into the Ohio Country began pouring into the region. Scouts alleged that the army, led by the flamboyant Revolutionary

²¹ For divisions see “Captain Brant’s Journal of the Proceedings at the General Council Held at the Foot of the Rapids of the Miamis,” in Cruikshank(ed.), The Correspondence of Lieut. Governor John Graves Simcoe, Vol.2, 14-17; For Ottawa quote see “Journal of Wm. Johnson’s Proceedings from Niagara to the Westward,” in Burton(ed.), Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, Vol.24, 468-472; “Brant to Simcoe,” in Ibid., 605-606; “Brant to Chew,” in Ibid., 614; For specific description of Potawatomi divisions see R. David Edmunds, The Potawatomi: The Keepers of the Fire, 129; See also Sword, President Washington’s Indian War, 222-225.

War veteran General Anthony Wayne, numbered close to 5,000 men and was within a two days march of the Glaize. Although in actuality Wayne's forces numbered less than half that number, the Maumee villagers could only assemble approximately 700 warriors to oppose the American advance. Turning to the surrounding nations, the horrified Maumee tribes wondered if any semblance of unity remained.²²

The morning of October 17 was clear and frosty. By dawn the crude road connecting Forts St. Clair and Jefferson came alive as a United States Military convoy under the command of Lieutenant John Lowry set out from Fort St. Clair. Consisting of 90 infantrymen, along with twenty wagon loads of Indian corn and seventy packhorses, the detachment approached a creek lying seven miles north of the fort. In an instant a war party of close to forty Ottawa warriors, led by their war chief, Little Otter, fell upon the panicked detachment. While the majority of the column managed to escape, the attack claimed the lives of fifteen soldiers, including Lieutenant Lowry. More importantly, Little Otter's band, which made off with about seventy horses and all of the stores and baggage held in the wagons, revealed the vulnerability of Wayne's extended supply system.²³

The Ottawa war party had been part of a large contingent of Lake Indians who responded to the Maumee villagers' calls for aid. While the residents of the Glaize reveled in what they perceived to be clear evidence of the confederacy's survival, they soon discovered that these signs

²² "Dorchester to Dundas," in Burton(ed.), Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, Vol.24, 625-626; "McKee to Chew," in Ibid., Vol.20, 323.

²³ "England to Simcoe," in Ibid., 627-629; "Extracts from Journal," in Ibid., Vol.12, 105-108; "Information from John Watkins a U.S. Army deserter," in Ibid., Vol.20, 323-324; For wayne's advance see Richard C. Knopf(ed.), Campaign into the Wilderness: The Wayne-Knox-Pickering-McHenry Correspondence(Columbus: Anthony Wayne Parkway Board, Ohio State Museum, 1955); For details of the attack see Sword, President Washington's Indian War, 251.

of unity were little more than a mirage. Finding the reports of such a huge American force threatening to their own lands and interests, the Lake Indians came forth to defend the Auglaize villages. Nevertheless, a month following Little Otter's attack would find the Lake Indians confronted by conflicting accounts regarding the Americans' strength and situation. Lacking both provisions and an immediate American threat, the tribes returned home.²⁴

Returning to their villages along the Great Lakes, the Ottawa, Potawatomi, and Chippewa were unaware that the opportunity that they had squandered was one which would never return. Encamped at an advanced site a few miles north of Fort Jefferson, Anthony Wayne's army was in dire straits. Plagued by insubordination resulting from a lack of rations and adequate clothing, the army languished through a bitterly cold winter. In addition, an extended supply line left an already inadequately provisioned army logistically vulnerable. By simply killing or driving off the depleted packhorse herd, the Indians could well have starved the army into mutiny or dispersal.²⁵

Still reeling from the Lake Indians' swift abandonment of the region, and lacking confidence in their depleted numbers to launch an assault on the disheveled American army, the Maumee villagers turned their attention toward preparations for the coming winter. A summer congested with lengthy councils and a fall harvest interrupted by reports of an American advance had taken a severe toll on the tribes residing at the Glaize. Having strained their food stores to the bare necessities in a desperate effort to provoke the Lake Indians to remain in the region, the

²⁴ "Extracts from Journal," in Burton(ed.), Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, Vol.12, 105-108; "England to Simcoe," in Ibid., Vol.24, 627-629; See also Sword, President Washington's Indian War, 254.

²⁵ "England to Simcoe," in Burton(ed.), Michigan Pioneer and Historical Society, Vol.24, 627-629; "Extracts from Journal," in Ibid., Vol.12, 108; see also Sword, President Washington's Indian War, 254-257.

tribes braced themselves for a winter that would severely tax the Maumee villagers' will to continue the resistance alone.

Chapter 7

And the Doors Slammed Shut

Admiring the beauty of the Castle of St. Louis, a small delegation representing the Seven Nations of Canada sat in silence. Having ventured to Quebec for a preliminary meeting with the Canadian governor-general, who had recently returned from a two-year visit to England, the delegation was growing apprehensive. Their restless wait finally came to an end on the morning of February 10, 1794, as Lord Dorchester hastily made his way into the castle. A man of less than imposing physical stature, the aging Dorchester was thin and austere in appearance. Nevertheless, the governor-general's bold words would forever transcend his meager image.¹

Prior to his sailing to Europe in late August of 1791, the Canadian governor-general had urged the tribes to seek a negotiated settlement with the Americans, as "we have no power to begin a war." St. Clair's invasion and the failure of the Miami Rapids council to reach a peaceful accord with the Americans revealed the extent that the Crown could not dictate action in the Ohio Valley. Convinced that Anthony Wayne had set his sights on Detroit, Lord Dorchester now stood determined to rectify the all too apparent weaknesses of Canada's military establishment. Unable to contain his emotion, the governor-general greeted the stunned Seven Nations delegation with an inflammatory speech in which he boasted that war between Great Britain and

¹ "From Lord Dorchester to the Seven Nations of Canada," in Cruikshank(ed.), The Correspondence of Lieutenant Governor John Graves Simcoe, Vol.2, 149-150; "Chew to Coffin," in Burton(ed.), Michigan Pioneer and Historical Society, Vol.20, 331; For discussion of Dorchester see Sword, President Washington's Indian War, 258.

America was inevitable, for “we have acted in the most peaceable manner, and ... with patience, but I believe our patience is almost exhausted.” “I shall not be surprised,” a rambling Dorchester would later add, “if we are at war with them in the course of the present year; and if so, a line must then be drawn by the warriors.”²

For the Maumee villagers, who had endured a particularly bitter and impoverished winter, Dorchester’s speech could not have come at a better time. Although the governor-general’s words offered hope, the tribes remained reluctant to believe that the Crown, which had been so adamant about its desire to avoid an open conflict with the United States, was suddenly willing to join the Indian nations in the active defense of their homelands. Within a week of his address to the Seven Nations, however, Dorchester infused substance into his remarks by ordering the reconstruction and reoccupation of a fort at the rapids of the Miami.³

For a confederacy on the verge of a complete collapse, the sight of British troops marching into Indian villages on their way to the Miami rapids, was invigorating to say the least. The same Indians who had reproached Matthew Elliott for overstepping his bounds in questioning the intentions of a Stockbridge delegation less than a year earlier, now welcomed the British Indian agent into their country. “You have,” they informed Elliott, “set our hearts right,

² “Dorchester to the Indians,” in Burton(ed.), Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, Vol.24, 309-313; “Chew to Coffin,” in Ibid., Vol.20, 331; “From Lord Dorchester to the Seven Nations of Canada,” in Cruikshank(ed.), The Correspondence of Lieut. Governor John Graves Simcoe, Vol.2, 149-150; See also Sword, President Washington’s Indian War, 258; Dorchester was so clearly overstepping the bounds of local initiative, that he was compelled to offer his resignation after his inflammatory speech failed to garner any official support, see Jones, A License for Empire, 158.

³ For Dorchester’s instructions to Simcoe see, “Dorchester to Simcoe,” in Burton(ed.), Michigan Pioneer and Historical Society, Vol.24, 642-643.

and we are now happy to see you standing on your feet in our country.”⁴

At the request of the Maumee villagers, British officials carried word of Dorchester’s speech and the construction of a fort at the Miami rapids to the Lake Indians. The Lake Indians, who had watched in disgust as Brant’s proposal for a Muskingum boundary found little favor among American negotiators, readily pledged a renewed resistance to the Americans. By May of 1794, Joseph Brant, who had himself grown disheartened by the prospect of continued diplomatic failures, found solace in British promises of direct aid, and formally abandoned negotiations with the Americans. Brant was soon joined by the Wabash villagers, who interpreted Wayne’s advance as clear evidence that their treaty with Rufus Putnam had been ignored. In addition, the Wabash Indians were further emboldened by reports from Delawares residing west of the Mississippi suggesting that the Spanish, along with the southern Indians, had dispatched war pipes to the Maumee. Their passions for resistance thus reignited, the surrounding Indian nations zealously responded to the confederacy’s call to converge on the Glaiize.⁵

The response was overwhelming. By June 1 five hundred Indians from the lake region were present at Detroit. They were soon joined by sixty Ottawa, twenty-five Chippewa, and another party of twenty-one Indians from northern Michigan. By mid-June, one of the largest

⁴ “Speech of the Shawnee, Delaware, Miami, Mingoes, and Deputies from the Wabash Nations,” in Burton(ed.), Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, Vol.24, 656; For advance of British troops see “McKee to Chew,” in *Ibid.*, 351; see also White, The Middle Ground, 465.

⁵ For requests see, “Speech of the Shawnee, Delaware, Miami, Mingoes, and Deputies from the Wabash Nations,” in Burton(ed.), Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, Vol.24, 656; For Chippewa response see “Lieut. Governor Simcoe to Dorchester,” in *Ibid.*, 659-660; For Lake Indians response see “McKee to Chew,” in *Ibid.*, Vol.20, 355-356; For Brant’s response see “Brant to Chew,” in *Ibid.*, 335-337; For reports of Spanish assistance see “Indian speeches at Miami rapids,” in *Ibid.*, 347-350; “Simcoe to Dorchester,” in *Ibid.*, 660-661; “McKee to Chew,” in *Ibid.*, Vol.20, 351; “McKee to Brant,” in *Ibid.*, Vol.12, 116; “Speeches of the Western Indians,” in Cruikshank(ed.), The Correspondence of Lieut. Governor John Graves Simcoe, Vol.2, 231-233; see also White, The Middle Ground, 465.

hostile assemblages of Native Americans ever brought together to challenge the United States military gathered along the Maumee. Numbering in excess of 1,700 men, the assembled warriors initiated a council to formulate a plan of action. Concluding that Wayne's extended supply lines remained vulnerable, the council unanimously conceded to Little Turtle's design to strike Wayne's lightly guarded convoys as they traveled far from the protection of his forts. Before departing from the council site at the Glaize, the Miami war leader dispatched two Delaware chiefs to meet with British officials in order to "remind" them of their promise to furnish the confederacy with supplies. "Make no excuses," the chiefs warned, for "time is urgent and no more words are necessary to convince you of our critical situation and the importance of our affairs."⁶

Although they were joined by Matthew Elliott and others employed by the British Indian Department, who were faced with a council resolution requiring all whites present at the rapids to serve with the warriors as they moved southward against the Americans, inherent difficulties continued to plague what remained a fragile alliance. Facing an enormous logistical burden, the Indian columns split into several segments. Reduced to sending out hunting parties to search the surrounding countryside for game, the expedition moved slowly, often traveling less than twenty miles a day. Adding to their predicament, the warriors were disturbed to find that the Delawares under Buckongahelas had not yet departed from the Glaize, as had been expected. In addition the Maumee warriors were incensed by reports that a recently arrived contingent of Mackinac and

⁶ For assembly and call for supplies see "Message delivered by two Delaware chiefs who arrived at the foot of the rapids," in Burton(ed.), Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, Vol.20, 354-356; "Duggan to Chew," in *Ibid.*, Vol.12, 118; McKee to Chew," in *Ibid.*, Vol.20, 355-356; For numbers involved see "Captain Doyle to Captain Chew," in *Ibid.*, Vol.12, 120; "England to Simcoe," in Cruikshank(ed.), The Correspondence of Lieut. Governor John Graves Simcoe, Vol.2, 252; See also Sword, President Washington's Indian War, 270; Larry L. Nelson, "Never Have They Done So Little:" The Battle of Fort Recovery and the Collapse of the Miami Confederacy," in Northwest Ohio Quarterly, Vol.64, Spring 1992, 43-55.

Saginaw warriors from the Upper Lakes region had passed through several Maumee villages where they allegedly “committed depredations and ravished the women.” Unwilling to threaten the unanimity required to carry out the expedition’s designs, Blue Jacket avoided a confrontation with the Lake Indians, and sent warnings to the villagers to approach the war party with great caution, and to leave behind sufficient guard to protect their homes from “troublesome allies.”⁷

On the morning of June 27, the Indian column, marching south-southwest in the direction of Greenville, halted approximately ninety miles from the Auglaize villages. Later that afternoon a group of warriors discovered and attacked a party of Choctaw and Chickasaw scouts who had been dispatched to the region by Wayne. Although the resulting engagement was brief, the events that followed would forever change the course of the conflict.⁸

As word of the skirmish reached the encamped Indian column, the Maumee tribes were astonished to find that the Mackinacs and Saginaws were now insisting that the expedition change its course and attack the Legion’s posts directly. Disparaging remarks from the Shawnee and the Delaware, who mocked the Lake tribes for what they considered to be a futile plan, served only to further cloud the northern tribes’ judgment. Hoping to retain what little semblance of unity remained, and at the same time perceiving an opportunity to enhance his own political standing at the expense of Little Turtle, Blue Jacket imprudently persuaded the Shawnee and the Delaware to acquiesce.⁹

⁷ “Diary of an Officer,” in Cruikshank(ed.), The Correspondence of Lieut. Governor John Graves Simcoe, Vol.5, 90-94; “McKee to Chew,” in Burton(ed.), Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, Vol.12, 120-121; “Duggan to Chew,” in Ibid., Vol.11, 362; see also Nelson, “Never Have They Done So Little,” 48.

⁸ “Diary of an Officer,” in Cruikshank(ed.), The Correspondence of Lieut. Governor John Graves Simcoe, Vol.5, 90-94; see also Sword, President Washington’s Indian War, 271; Nelson, “Never Have They Done So Little,” 48.

⁹ Ibid., 48.

Fort Recovery stood twenty-three miles north-northwest of Greenville. Under the energetic command of Captain Alexander Gibson, the small post had recently been expanded to include a second story to each of the blockhouses, as well as a series of watchtowers. For the two hundred men assigned to the post, the summer of 1794 had been uneventful. All of that changed on the afternoon of June 29, as a convoy of 360 packhorses laden with 1,200 kegs of flour arrived at the fort. Escorted by Major William McMahan and a detachment of fifty dragoons and ninety riflemen, the convoy represented an enormously valuable resource for Wayne's army. Later that afternoon, Captain Gibson received the first of a series of reports regarding a major Indian force advancing toward the post.¹⁰

Irrationally choosing to ignore these repeated warnings, Gibson instructed the convoy to return to Fort Greenville. Shortly after dawn on the morning of June 30, the packhorse drivers began to move their herd forward along the road to graze. Observing the movement of the American column from the cover of the surrounding woods, the Indians rushed forward, focusing the brunt of their initial attack on the foremost packhorse drivers. Their objective achieved, the warriors leveled an intense fire on the American cavalry, killing close to a third of the one hundred soldiers who hastened into the woods.¹¹

With the majority of the men managing to reach the protection of the stockade, the Indians suddenly undertook an unprecedented maneuver. With the Americans in the midst of

¹⁰ "General Wayne's Orderly Book," in Burton(ed.), Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, Vol.34, 523-524; Dwight L. Smith(ed.), From Greene Ville to Fallen Timbers: A Journal of the Wayne Campaign, July 28 - September 14, 1794, (Indianapolis, 1952), 227; Nelson, "Never Have They Done So Little," 46-49.

¹¹ "Duggan to Chew," in Burton(ed.), Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, Vol.12, 121-122; "McKee to Chew," in *Ibid.*, Vol.20, 364; Sword, President Washington's Indian War, 275.

securing the fort, a large contingent of warriors initiated a massive frontal assault on the fort. While their traditional tactic of laying siege to the American fortifications would have undoubtedly succeeded, the Indians dashed toward the post in an impetuous attempt to storm the walls. Devoid of any artillery, the warriors faced an impossible task. Nevertheless, fueled by a determination to justify their decision to strike the Legion's posts directly, the Mackinacs and Saginaws surged forward. Having suffered only three casualties prior to the ill-fated assault, the Indians were revolted by the dramatic turn of events. Delaware and Shawnee warriors soon seized the occasion to take retribution for the infractions perpetrated against their families and their homes. Raising their rifles, the disgruntled warriors discreetly fired into the attacking ranks of the Lake tribes.¹²

Reporting to his superiors, British Superintendent of Indian Affairs, Alexander McKee claimed that the defeat at Fort Recovery was "unconsequential." It would not take long for McKee to realize how naive his words must have seemed. As the expedition returned to the Glaize, the long-standing antagonism between the Lake Indians and the Maumee Valley tribes reached its breaking point. Of the twenty-five warriors who were either killed or mortally wounded during the ill-fated assault on Fort Recovery, the majority originated from the Lake tribes. Adding to their consternation, were reports that Shawnee and Delaware warriors had fired upon their rear during the attack. That the Maumee tribes attempted to justify their acts with claims that the Mackinac and Saginaw-region Indians had committed various depredations on

¹² "McKee to Chew," in Burton(ed.), Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, Vol.20, 364; "Duggan to Chew," in Ibid., Vol.12, 121-122; "McKee to England," in Cruikshank(ed.), Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, Vol.2, 305-306; For Shawnee and Delaware intrigue see Nelson, "Never Have They Done So Little," 51.

Maumee villages while en route to join the expedition did little to stave off the inevitable. Having already lost a major contingent of Lake tribes to a lack of provisions and ammunition, for during the conflict the warriors had been so destitute of food that they consumed several of the captured packhorses, the remainder of the Lake Indians proclaimed that they had “accomplished the call of their belts,” and soon formed a steady stream of northward-bound Indians.¹³

Faced with the loss of the northern tribes, and an American force lingering above the horizon, the Maumee villagers turned once again to the British. While British promises of direct aid had served temporarily to reunite the region’s bickering tribes, the Crown’s unwillingness to fulfill these promises had played a major role in the detachment of the Lake Indians. Determined to acquire a formal statement of British intentions, Little Turtle immediately undertook an unannounced visit to Detroit. Meeting with Lieutenant Colonel Richard England, the commandant of Detroit, the emphatic Miami chief requested two cannons to renew the attack on Fort Recovery. It was a calculated request. Although the cannon would obviously aid in the assault on the American post, Little Turtle’s call for twenty regulars revealed the extent that the Miami chief was primarily concerned with drawing the British into the war directly.¹⁴

The Wyandots who followed Little Turtle to Detroit were less willing to mask their intentions. Approaching Colonel England, the delegation demanded that the British fulfill their promises and “rise upon your feet with your warriors and help us. If you do not, we cannot go to

¹³ “McKee to Chew,” in Burton(ed.), Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, Vol.20, 364; “Duggan to Chew,” in Ibid., Vol.12, 121-122; La Mothe to Chew,” in Ibid., “Chew to Coffin,” in Ibid., 367-368; Vol.20, 365; see also Sword, President Washington’s Indian War, 278.

¹⁴ “England to Simcoe,” in Cruikshank(ed.), The Correspondence of Lieut. Governor John Graves Simcoe, Vol.2, 334.

war anymore.” By the end of July the Indians had evacuated their Auglaize villages and resettled in the vicinity of the new British fort at the Miami rapids. An American attack would now have to take place within the shadow of a British post. Unable to ignore the distinct possibility that the surrounding Indian nations would, as the Wyandot delegation to Detroit chillingly declared, abandon the war effort, a frantic Lieutenant Governor Simcoe advised British secretary of war, Henry Dundas, that “assistance must absolutely be extended to the demolition of Fort Recovery and if possible, that of Fort Jefferson.”¹⁵

Like Lord Dorchester before him, John Graves Simcoe had spoken in haste. The British did not harbor any intention of committing troops to the conflict, or any other overt military aid for that matter. With the outbreak of war between Great Britain and France in 1793, Crown officials had been actively seeking an agreement with the United States that would reduce tensions in North America. By the summer of 1794, British negotiators had nearly completed a pact calling for the removal of British troops from the northern posts, including Detroit. With the United States negotiator John Jay threatening an American alliance with European trading interests to resist British trade restrictions, the Crown refused to take any action that would endanger the peace process or force a declaration of war from the United States.¹⁶

British actions at the Miami rapids stood in stark contrast to their alleged determination for peace. Simcoe continued to postulate that war between the British and the Americans was

¹⁵ “A speech delivered to Colonel England,” in Cruikshank(ed.), The Correspondence of Lieut Governor John Graves Simcoe, Vol.2, 357; “Simcoe to Dundas,” in *Ibid.*, 353-354; “McKee to Simcoe,” in Burton(ed.), Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, Vol.24, 696-698; see also White, The Middle Ground, 467.

¹⁶ Nelson, Cultural Mediation on the Great Lakes Frontier, 302; Samuel Bemis, Jay’s Treaty: A Study in Commerce and Diplomacy (1923); Jones, License for Empire, 160-161.

inevitable. Arguing that the Americans “so highly overrate their own importance that Mr. Jay’s embassy will be fruitless,” Simcoe advised McKee to continue his efforts to supply arms and provisions to the tribes. As a result, the assembled nations, who heard nothing of the peace negotiations, found reason to rejoice. McKee’s inflammatory speeches and subsequent outpouring of war material translated into a soaring morale. Hoping that McKee’s actions, along with the prospect of British militia joining the war effort, would reconcile the Lake Indians, the tribes dispatched runners bearing red painted tobacco to the surrounding Indian nations.¹⁷

The response was overwhelming. Upon learning that the Maumee villagers had moved their villages near the British fort at the Miami rapids, and that a regiment under Major William Campbell had landed at the fort with a fresh supply of ammunition, provisions, and artillery, the Ottawa and Wyandot assembled close to 600 warriors. Joined by parties from the Chippewa, Potawatomi, Piankashaw, Wea, and Kickapoo, the Lake Indians converged on the Miami rapids, requesting that the confederacy “take pity on them and receive them again among them as brothers.” By mid August nearly 1,300 warriors had assembled along the upper Maumee.¹⁸

The morning of August 20, 1794 was damp and rainy. Occupying a dense thicket about four miles west of Fort Miamis where high winds had uprooted many of the surrounding trees, the Indian force awaited Wayne’s advance. Deployed in a long line running from the Maumee to the northwest for nearly a mile, the assembled tribes anticipated an effective ambush. Joined by a

¹⁷ “Simcoe to McKee,” in Cruikshank(ed.), The Correspondence of Lieut. Governor John Graves Simcoe, Vol.5, 97; “McKee to Simcoe,” in Burton(ed.), Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, Vol.24, 696-698; see also Nelson, Cultural Mediation on the Great Lakes Frontier, 302-303; Red Tobacco symbolized a call to arms, see “extracts from a journal,” in Burton(ed.), Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, Vol.12, 106.

¹⁸ “McKee to Simcoe,” in Burton(ed.), Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, Vol.24, 696-698; “McKee to Chew,” in Cruikshank(ed.), The Correspondence of Lieut. Governor John Graves Simcoe, Vol.3, 7-8; For specific numbers see Sword, President Washington’s Indian War, 288-289.

detachment of Canadian militia, painted and dressed to look like Indians, and a strengthened British fort to their rear, the assembled Indian nations had little reason to be anything but highly optimistic. Believing that the wet and dreary weather would preclude the prospect of an American advance, many of the warriors who had been fasting for two days, withdrew from the field in search of provisions.

Wayne's approach could not have come at a more inopportune time. With the main Indian force still foraging several miles away, the Ottawa and Potawatomi impetuously rose from behind the cover of the downed timber and slammed into Wayne's column. Although their initial assault inflicted heavy casualties, the Ottawa's decision to pursue the fleeing army severely disrupted the entire Indian defensive alignment. Once they reached the main American army, the Ottawa and Potawatomi found themselves out-numbered and confronted by an extended battle line. When the remaining Indian force finally reached the scene of the battle, the warriors were winded and soon found themselves outflanked. Demoralized by the wounding of Little Otter and Agushiway, two principal Ottawa chiefs, and finding their force split into broken remnants, war leaders made a desperate attempt to rally the warriors. In the face of such distress and confusion, many hoped that the sight of their newest ally, the British, would once again serve to regroup the tribes. Racing toward the post at the foot of the Miami rapids, their darkest fears came to fruition as the doors of the fort that had offered so much promise, slammed shut.¹⁹

¹⁹ "Duggan to Chew," in Burton(ed.), Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, Vol.12, 121-122; "Butler to Chew," in Ibid., Vol.20, 368; "McKee to Chew," in Ibid., Vol.20, 370; "Campbell to England," in Cruikshank(ed.), The Correspondence of Lieut. Governor John Graves Simcoe, Vol.2, 395-396; see also Sword, President Washington's Indian War, 301; White, The Middle Ground, 468.

Conclusion

A Vision of Hope

Anthony Wayne had barely finished speaking, when a defiant Little Turtle rose to his feet in order to question the American general's reasoning. Unable to stomach Wayne's claims that the Fort Harmar Treaty of 1789 had been "founded upon principles of equity and justice," the Miami chief berated Wayne for advocating a treaty that had only involved pacifist Seneca factions who "disposed of our lands without our knowledge or our consent." Having forced Wayne on the defensive, Little Turtle desperately attempted to fashion a compromise, for the boundary line proposed by American commissioners would "confine the hunting of our young men within limits too contracted."¹

Little Turtle's efforts would prove to be in vain. Of the hundreds who converged on the prepared council site at Greenville on the morning of July 15, 1795, few could summon the will to resist American demands. With the sealed gates of Fort Miamis, and word of the recently completed Jay's Treaty, the determination of a people who had struggled for over a decade to forge a collective sense of themselves came to an abrupt end. The worn thread that had tenuously reunited the tribes throughout the summer of 1794 tore with the painful realization that the British would not fulfill their vow to the surrounding Indian nations. Facing an enemy who "like the leaves of the trees" fall with the coming frost, only to reemerge "more plentiful than ever" amid the sun's warm rays, many who ventured to Greenville hoped to initiate the Americans as a "new

¹ "Minutes of a Treaty," in Cochran(ed.), The New American State Papers: Indian Affairs, Vol.4, 152-177.

father.” New Corn, a Potawatomi chief, revealed the sentiments of many present when he urged the Americans to “not deceive us in the manner that the French, the British, and Spaniards, have heretofore done. The English have abused us much; they have made us promises which they never fulfilled; they have proved to us how little they have ever had our happiness at heart; and we have severely suffered for placing our dependence on so faithless a people. Be you strong, and preserve your word inviolate.”²

Under such circumstances, the divisions separating the nations grew even deeper. Various villages sent separate delegations to seek negotiations with Wayne. Quarreling over their respective rights and claims, the assembled Indians asked Wayne to determine which nation should speak for the whole. It proved to be an impossible request. At the same time that the chiefs reminded the Americans that the “Great Spirit gave us this land in common,” their respective tribes argued over the lands to be ceded.³

The intertribal conflict further manifested itself as a conflict between villages, as various factions sought to achieve the ascendancy. Eager to incur Wayne’s favor, many were willing to illustrate their support of American initiatives at the expense of those who sought to further negotiate the proposed boundary. The Shawnee chief, Red Pole, even went as far as volunteering to proceed to the Scioto River in order to bring in a militant Shawnee band who had refused to attend the treaty. Others such as the Potawatomi chief, Sun, requested that the Americans supervise the division of lands and annuities among them in order to “preserve proportion and

² Quote comparing the Americans to leaves see Alder, *The Captivity of Johnathan Alder*, 72-73; “Minutes of a Treaty,” in Cochran(ed.), *The New American State Papers: Indian Affairs*, Vol.4, 152-177.

³ *Ibid.*, 152-177; For mounting divisions see White, *The Middle Ground*, 472.

harmony,” as the “division amongst ourselves will be attended with difficulty and discontent.”

Well aware that Wayne would utilize the apparent submission and mounting factionalism of the tribes as leverage, a distraught Little Turtle painfully abandoned the prospect of further negotiations. The Miami chief would be the last to come forward on the morning of August 3, 1795 to place his mark upon a treaty that ceded all but the northwestern corner of Ohio to the Americans, and guaranteed the United States military reservations within the remaining Indian territory.⁴

The Treaty of Greenville marked the end of an era. For twelve long years the Ohio Indian nations had struggled to overcome the shadow of doubt cast by an apprehensive Lieutenant Colonel Arent Schuyler De Peyster, who warned the tribes that their retaliation against American claims to the upper Ohio Valley would be an “affair of your own.” Having accepted the harsh reality that they now stood alone in the defense of their homelands and their very way of life, the Ohio Indian nations sought an intertribal alliance founded upon the principles of common ownership. Urging the disavowal of tribalism, which accepted many distinctions, the Indians appealed for a unity based on race, which accepted fewer distinctions. Drawing on religious expression, often tinged with nativist sentiment, as well as the developing notions of Indian identity and separateness from white people, the tribes pledged cooperation in maintaining the Ohio River as a boundary separating Indians and Americans.⁵

⁴ “Minutes of a Treaty,” in Cochran(ed.), The New American State Papers: Indian Affairs, Vol.4, 152-177; For copy of the treaty see, *Ibid.*, Vol.4, 150-152; see also White, The Middle Ground, 472, Sword, President Washington’s Indian War, 326-331; Jones, License for Empire, 174-175.

⁵ For De Peyster see “Indian council at Detroit,” in Burton(ed.), Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, Vol.20, 153-154.

Despite their intense efforts, Indian leaders could not overcome the disturbing fact that the village remained the defining political unit in their world. While the tribes achieved concordance on principle, these agreements did not eliminate factional divisions and rivalries. Although the Ohio Indians were able to overcome the extent that the Americans utilized these factional disputes to achieve their own ends during the late 1780s, the deep divisions between the moderates and the militants remained readily apparent. In the moderates' failure to achieve a beneficial compromise with American negotiators, who initially claimed the rights of conquerors, the militant factions seized the initiative. Convinced that armed resistance was the only answer, the warriors waged a furious war of attrition along the Ohio River border settlements. For those who suffered devastating American counterstrikes, and the loss of their men to a near constant stream of war parties stretching along the Ohio Valley, the militants offered the promise of eventual British aid.

Aside from the shipments of provisions and arms that occasionally trickled into the Ohio Country from Detroit, the aid that the militant factions so desperately relied on never actually materialized. Facing the prospect of a "red revolt" in retaliation for their failure to consider the tribes' interests during the 1783 Treaty of Paris, and eager to defend their commercial centers in the region, Crown officials initially revealed a distinct willingness to accommodate the surrounding Indian nations with covert military assistance. The tenuous arrangement persisted throughout the mid 1780s to the early 1790s, as the tribes hoped to enhance their diplomatic bargaining position by illustrating the existence of an alliance with the British. Nevertheless, unbeknownst to the Ohio Indians, Crown officials remained unprepared to take any action that would force a declaration of war from the United States.

Although the tribes were triumphant in the first two engagements with American forces,

the battles had taken a severe toll on the Indians, as well as their lands. Lacking the logistical capability to sustain large numbers of men in the field, Indian forces tended to melt away once the immediate threat of an American advance had been repelled. Time proved to be the Indians' worst enemy. Victory came at the price of increasing dependence on the British. British aid, once considered a luxury by the tribes, quickly evolved into a necessity.

Distant nations, having grown weary at the sight of their young men abandoning both the hunt and their crops in favor of war parties, steadily questioned their situation. Further aggravated by the increasing assertiveness of the Maumee villagers, as well as the continued absence of a British commitment, the Lake and Wabash region tribes soon answered the moderates' call for peace talks with the United States. Emboldened by a shift in American diplomatic policy, which included the renouncement of American claims to conquest and the abdication of requests for more land, these nations turned to the Muskingum as a solution to the lingering conflict. For the Maumee villagers, there would be no compromise.

The overwhelming response of the surrounding Indian nations to Wayne's advance into the region and Dorchester's ill-fated proclamations revealed the extent that British actions now took on as much precedence as American actions. Nonetheless, as promising as McKee's actions during the summer of 1794 had been, the Crown's subsequent abandonment of the tribes following the confrontation with Wayne proved to be the final blow to the confederacy's morale. Finding in the sealed gates of Fort Miamis the "determined answer" that they had so desperately longed for, the tribes answered the Americans' call to converge on Greenville.

Unwilling to cede the authority that they had wielded over the confederacy for over a decade, militant leaders readily assumed the initiative in acknowledging the Americans as

“fathers.” Hoping to develop relations with the United States that mirrored their previous relationships with the French and the British, which had been rooted in accommodation, the assembled nations urged the Americans to assist them in constructing a “new world.” It was an attitude that would persist throughout the coming years.⁶

Serving as chiefs to the Americans, such prominent former war leaders as Buckongahelas and Little Turtle urged the adoption of new technologies and gender roles. Yet despite their efforts, the Ohio Indians had lost the ability to force whites to act as fathers. The Americans no longer feared Indians, nor did they have any real use for them. Plagued by the unquenchable thirst for land, the Americans sought only to transform the Indians as part of a transient stage in the much larger scheme of expansion.

Immersed in repeated attacks on their cultural values, as well as a copious flow of rum that was claimed to have taken more lives than the previous war years combined, many villagers soon rejected an American vision of the future that promised little more than alternative routes to extinction. Into this “new world” emerged a Shawnee visionary who claimed to have died and been given a doctrine of revitalization. Lalawethika, who immediately changed his name to Tenskwatawa (the Open Door), constructed a social and theological response to the Indians’ condition that included the relinquishment of all contact with the Americans. Like Pontiac and Neolin before them, Tenskwatawa’s brother Tecumseh soon transformed the religious revitalization into a political alliance. In what proved to be the final attempt of the region’s Indian nations to forge a unified political structure, Tecumseh’s alliance, which essentially

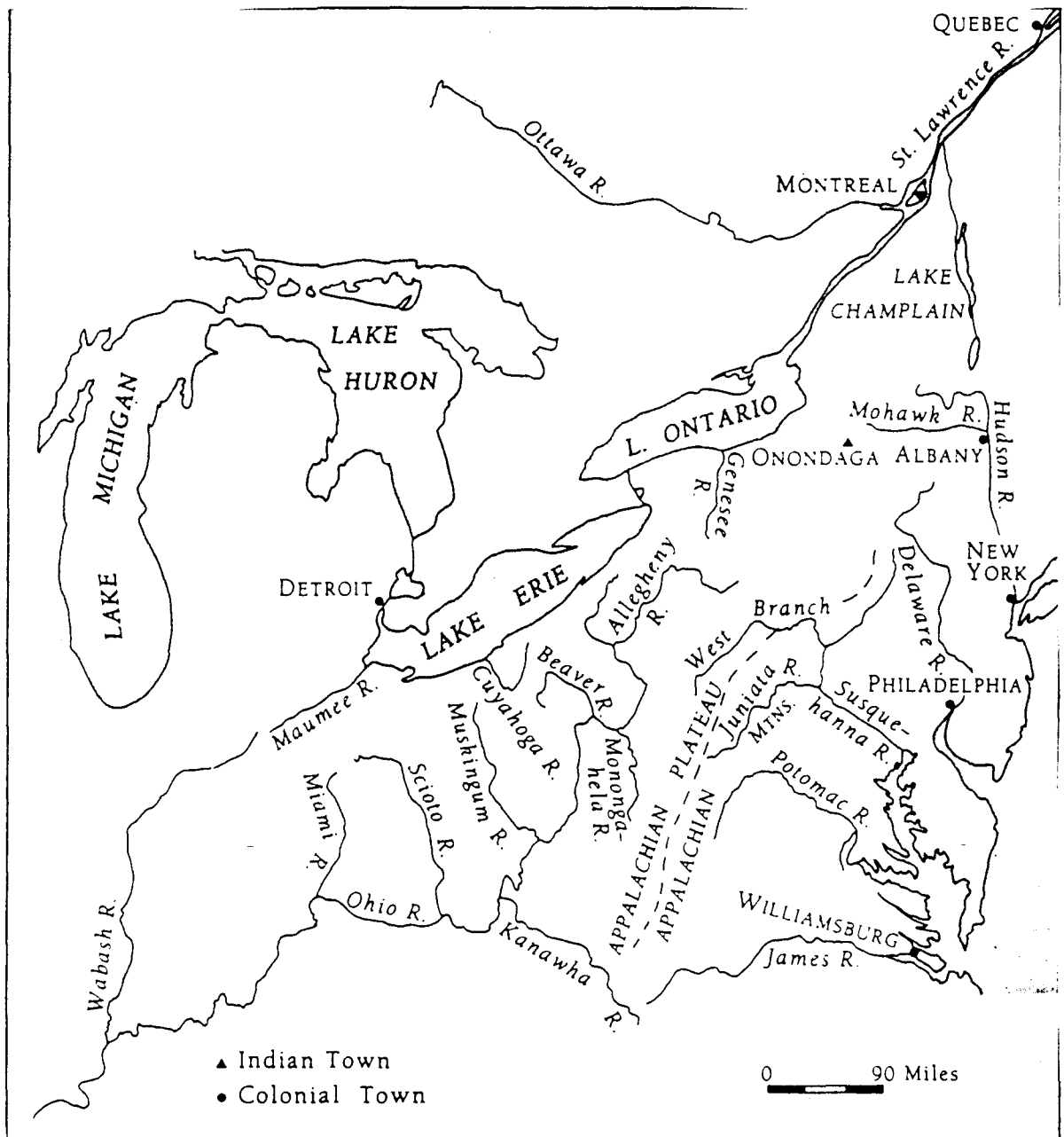
⁶ For quote see “Minutes of a treaty,” in Cochran(ed.), The New American State Papers: Indian Affairs, Vol.4, 152-177.

included political ends that were identical to the Indian confederations of the 1790s, soon fell prey to the same divisive strains that had prevented the Ohio Indian confederacy from ever coming to fruition.⁷

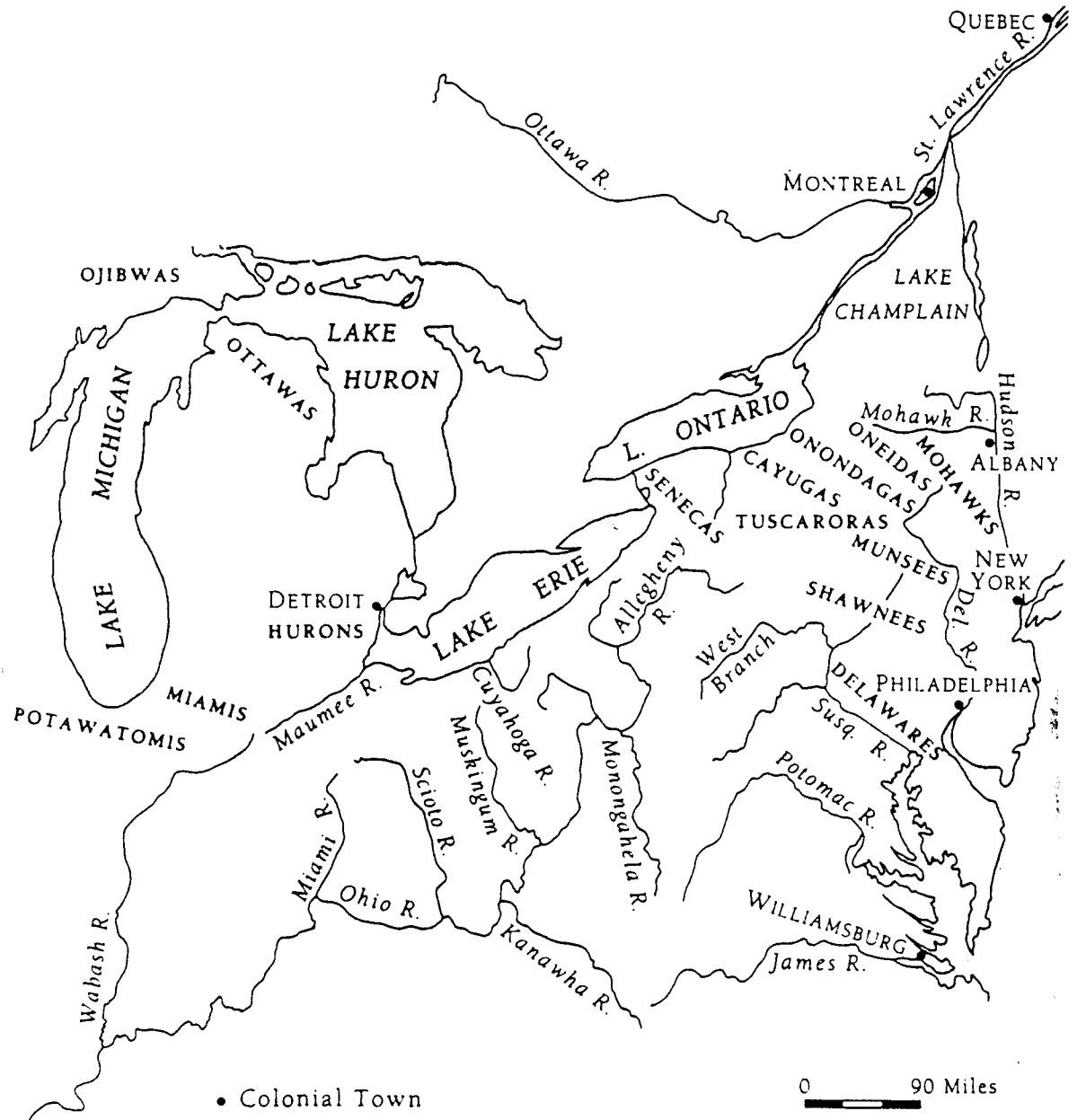
Amid the indescribable hardships and suffering that accompanied the long trek west following the Indian removal acts of the 1830s and 40s, Indian societies persisted. As Michael N. McConnell has poignantly revealed, new collective identities emerged from a struggle that spanned several decades. From scattered lineages and bands emerged Delaware, Miami, and Shawnee nations. In the continued defense of their common cultural heritage, which would follow the Ohio Country tribes to Canada, and to the plains of Kansas and Oklahoma, these new nations discovered a unity that would never die.⁸

⁷ For role of alcohol see Sword, President Washington's Indian War, 335. For discussion of the overemphasized uniqueness of both Tenskwatawa and Tecumseh see R. David Edmunds, Tenskwatawa: The Shawnee Prophet (University of Oklahoma Press, 1985); Dowd, A Spirited Resistance, 123-136; White, The Middle Ground, 502-517.

⁸ McConnell, A Country Between, 282.

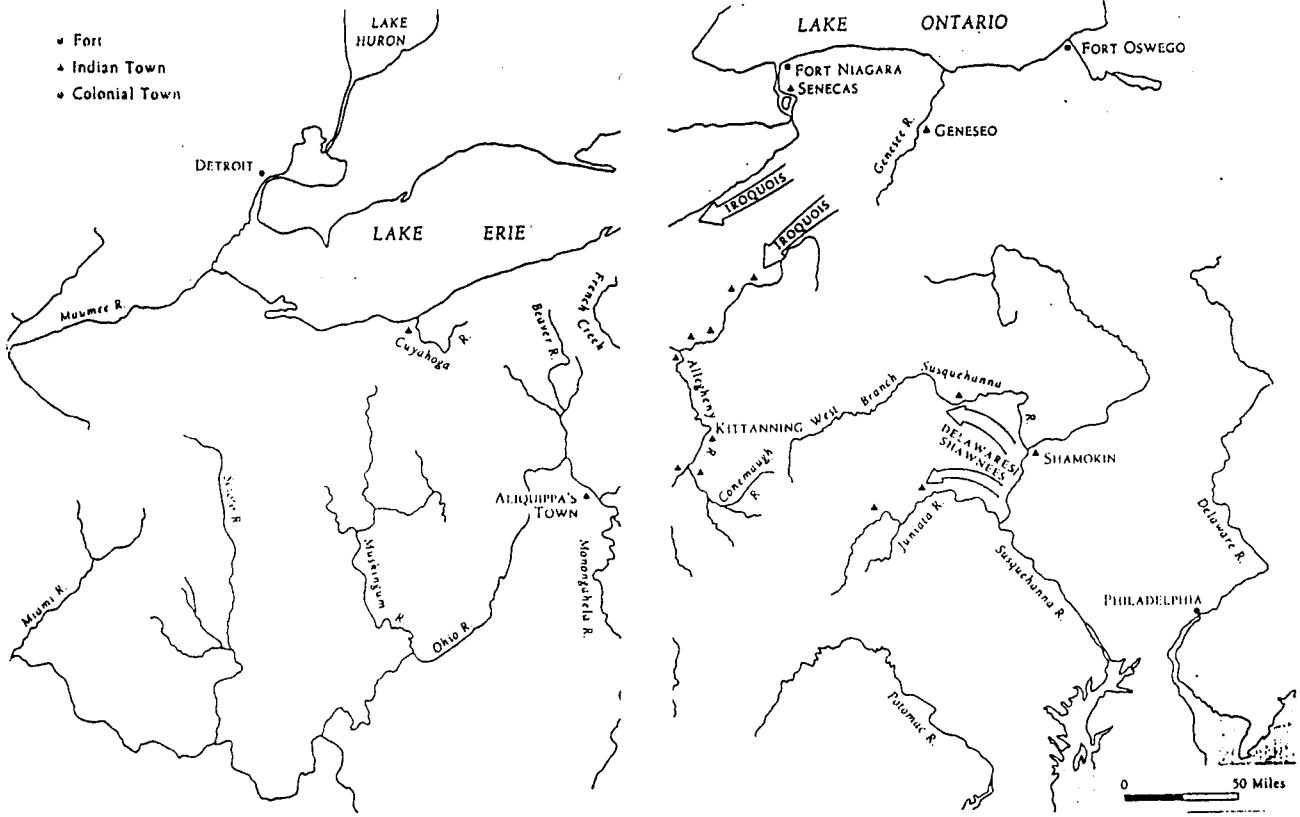


The Ohio Valley and the trans-Appalachian West
 From Michael N. McConnell, *A Country Between: The Upper Ohio Valley and Its People, 1724-1774*, 6.



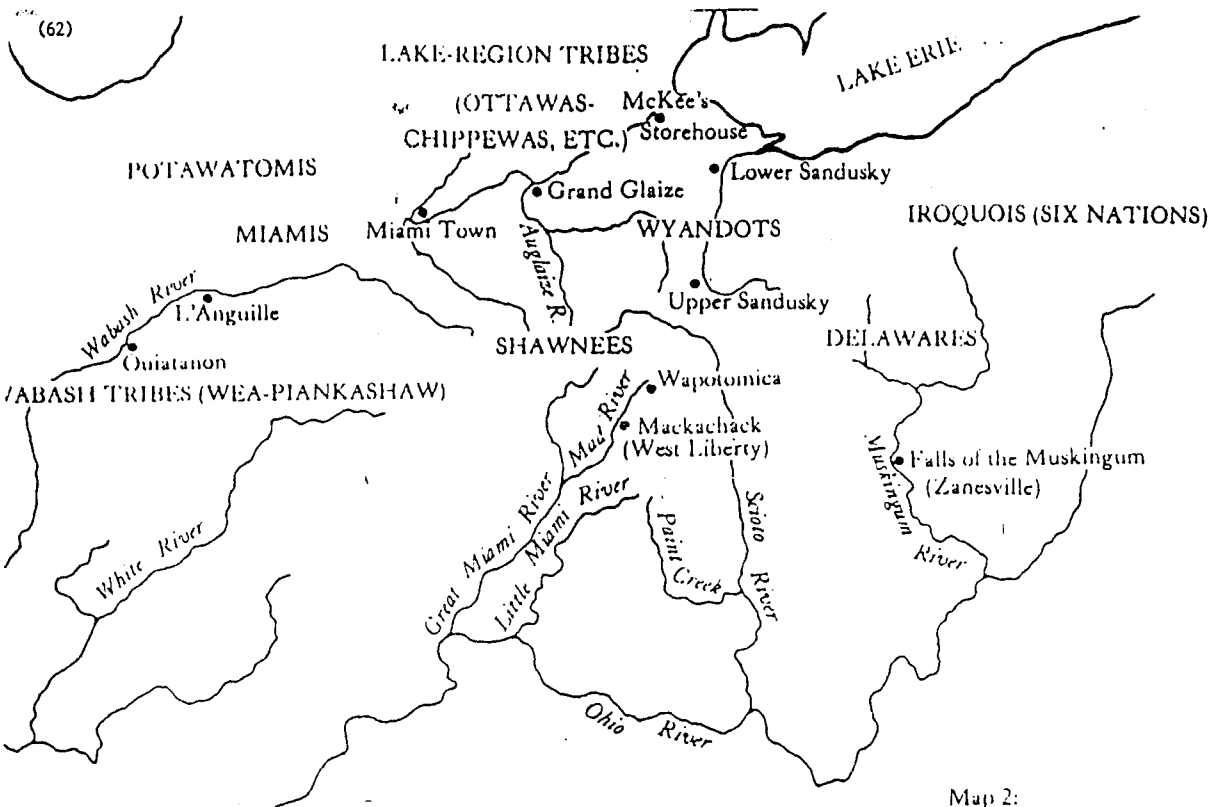
Indian Societies, 1720

From Michael N. McConnell, *A Country Between: The Upper Ohio Valley and Its People*, 11.



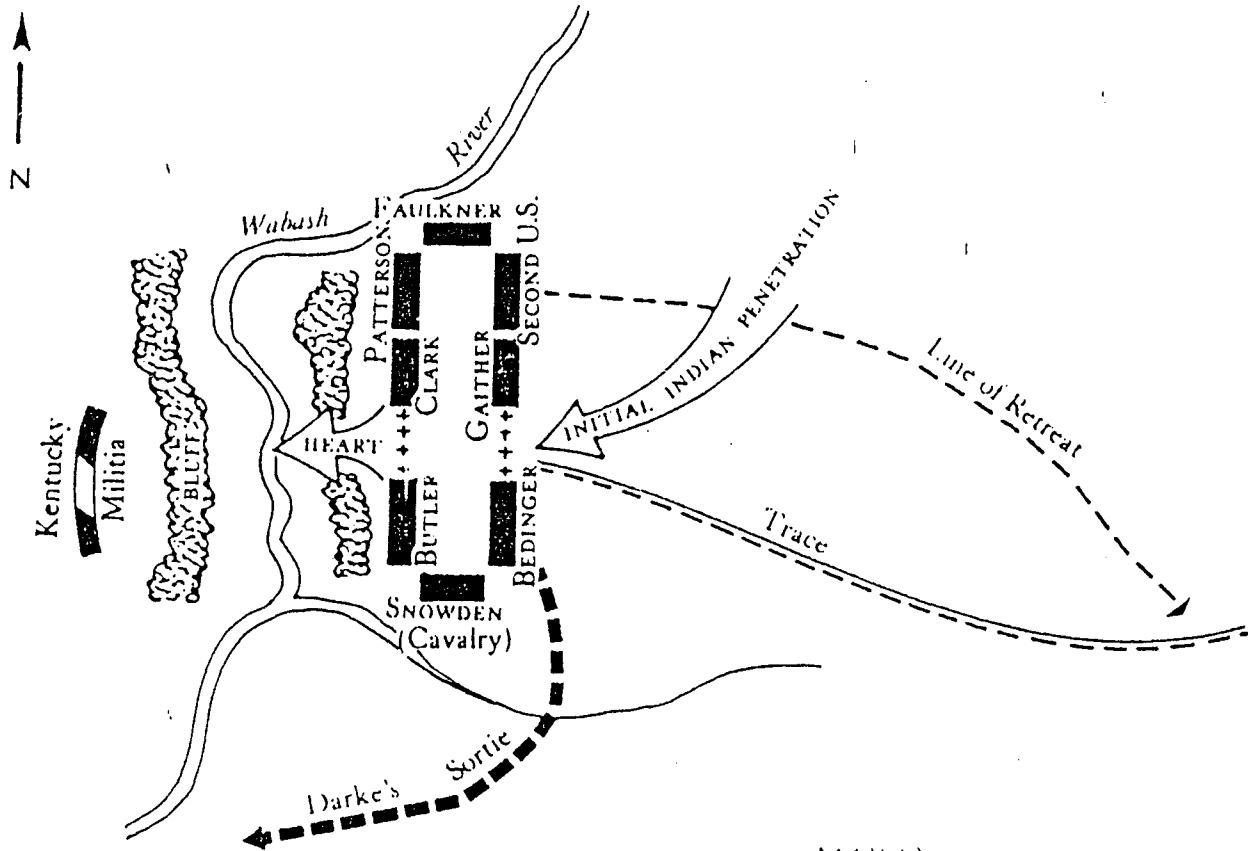
Indian Migrations to the Ohio Country, 1724-1725

From Michael N. McConnell, *A Country Between: The Upper Ohio Valley and Its People*, 11.



Map 2:
 OLD NORTHWEST TRIBAL DOMAINS

The Ohio Country, 1783-1794
 From Wiley Sword, *President Washington's Indian War: The Struggle for the Old Northwest, 1790-1795*, 2.

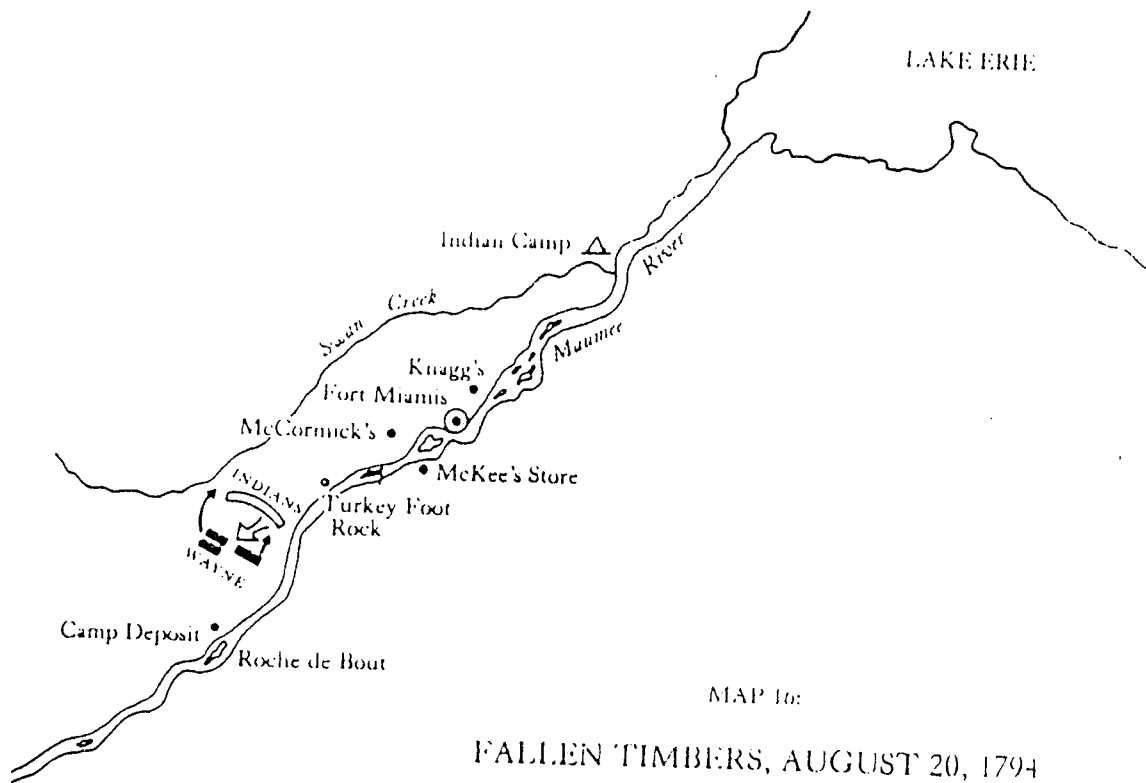


MAP 13

ST. CLAIR'S DEFEAT, NOV. 4, 1791

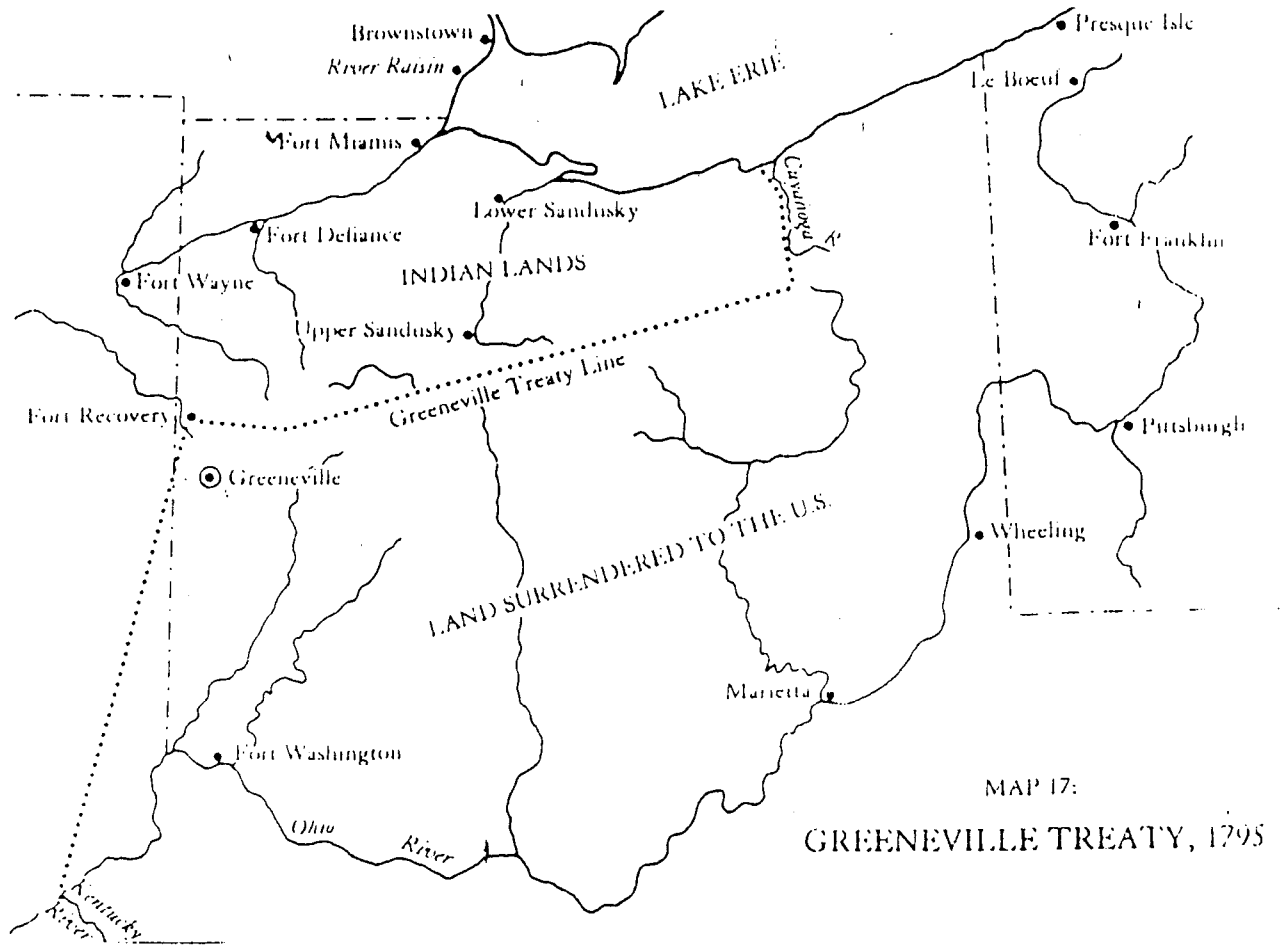
Defeat of St. Clair, November 4, 1791

From Wiley Sword, *President Washington's Indian War: The Struggle for the Old Northwest, 1790-1795*, 172.



Fallen Timbers, August 20, 1794

From Wiley Sword, *President Washington's Indian War: The Struggle for the Old Northwest, 1790-1795*, 300.



MAP 17:
GREENEVILLE TREATY, 1795

Treaty of Greenville, 1795

From Wiley Sword, *President Washington's Indian War: The Struggle for the Old Northwest, 1790-1795*, 322.

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