The American Revolution in Indian country
Crisis and diversity in Native American communities

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Prologue

New worlds for all:
Indian America by 1775

In the summer of 1775, as news of the opening conflicts in the American Revolution spread west, a young Englishman recently arrived from Derbyshire in search of good land traveled to the “Indian country” of the Ohio Valley. Nicholas Cresswell went with a party that consisted of two Englishmen, two Irishmen, a Welshman, two Dutchmen, two Virginians, two Marylanders, a Swede, an African, and a mulatto. On August 27, Cresswell visited a mission town of Moravian Delawares at Wal-back-sap-poke or Schenksheim, a settlement of sixty log houses covered with clapboards, arranged along newly laid-out streets, and a meeting house with a bell and glass windows. The parson preaching through an interpreter, the Indian congregation sang hymns in Delaware, and the service was conducted with “the greatest regularity, order, and decorum, I ever saw in any place of Worship in my life.” Four days later, Cresswell was at the Delaware town of Coshocton, where he participated in an Indian dance. The beating of drums, the gourd rattles, the rattling of deer hooves on the knees and ankles of the male dancers, and the jingling of the women’s bells struck Cresswell’s ears as “the most unharmonious concert that human idea can possibly conceive,” and the sight of an “Indian Conjurer” in a mask and bear skin was “frightful enough to scare the Devil.”

Indian America by 1775 was a landscape of cultural polyphony, or more accurately perhaps, cultural cacophony, a country of mixed and mingling peoples. Cresswell’s brief sojourn among the Delawares exposed him to some of Indian country’s diversity and to its mixture of change and continuity. He saw Indians who wore European clothes but retained traditional loincloths and nose rings. He noted that they had learned to curse from Europeans, observed that white traders cheated them blind whenever they could, lamented the destructive effects of alcohol, and learned that smallpox had “made terrible havoc.” He traveled with Indian girls who served as guides during the day and bedfellows.

Prologue

at night. He witnessed Indian orators in council, and became something of an ethnographic observer. He had "been taught to look upon these beings with contempt," but instead developed "a great regard for the Indians" and felt "a most sensible regret in parting from them." Three months in a changing Indian world changed a visiting Englishman.

The next year, a New Jersey captain in Iroquois country was struck, as Creswell had been among the Delaware, by the contrast between the quiet and orderly church services of the Oneidas, and the noise, drumming, and chanting of Seneca, Cayuga, and Onondaga ceremonies. Many Oneidas by this time were Presbyterian, although traditional beliefs and rituals survived intact. Some people were literate in both English and Iroquois. Some Oneida children attended school, many Oneidas were skilled carpenters and farmers, and trade with Europeans was a major economic activity.

Other Indian communities throughout the eastern woodlands displayed similar blends of old and new. Single-family log cabins had replaced, or coexisted with, traditional wigwams and communal longhouses. At the mission village of Lorette on the Saint Lawrence, for example, the Huron Indians "built all their houses after the French fashion." In New England, Indian families who still lived in wigwams likely had their share of European-manufactured household goods, and even European-style furniture. The palisaded villages of the seventeenth century had often given way to more open and dispersed settlements in which kin groups settled near their fields and livestock rather than around the village council house. Indian towns sometimes comprised clusters of small hamlets; sometimes they were large multiethnic trading centers.

Indian America had always experienced changes, of course, but their tempo and impact increased dramatically after the arrival of European and African

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3 Indian America by 1775

people, producing what James Merrell has aptly described as a "new world" for Native Americans. "It is strange what revolution has happened among them in less than two hundred years," remarked Hector De Crèvecoeur. At first contact, America was what John Winthrop called a land "full of Indians." By the end of the colonial period, the Indians of the eastern woodlands numbered perhaps 150,000 people in a world teeming with immigrants. Most who survived did so by adjusting in some measure to Europeans and their ways.

Adjusting to Indian country and Indian people also created a new world for the newcomers. Like the rest of colonial America, Indian country was an arena in which a "kalidoscope of human encounters" generated a web of cultural exchanges as Indians, Africans, and Europeans made what T. H. Breen has called "creative adaptations" to new places and new peoples. Those Indians, Africans, and Europeans were not representatives of monolithic groups, but individuals of different ethnicity, geography, gender, and status. "Indians" were Abenakis, Delawares, Senecas, and Cherokees; "Africans" were Ibes, Asantians, and Yorubas; "Europeans" were Swedes, Germans, Scots, Irish, and English—and Englishmen from London were very different than Englishmen from Cornwall or Yorkshire.

Mohawks shared their villages with individuals from other tribes, and their valley home with people of Dutch, German, Scots-Irish, and English descent. Delawares lived alongside Swedes and Fins before Germans, Scotch-Irish and Welsh settled their lands. Franco-Indian communities and individuals persisted long after the collapse of New France. Catholic Indians often spoke French and bore French names, wearing clothes as well. Cosmopolitan French communities that embraced both Indians and blacks dotted the landscape from the Saint Lawrence to the mouth of the Mississippi. Non-Indians lived and treasured in Indian country, with or without the Indians’ consent. Scotch-Irish borderers competed with Cherokee and Shawnee hunters in the latter’s traditional hunting territories; Cherokee and Shawnee villages were home to Scots and Irish Indian agents; adopted white captives took their place in the kinship network of Indian societies. Runaway slaves added an African strand to the fabric of southeastern Indian communities. People who intruded on Indian country often

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pursued their own independence from eastern authorities and rendered ineffective much of colonial and early national Indian policy.

Indian people likewise participated in shaping colonial and revolutionary American society. They served in colonial armies as soldiers and scouts, traveled to colonial capitals as ambassadors, attended colonial colleges as students, walked the streets of colonial towns as visitors, came to settlements as peddlers, and worked as slaves, servants, interpreters, guides, laborers, carpenters, whalemen, and sailors. The proximity and interconnectedness of Indian and colonial communities throughout large areas of North America gave the backyard warfare of the Revolution a face-to-face nature that heightened its bitterness.

The "changes in the land" described by William Cronon in colonial New England were replicated with variations on other frontiers in the wake of European contact. Ecosystems, like cultures, experience perpetual change, and Indian people had been clearing and cultivating fields for hundreds of years before Europeans arrived. But the colonists, and in the South their African slaves, introduced new plants, new techniques of forestry, new agricultural practices, and domesticated livestock, which generated far-reaching changes in the physical world Indian people inhabited. Indians in Maryland had complained to the General Assembly in the seventeenth century that the colonists' cows ate their corn. "Your hogs & Cattle injure Us," they said. "We Can fly no Further let us know where to live & how to be secured for the future from the Hogs & Cattle." Later generations of Indian people incorporated cows and pigs into their economies. Old World grazing animals not only contributed to deforestation; they also brought new grasses like Kentucky bluegrass. English colonists in the south found Indians cultivating peach trees, introduced by Spaniards and diffused northward along native trade routes, as if they were indigenous to the region. Charles Woodmanson noted that the Carolina backcountry had begun to "wear a new face" by the 1760s as colonists carved farms and fields out of the forest.

For thousands of Indian people, the new world that Europeans created was also a graveyard. European and African people brought with them lethal diseases common in the Old World but unknown in America. Smallpox, plague, measles,

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survival in a dangerous new world, they found it difficult if not impossible to avoid becoming involved in the wars for empire waged in North America. George Morgan, American Indian agent at Fort Pitt, knew that Indian neutrality in the Revolution was unlikely: "They have long been taught by contending Nations to be bought & sold."105 Intertribal warfare escalated and, again, Europeans sometimes worked to curtail it, sometimes actively encouraged it as part of a "divide and conquer" strategy.46

Epidemic warfare disrupted normal patterns of life. Communities that diverged their manpower into war felt the repercussions in lost sons and husbands, in reduced economic productivity and increased dependence on allies, in disrupted ceremonial calendars and neglected rituals, and in diplomatic chaos and political upheaval. War became normal, and the warrior culture that was ingrained in many societies as they battled their Indian and European enemies created a stereotype of Indians as warlike, which in European eyes justified treating them as savages. In some societies, the influence of women declined as Europeans dealt exclusively with males as the hunters and warriors; in others, women's traditional roles escaped relatively undisturbed and provided a much-needed measure of stability.47

In a world of escalating violence, war chiefs rose in status as civil chiefs lost influence. Richard White has painstakingly reconstructed the attempts of French and Algonquian people living in the Great Lakes region in the late seventeenth century to create a "middle ground" of common understanding and accommodation in a world of upheaval. Chiefs struggled to maintain peace, knowing that the alternative to coexistence and mutual dependency was a bloodbath. First the French, then the British, learned that success in this middle-ground world required mediation, moderation, and generosity, not force and coercion. But the Franco-Indian alliance unraveled as the Ohio Valley, once a haven between

[105] E.g., Thomas Gage to John Stuart, Jan. 27, 1764, Clinton Library, Gage Papers.
[40] White, Middle Ground.
the Mobile congress in 1765; at the same congress in 1772 he convened the Cherokees to fill vacancies in the ranks of Britain's client chiefs created by war and old age.

The competition and anxiety of the candidates for modes and commissions was as great as can be imagined and equalled the struggles of the most aspiring and ambitious for honours and preference in great states. I took every step to be informed of characters and filled the vacancies with the most worthy and likely to answer the purposes of maintaining order and the attachment of this nation to the British interest.

Such interference further undermined traditional leadership structures; two years later Stewart was complaining that chiefs lacked the influence to control their young men. The inroads of alcohol also deadened young men to the wisdom of their elders, and sachems lamented their inability to control their warriors in this new world of chaos and opportunity. Challenges to traditional authority and declining political deference were not unique to colonial white society in the years before the Revolution.

The pressures unleashed by European invasion threw the jigsaw map of Indian America into the air, and Indian people tried to rearrange the fallen pieces into some kind of coherent world. Ancient communities collapsed; new, multilingual communities grew up out of the ruins of shattered societies. New villages grew up around French missions on the banks of the Saint Lawrence as Abenakis and other people from New England pulled back from the northward-pushing English frontier. Iroquois towns seemed to absorb all comers. Shawnees, Delawares, and Senecas who turned their backs on colonial society and resettled the upper Ohio Valley early in the eighteenth century acquired new identities as little-known "Ohio Indians." In the Great Lakes region, the Ohio and Susquehanna valleys, and the South Carolina Piedmont, remnant groups, their old identities often all but lost to history, amalgamated. Europeans identified the new polyglot societies as "tribes." By the time William Bartram traveled through the South on the eve of the Revolution, the loose Creek Confederacy consisted of "many tribes, or remnants of conquered nations, united."

Indian country was a world of villages, bands, and clans, but European pressures and the need to deal with distant capitals demanded increasingly unified responses at a time when traditional structures often were in flux. The location of Indian politics did not confine Indian people to local activity. On the contrary, Indian communities throughout the eastern woodlands became more closely interconnected. By the middle of the eighteenth century, eastern Indian horizons had widened considerably from the world of small villages and narrow loyalties that had occupied their attention a century before. Competition between European powers for Indian allegiance, and between Indian nations for European trade, dominoed Indian politics and foreign policies throughout most of the eighteenth century. Indian nations aligned and realigned themselves with European allies, played rival nations against each other to ensure their neutrality and survival while retaining a flow of trade goods, and divided into factions. "To preserve the Balance between us & the French is the great ruling Principle of the Modern Indian Politics," wrote Peter Wescott. Indian warriors and diplomats, following an extensive network of trails and water courses, traveled, talked, and fought on a semicontinental scale. Iroquois diplomacy ranged from the Great Lakes to Quebec; Cherokee towns hosted ambassadors from other nations. Henry Hamilton, the British governor of Detroit early in the Revolution, sketched an Indian whose name he forgot but whom he remembered as "one of those characters, always to be found among the Indians - He travels from Village to Village, being provided with news!" (Fig. 1). A multitalented conference that assembled on the Scioto plains in southern Ohio in 1775 to discuss unified defense of Indian lands brought together "the Chiefs of the most powerful Nations on the continent." The cross-tribal nature of intertribal cooperation...

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9 Robert Park, vol. 12: 1872; White, Route of Dependency, 154; ibid., Middle Ground, 324–32.
12 Bartram, Country Bettman, ch. 7.
15 John Sugler, Blue Jacket and the Shamans Defense of the Ohio, unpublished manuscript.

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9 Indian America by 1775

He travels from Village to Village, being provided with news!" (Fig. 1). A multitalented conference that assembled on the Scioto plains in southern Ohio in 1775 to discuss unified defense of Indian lands brought together "the Chiefs of the most powerful Nations on the continent." The cross-tribal nature of intertribal cooperation...
Indian communities and Indian actions would become even more apparent during the Revolution.

Most Indian communities were economically dependent upon Europeans to some degree by 1775. The rate and extent of dependency varied, but Cherokees in the mountains of the interior were no more willing or able to do without European trade goods than were coastal groups surrounded by European settlers. A Cherokee headman named Skiagunsta told the governor of South Carolina in 1753 that his people could not survive without the English: "The Cloths we wear, we cannot make ourselves, they are made to us. We use their Ammunition with which we kill Dear [sic]. We cannot make our Guns, they are made to us. Every necessary Thing in Life we must have from the white People." Skiagunsta probably exaggerated for his audience—Indian peoples in New England, the Ohio Valley, and the Southeast had learned to overcome total dependence on Europeans by repairing and maintaining their own firearms and metal tools—but the language of abject poverty and dependence was common in Indian speeches up through the Revolution. Captain Ousa of the Chocowas said his people were as "helpless as the Beasts in the woods," without British goods; Handsome Fellow of the Oconaluftee Creeks acknowledged in 1772 that "we have been used so long to wrap up our Children as soon as they are born in Goods procured of the white People that we cannot do without it." Dependency rendered Indian people vulnerable to abuse. Choctaws at the Mobile congress in the winter of 1771–2 complained graphically that traders shortchanged them so often that the flaps of cloth provided as hism cloths "dount cover our secret parts, and we are in danger of being deprived of our manhodd by every hungry dog that approaches." As Indian peoples became tied into the trade networks of western Europe, they also became participants in a consumer revolution that brought the products of industrializing Europe to frontier America. A "pan-Indian trade culture"

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* Breed, Darvick, and Duffield, provide an in-depth examination of the extent to which trade with Europeans became the economic lifeline of Creek society.


* McIntyre, Shadow Way of War, 60–74; McCannell, Country Between, 189; Breed, Darvick, and Duffield, 68.


emerged in many areas of the country. When William Tapp or Tappi, a surveyor at the Wicomico Indians of Chesapeake Bay, died, he left behind English clothing, a house furnished with tables, chairs, and chests, four feather beds, and a parcel of Olde Books. By the time of the Revolution, accord- ing to one observer, the Fort Hunter Mohawks lived "much better than most of the Mohawk River farmers." Oueula Indians cooked in metal kettles and frying pans, ate with spoons from pewter plates at meals illuminated by candlesticks, sipped out of cups filled from teapots, served beverages from punch bowls, combed their hair with ivory combs while looking in glass mirrors, wore white flannel breeches, used silk handkerchiefs, and lived in "a very large framed house [with a] chimney at each end [and] painted windows." Overhill Cherokee used combs, mirrors, scissors, pewter spoons, and a variety of metal tools and jewelry. White Eyes of the Delawares and Oconostota of the Cherokee both wore eyeglasses. European trade goods were so pervasive in eastern Indian communities before the Revolution that archaeological deposits often reveal little distinction between Indian and non-Indian sites. Native Americans, like their backcountry colonial neighbors, had been drawn into a larger Atlantic economy that shaped their tastes, their lives, and ultimately their landscape. For many Indian peoples, the most pressing question posed by the Revolution was not what should govern in America but who would supply the trade goods on which they had come to depend. For many of their colonial neighbors, the material wealth to be found in Indian communities by 1775 provided an economic incentive for going on campaigns into Indian country. The fur and deerskin trades not only introduced new commodities to Indian America; they also introduced alien systems of value and meaning. New economic incentives undermined old spiritual relationships between hunters and their prey. Indian hunters and European traders combined to deplete deer and beaver populations; native and European economies intersected. In areas and eras of shrinking animal populations, consumption outran production, and Indians who had become commercial hunters often became debtors-hunters. Traders and their alcohol brought death and disruption to Indian communities, as village chiefs and colonial officials realized. From Maine to the Mississippi and throughout the century, Indian spokesmen complained about abuses by traders and the alcohol they peddled in Indian society. Christian Penobscots said "it hurts our souls." You may find graves upon graves along the Lake," an Iroquois leader lamented to Albany officials in 1775, "all which misfortunes are occasioned by Selling Rum to our Brethren." In 1738 the Shawnee swayed in all the kgs of rum in their villages and sent word to all French, British, and Indian traders that they would destroy any rum they brought. A chief from the Hudson River apologized to the Mohawks in 1776 for his inexpediency in council proceedings, explaining "the Rum we get from the English hath drowned the Memory of all antient Customs & the Method of treating on public affairs." A Chocotaw chief said rum "poises upon our nation Like a great Sea from Mobile and from all the Plantations and Settlements round about"; another admitted that "When the Clattering of the Packhorse Bells are heard at a Distance our Town is Immediately deserted young and old run out to meet them joyfully crying Rum, Rum, they get Drunk, Distraction Mischief Confu- sion and Disorder are the Consequences and thus the Ruin of our Nation." Another Chocotaw said "he had lost above a thousand people by excessive drinking in little more than 18 months." A British agent in the Chocotaw towns in 1777 saw "nothing but Rum Drinking and Women Crying over the Dead Bodies of their relations who have died by Rum." By the time of the Revolution, according to Richard White, the Chocotaws "quite simply, hunted for liquor," and chiefs were powerless to halt the social chaos that resulted. In Cherokee society, too, drunkenness increased the aggressiveness of warriors and served as a way of challenging traditional leaders who could not keep peace in the villages.


Colonial officials lamented alcohol's effects but recognized its usefulness in destabilizing Indian communities.\textsuperscript{10} The forces of change challenged people's spiritual lives. Missionaries from different countries and denominations entered Indian country to compete for a harvest of Indian souls. They promoted social revolution and produced factions in Indian communities.\textsuperscript{11} The divisions became further complicated after the Great Awakening in the colonies in the 1730s and 1740s severed ties with a single established church. In the 1760s, a Seneca warrior named Oconostota, as told Presbyterian missionary Samuel Kirkland in an uncertain term that his presence "would be destructive to the nation, & finally over throw all the traditions & usages of their Forefathers & that there would not be a waster remaining in their nations in the course of a few years." Another Seneca named Isaac, "painted black and red on each side of his face," took a shot at Kirkland.\textsuperscript{12} Indian peoples confronted Christian invaders with movements of spiritual revitalization and cultural resistance such as those led by Neolin, the Delaware Prophet, and the Munsee Wingenrand in the 1760s.\textsuperscript{13} Others embraced Christian messages in Indian ways. Many of the Indians who fought in the Revolution were Christians.

Everywhere, though, there was continuity in the midst of change.\textsuperscript{14} Indians who donned European clothes often retained traditional hairstyles, slits ears, and facial tattoos. New trade goods were fashioned into traditional motifs or endowed with traditional meanings. Traditional lithic and ceramic technologies declined, but basket making and wood carving survived and even were stimulated by European demand. Some Indians continued to prefer birch-bark containers to metal pots for maple sugaring. Moccasins and canoes were unmatched by European substitutes for travel along forest paths and lakes. People still found guidance in dreams and believed in the efficacy of spirits, ceremonies and

\textsuperscript{10} C. Joy Miller, "Delaware Integrity: The History and Culture of the Gausing Big House Ring," unpublished manuscript.


Devere, Causing Colonization, suggests that missions also disrupted formerly reciprocated gender relations among Great Lakes communities.


L.G. Richter, Order of the Longhouse, 278–84.
Prologue

As old Tuscarora notions of the frontier as a line of advancing settlements diminish, we can better understand the persistence and presence of Indian people in colonial cities, and better appreciate the tapestry of colonial life. Not only did Indian diplomats regularly visit colonial capitals from Quebec to New Orleans, but Indians living in the neighborhood of emerging towns actively participated in the urban economy. They sold food, plants, baskets, and firewood in market squares, and earned wages as day laborers, servants, and dockworkers. As traditional economies were disrupted and the fur and deer skins trades declined, many Indian people resisted to "a cycle of itinerant economic activities." Some actually moved closer to colonial towns, relying on the urban economy in hard times of readjustment. They learned new skills as bricklayers, cooperers, wheelwrights, blacksmiths, and seamstresses, and they adopted traditional skills to meet new demands, as wood carvers, potters, and basket makers.15

Throughout Indian country, Europeans lived in and around Indian communities. Traders who went into Indian country to do business often found that they were most successful if they married into the kinship networks of Indian societies. Like other colonists who lived with Indians, many found themselves living as Indians. Rev. David Jones found 20 white living at the Shawnee town of Chillicothe in the winter of 1772-3, as many as 300 English and Scots were living among the Creeks by the beginning of the Revolution.16 Scottman Alexander Cameron married a Cherokee woman and lived with the Overhill Cherokees so long that he "had almost become one of themselves" by the time of the Revolution.17

Many other captives, traders, Indian agents, and even occasional missionaries underwent similar "conversion" in Indian ways. Like many of his Jesuit colleagues, Sebastian Rasles, missionary to the Abenakis at Norridgewock in Maine in the early eighteenth century, spent most of his adult life in Indian country. He spoke the Abenaki language and shared their homes and hopes, food and fears, even as he sought to convert them. "As far as I know personally," Rasles told his brother, "I assure you that I see, that I hear, that I speak, only as a savage."18

"White Indians" often aroused fear and contempt in colonial society, but found a place in Indian country and exercised considerable influence as culture brokers.19 James Dean, who served as an American interpreter during the Revolution, spent his boyhood among the Oneidas and learned to speak their language without a trace of an accent.20 Simon Girty, captured as a boy by Senecas, produced "new peoples" of mixed ancestry. Most were incorporated into Indian communities, but many suffered psychological stress as racial conflicts increased.21 Some lived with racism in colonial communities; some developed separate communities and formed an ethnic identity of their own.22 Interaction between different peoples produced new languages in these new worlds. Refugee communities sometimes produced a label of different dialects, trade jargons emerged. Indians adopted Spanish, English, Gaelic, Dutch, French, and African words; Europeans incorporated Algonkian, Iroquoian, and Muskogean terms into their vocabulary.23 In the 1770s, at Stockbridge, Massachusetts, where an Indian blew a conch shell every Sabbath to call the faithful to worship, the missionary's son heard so much more Mahican than English spoken that he frequently found himself thinking in the Indians' language.24 Traveling in New York in 1776, Joseph Boudinot, then a captain in the Third New Jersey Regiment and later governor of New Jersey, heard spoken on a daily basis English, High Dutch, Low Dutch, French, Mohawk, Oneida, Seneca, Cayuga, Onondaga, and Tuscarora.25

Even where whites did not live with Indians, the influence of Indian country and the evidence of cultural exchange was strong. In the Delaware Valley, Fins and Sweden lived closely with Indian neighbors, acquiring from them corn (and the knowledge of how to plant, cultivate and prepare it), gourds,
pumpkins, squash, turkeys, furs and skins, sausages, tea, bayberry candles, and maple syrup. "They adopted wholesale the Delawares' knowledge of edible and medicinal wild plants," and spoke a Delaware-derived pidgin. Intermarriage was common and Indian children were reported living in Swedish homes in New Sweden before the end of the seventeenth century. Long before Scotch-Irish and Welsh people came to dominate the midland backwoods population, Penns and Swedes set the pattern of trade, tolerance, and mutual acculturation "that was essential to the piecing together of a successful woodland pioneer culture." Later arrivals noted that the Indians and the Indian neighbors were "like one people." Things were not too different elsewhere. Ranger Robert Rogers recalled that growing up in a frontier town in New Hampshire in the early part of the century, he "could hardly avoid" gaining some knowledge of Indian ways and languages.51

Colonists from Europe, where hunting was a gentleman's sport, learned from Indians how to hunt for a living. Colonial hunters who operated in Indian country pooled on Indian leggings, breechclouts, and moccasins, dressed their long hair with bear grease, and sometimes donned war paint. Anglican preacher Charles Woodman wrote that "the back country Virginians were "generally white Indians, and subsist by hunting, and live like the Indians." Whereas Indians in Canada took to wearing jackets and waistcoats like their French neighbors, Frontenac's traveling in Indian country "generally dressed like the natives," exchanging their trousers for leggings and bonnets. Young men in backcountry Virginia were proud of their "Indian-like dress," and even wore leggings and breechclouts to church, which apparently sparked the interest of young women in the congregation. When George Rogers Clark and his Virginians arrived at Kakasakia in 1778, they were dressed Indian style, "in hunting shirt and breech cloth." Their appearance surprised the Spanish translation governor of Saint Louis but was not unusual for men accustomed to life in Indian country.52

In the Mohawk Valley in the 1760s, Peter Warren Johnson

51 Jordan and Kapteyn, American Backwoods Frontier, 97–99.

met Europeans who tattooed their faces and chests like their Indian neighbors, "which is done by prick[ing] the Skin with Pins, till the Blood comes, & then applying Gunpowder to it, which will remain for ever." French for traders in Canada likewise tattooed their bodies.53 Cultural boundaries between Indians and Europeans, and between Indians and African-American settlers (as well as between Indians and other Indians), were often fuzzy and porous. The mixing of peoples and cultures did not erase differences or eradicate conflict. Surveying the inventory of things colonists borrowed from Indians, James Astell reminds us that "Their goal was not to become Indian, nor did their selective and piecemeal adaptations of native techniques and technology make them so.54 The same can be said of Indians who borrowed from Euro-

51 Astell, Europe and the Indian, 102.
52 Ridout, Ordeal of the Longhouse, ch. 12, note at 271.
53 James Astell surveys the shift from a population that was predominantly known to one that was increasingly white and black in "The Colonial Minstrel," in his Beyond 1776, 217–20. McCull, Valley of Opportunity, 15; Bernard Bailly, Face of Revolution: Persuasion and Themes in the Struggle for American Independence (New York: Knopf, 1996), 172–3. White, Middle Ground, 940.
England borders, Ireland, and Wales, migrating to America in such numbers that authorities in Britain worried the exodus would empty Scotland of its people. Accustomed to lives of hardship and cultures of violence, Scotch-Irish and North Country immigrants brought their clan rivalries, blood feuds, and Old Testament sense of justice to the American frontier, where, said Quaker James Logan, they made "hard neighbors to the Indians." Colonial authorities steered Scotch-Irish immigrants toward the frontier, knowing they would provide effective defense against Indian attacks. Alternatively, they made excellent shock troops for the invasion of Indian lands.

Land, of course, was the main source of contention between Indian people and their new neighbors. In the seventeenth century, although some colonial governments passed laws to protect Indian lands, others used deeds to legislate the acquisition of Indian lands by trickery, coercion, and corruption—what Francis Jennings refers to as "the deed game." Many Indians learned the terms and implications of selling land to Europeans, struck the best deals they could in the circumstances, and endeavored to slow the rate of land loss, but they could not halt the pressure. The problem increased in intensity throughout the eighteenth century. Long before the Revolution, Indians found themselves sucked into the practice of selling off lands to satisfy debts accumulated in trade with their colonial neighbors. Creek Indians called their Georgian neighbors "Eccomaussylgee"—people greedy grapping after the lands of the red people. 60

could ignore the proclamation, land speculators could not, and it helped push into rebellion Virginia gentry with western lands to sell.69

New boundaries negotiated in the North at the Treaty of Fort Stanwix in 1768, and in the South at Augusta and Hard Labor in 1768 and 1770, did little or nothing to stem the tide. The Treaty of Fort Stanwix in particular infuriated Shawnees and others who felt the Six Nations had sold their lands out from under them.70 In the fall of 1770, Indian trader, agent, and land speculator George Croghan reported, "Last year, I am sure, there were between four and five thousand [new settlers] and all this spring and summer the roads have been lined with wagons moving to the Ohio."71 Settlers and land speculators opened up new frontiers everywhere. Daniel Boone Sounded Boonesborough in April 1775, "opened a land office, disposed of over half a million acres in a few weeks, founded three more settlements, and convened a legislature before the year was out."72 By the eve of the Revolution, Kentucky constituted a wedge of colonial settlement thrust into the heart of Indian America. The new settlements not only threatened Indian hunting territories but divided northern and southern tribes, disrupting old networks of trade and communication.73 Most of the settlers coming to Kentucky came from North Carolina, which was itself being settled from Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and Scotland. Such constant movement, settlement, and resettlement alarmed Indian people struggling to hold onto their lands.74 Anglo-American history for generations has portrayed pioneers as settlers, Indians as nomads. But Indian people in the eastern woodlands, who lived in settled communities reliant upon a mixed subsistence economy that almost always included agriculture, must surely have regarded Scotch-Irish and Anglo-American invaders as the true nomads of colonial America. Others did; after the Revolution, Spanish officials regarded American backwoodsmen on Florida's northern frontier as "nomadic like Arabs and . . . distinguished from savages only in their color, language, and the superiority of their depraved cunning and untrustworthiness."75


72 Balch, Frontiers of Revolution, 172.


74 E.g. C.G. 5:96–97.

themselves ignored distant governments, killing Indians and occupying their lands.

In 1774, American frontiersmen bared a party of Mingo Indians into their camp, got them drunk, and then killed and scalped them, mutilating the pregnant sister of a Mingo chief known as Logan.90 The act was the most brutal in a spate of killings along the Ohio that spring. Despite Delaware efforts to avert it, and amid considerable diplomatic scrambling in Indian country, open war exploded between Virginia and the Mingoes and Shawnees. Lord Dunmore's War was both the latest in a series of escalating frontier conflicts and a precursor of the one to come.

Anglo-Americans were not the only people experiencing times to try men's souls by 1775. In Indian country, too, people wrestled with challenges to traditional sources of authority, felt the repercussions of religious ferment, struggled to deal with demographic changes, felt squeezed by economic strangleholds, resented growing threats to their liberty, and worried about the kind of world their children would inherit. Indian people had had plenty of experience of colonization, and they had already fought their share of anticolonial wars. Choosing the winning side in the new war that broke out in 1775 was crucial but, as in past wars, victory was hardly a realistic goal. The best Indian people could hope for was damage control, but they could not know the extent of the damage the Revolution would cause to the worlds they and their colonial neighbors had created.

Most of North America was still Indian country in 1775. Indian people still dominated most of the continent and walked the streets of colonial towns. Much of colonial life involved Indians; much of colonial war, diplomacy, and commerce revolved around them. Writing to fellow revolutionary John Adams in 1819, Thomas Jefferson recalled that in Williamsburg before the Revolution, Indians "were in the habit of coming often, and in great numbers to the seat of our government, where I was much with them."91 The Revolution that erupted in 1775 was bound to affect and involve Indians, but it also ushered in a new era and a new society from which they were to be increasingly excluded. The interethnic societies and cultural mixings that characterized much of Indian America by 1775 had been a long time in the making. The Revolution did not terminate them overnight, but did produce a new government and society increasingly committed to the notion that Indian country east of the Mississippi should cease to exist.

At the beginning of May 1775, before news of Lexington and Concord reached him, Major Arent Schuyler De Peyster, commanding officer at the
Corn wars and civil wars: 
the American Revolution comes to 
Indian country

The Revolution becomes an Indian war

In Indian country the American Revolution often translated into an American civil war. While British regulars and Continental troops fought campaigns in the East, in the backcountry—which usually meant the Indians' backyards—whites killed Indians, Indians killed whites, Indians killed Indians, and whites killed whites in guerilla warfare that was localized, vicious, and tolerated no neutrals. Discontent and disruption in Indian councils increased as militant voices drowned out words of moderation.

In Indian country and Indian communities the outbreak of the Revolution usually generated division and confusion, not united tribal action. Some people saw in the Revolution and the promise of British support a chance to drive Americans from their lands; others hoped to keep out of it; still others volunteered to fight alongside American neighbors. Abenakis in western Maine debated night after night as to what to do now that Englishmen were killing one another. One Abenaki woman said she thought the world was coming to an end. Katawbas Indians in South Carolina "were alarmed, and could not tell what to make of it." George Morgan found Indians in the Ohio Valley "much


confused and unsettled in their Resolutions” in the spring of 1776. The Spanish governor of Saint Louis, Fernando de Leyba, told the governor of Louisiana, Bernardo de Gálvez, in the summer of 1776 that the war was “causing a great number of Indian tribes to go from one side to the other without knowing which side to take.”

Not all Indian people were living in Indian country when the Revolution broke out, and Indians responded to the event as individuals, not just as tribal units. Joseph Burd Jaugi, a Mohican Indian from Connecticut, had served in the Seven Years’ War and was in England on a lieutenant’s half pay when the Revolution began. He was offered a captain’s commission in the British army but, he said in a later petition to the government of Connecticut, “refused to serve in that unnatural contest.” He gave up his lieutenantcy, forfeited his half pay, and returned to America. Taking up residence in North Carolina, he joined the American army to fight against his former comrades in arms when the British invaded the Carolinas.8 Other Indians also enlisted in the American cause as individuals. “Lewis Indian” and “James Indian” volunteered for service in New Hampshire companies in the first months of the war. “Peter Indian,” a Dartmouth graduate, enlisted in a New Hampshire company to fight British in 1777. Others, with distinct Indian names or with names not different from their colonial comrades, joined up in other colonies; still others may have enlisted with their Indian identity unrecorded.

When “this island began to shake and tremble along the Eastern shore,” the American Revolution looked very much like an English civil war to Indian eyes. Most Indian people seem to have regarded it as a family quarrel in which they had no business meddling.9 Mohican preacher Samson Occom wished the whites “would let the poor Indians alone, what have they to do with your Quarrills.”8 British and American agents encouraged a non-involvement on the part of the Indians in the early months of the war, when they were soliciting neutrality rather than support from the tribes. Before long, however, British and American, then Spanish and French, agents began to lobby Indian peoples for their active support, justifying their actions with the argument that if they did not employ Indians as allies, the enemy would.10 The Continental Congress resolved in December 1775 to call on Indians “in case of real necessity.” The British likewise pleaded necessity in enlisting Indian support for the defense of Canada, and in forest warfare, where their enemies employed Indians.11 Where Indian support was not forthcoming, British and Americans naturally preferred to factionalize tribes than to see them swing into the enemy camp. Faced with an ongoing struggle to preserve their cultural and territorial boundaries, some Indian peoples needed little encouragement to take up arms against the Americans. Others were more cautious. Little Abraham of the Mohawks told American commissioners at Albany in August 1775 that his people intended to remain neutral. “We mind nothing but Peace,” he said, and celebrated the cessation the following year.12 When British Indian agent John Butler attempted to enlist Seneca support at Niagara early in June 1776, Cauconsannahneto, or Flying Crow, head war chief of the Allegany Senecas, treated his arguments with disdain, declaring that the Americans were at peace with the Americans and intended to remain so as long as they could.

It is true they have encroached on our Lands, but of this we shall speak to them. If you are so strong Brother, and they but as a weak Boy, why ask our assistance. It is true I am tall and strong but I will reserve my strength to strike those who injure us ... You say they are all mud, foolish, wicked, and deceitful – I say you are so and they are wise for you want us to destroy ourselves in your War and they advise us to live in Peace.”13

The Seneca chief Kayahwah agreed, saying, “We must be Fools indeed to imagine that they regard us or our Interest who want to bring us into an


The Revolution comes to Indian country

unnecessary War." Recognizing that taking sides in the conflict would set off a destructive cycle of revenge and retaliation, Kayahatsa worked tirelessly to keep his people out of the fight. At Fort Pitt in July 1778 he tried to argue Indian neutrality from a position of strength and to implement the kind of diplomacy that had saved the Iroquois well in past wars, "We will not suffer either the English or Americans to march an army through our country," he declared. That autumn, he warned the Americans to restrict their fighting to the coast and "not come into our Country to fight, lest you may stumble and fall on us so as to wrest the Chain of Friendship out of our hands."

But Indians could not keep the war out of Indian country. As Britons, Americans, and other Indians demanded to know "who are friends and who are not," many Indians already had come to the sad realization that "it is impossible for them to continue much longer in a state of neutrality." The competition continued throughout the war and throughout the eastern woodlands.

Winning Indian allegiance was one thing; retaining it amidst shifting fortunes of war and competing diplomacies required constant attention to gift giving, protocol, and local chiefs. In the spring of 1777, British agent William Caldwell warned the Senecas not to "regard anything the Hugnifs [Americans] might say to them for tho he had a very smooth Ody Tongue his heart was not good." Two years later, American commander Daniel Brodhead warned the Shawnees that the British would tell them fine stories but had come three thousand miles only "to rob & Steal & fill their Pockets." As long as Detroit remained in British hands, securing the support or at least the neutrality of the French and Indian inhabitants of the Illinois country was vital to the American war effort. Pulled between British and American agents, many tribes in the Wabash and Illinois country "got divided among themselves part for us or others"


B. Hoffman, Ture, and Albert, eds., United States, 1851.

Revolution and Confederation, 32, Draper Min. 1895-96; Foreign Affairs, 32, PPC, reprinted in 1853, 186-196.


B. Hoffman, Ture, and Albert, eds., United States, 1851.

Revolution and Confederation, 32, Draper Min. 1895-96; Foreign Affairs, 32, PPC, reprinted in 1853, 186-196.


"For the English," recalled George Rogers Clark. Having won many of the Indians over by his hard-line diplomacy, Clark realized that they "required great attention to keep the Flame from cooling too soon."Discourse and discord were part of the normal process by which Indian societies reached consensus. However, the issues raised by the Revolution were such that consensus could not always be reached. The divisions of colonial society that John Adams summarized as one-third patriot, one-third loyalist, and one-third neutral were replicated with numerous variations in countless Indian communities in North America. As elsewhere on the frontier, the pressures imposed by the Revolution revealed existing fissures as well as creating new ones. Mohawk and Onondaga speakers asked Congress to ignore the actions of individuals who went against the consensus of the Iroquois League. In 1775 the Delawares asked Congress to distinguish between their nation as a whole, which was still friendly, and the actions of a few individuals who, like the Tories in the states, sided with the British and had been obliged to leave the nation.

As provocations increased, neutrality became increasingly precarious, even impossible, forcing Indians to choose sides. Neutrality was not a viable option for people who were not economically independent. A Cherokee headman indicated the degree of dependency to which his people had succumbed by the beginning of the war when, suddenly cut off from trade and ammunition, "I had recourse to the bow & arrow for my subsistence and defence — these weapons my boy understands the use of better than myself." Most of the Indians who eventually sided with Britain did so after American acts of treachery, inability to provide trade, and continued pressure on their lands convinced them they had no choice in the struggle for survival but to support the crown. In colonial times the crown had established a record of protecting Indian country; its colonial subjects, those now in rebellion, had posed the major threat to Indian lands. Moreover, Britain promised the economic resources Indian peoples needed. Commitment was never unanimously and, council-free rhetoric aside, Indians fought for their own reasons, to protect their lands and people.
The American Revolution in Indian country

from invasion, or to secure vital supplies, rather than to carry out the wishes of their British "father." A Seneca chief who had just returned from visiting the British at Niagara declared, "When our white brethren call us to meet them at their Towns, we all flock like Bees — not that we want to take strong hold of their Friendship but to share the Goods they bring with them." After France entered the war, French emissaries circulated among the tribes of the Great Lakes region in an effort to secure Indian allegiance to the United States. But long-standing French influence could not outweigh American failure to match promise with performance when it came to supplying their Indian allies. Northwestern Indians assured Godfrey de l'Isleriot in 1780 of their fidelity to the king of France, but asked pointedly:

If our father is allied to the Americans, why do these allow us to be in want of everything; must we die together with our wives and children while rejecting the offices which the English make us to...? On the one hand we are forgotten, abandoned; on the other hand we are solicited and at times threatened by the English, in such a situation what can we do, what ought we to do?"18

Any overview of Indian dispositions and allegiances is difficult and hazardous. Militants throughout Indian country saw the Revolution as an opportunity for a British-supplied-and-supported Indian alliance to recoup many of the losses of past generations. Deputies ranged far and wide promoting intertribal unity against American expansion.19 However, most people fluctuated in their sentiments, and participation in the fighting was often relatively brief. Enthusiasm for the British cause wavered and waned with the fortunes of war. Indian leaders displayed considerable statesmanship in steering their people through the treacherous diplomatic waters churned up by the Revolution.20 Emerging on the winning side was a vital consideration for Indian people, who knew they would have to live with the winners.

Some of the groups most consistently hostile to the Americans were actually hands comprised of what Americans termed "renegade" warriors from various tribes. One of the first communities to wage war against the Americans was Plumy's Town on the Olentangy River, where Chippeewa, Wyandots, and Ottawas joined the Mingoos (Ohiou Iroquois), and where Americans found it was often "difficult to tell what Nation are the Offenders." Like the Mingo chief Logan,


20 White, Middle Ground, 387, 398.

The Revolution comes to Indian country

Plumy had good reason for his hostility, having returned from peace talks after Dunmore's War to find "his blood relations being dead" at the hands of Virginians. Plumy’s Mingoos caused consternation among Americans and among neighboring tribes who blamed them for corrupting their young men and threatening to embroil them all in war. The Americans wanted to destroy. Plumy's Town but held off for fear they would spark a general Indian war.21 The League of the Iroquois or Six Nations — the confederacy of Mohawks, Oneidas, Tuscaroras, Onondagas, Cayugas, and Senecas that stretched across upper New York State — had managed to maintain a pivotal position in North American affairs by preserving formal neutrality and essential unity of action in previous conflicts, but was unable to do so in this one. According to British agent Daniel Claus, the sudden death of superintendent Sir William Johnson on the eve of the Revolution left the Iroquois "scattered like a flock of helpless shee".22 Presbyterian missionary Samuel Kirkland heard many Indians say that "they never knew a debate so warm & contentious so fierce to have happened between these two Brothers, Oneidas & Cayugas, since the commencement of their union."23

In 1775 the Oneidas and other Iroquois took a neutral stance, but two years later they were killing each other. Mary Jemison, an adopted white captive living with the Senecas, recalled how her people returned from meeting the Americans at German Flats, where they had pledged their neutrality late in the summer of 1775, "well pleased that they could live on neutral ground, surrounded by the din of war, without being engaged in it."24 But in 1777, after resistance struck Onondaga, the central council fire was ritually extinguished for the first time in the league's history, and civil war erupted. Jemison said the British invited Iroquois warriors "to come and see them whip the rebels" at the siege of Fort Stanwix, but instead of "smoking and looking on, they were obliged to fight for their lives" in the bloody battle at Oriskany. The memory of the hand-to-hand fighting haunted Seneca chief Blackmace into his old age:


"There I have Seen the most Dead Bodies all it over [sic] that I never Did see, and never will again [.] I thought at the time the Blood Shed a Stream Running Down the Descending ground During the afternoon." The Senecas suffered heavy losses, and Fenimore remembered the "sorrow and distress" in her community after the battle. Pro-British warriors burned Oneida crops and houses in revenge; Oneidas retaliated by burning Mohawk homes. The Oneidas themselves split into factions; most supported the Americans, but some joined the British. The Tuscaroras also supported the Americans, whereas the Cayugas lent their weight to the crown. The Onondagas struggled to maintain neutrality until American troops burned their towns in 1779. For the Iroquois, the Revolution was a war in which, in some cases literally, brother killed brother.5

Massachusetts and Connecticut exempted Indians from their wartime drafts, along with blacks, mulattoes, schoolteachers, and students at Harvard and Yale.6 Nevertheless, Indian towns surrounded by colonial neighbors in southern and central New England rallied to the American cause and served steadfastly, despite suffering heavy losses. William Aapos, a Pequot Indian writing in the next century, said that the small Indian town of Mashpee on Cape Cod furnished twenty-six men for the Patriot service, all but one of whom "fell murther to liberty in the struggle for Independence." Pequots and Mohicans from Connecticut suffered similar high casualties: roughly half the Pequots who left to fight in the Revolution did not come home. Indian women widowed by the war were forced to look outside their communities for husbands, intermarrying with European and African American neighbors.7

Indian responses in northern New England and eastern Canada were more ambiguous. Abenakis seemed ambivalent. Some served with George Washington, others joined the British. The Indian communities on the Saint Lawrence known as the Seven Nations of Canada displayed similar reluctance. Most of them had fought against the "Bostonians" during the Seven Years' War; but their exposed position meant they had much to lose and little to gain in this conflict. British and American agents campaigned to win their allegiance. Warriors from the Seven Nations served with Burgoyne; some also sided with the Americans. But the Seven Nations as a whole resurrected the old system of playing off rival powers, and avoided declaring openly for either side, considering their best strategy for surviving the war intact. As the Revolutionary War escalated in Indian country, this meant steering a middle course between warning Six Nations relatives as well as between redcoats and Bostonians.8

The village of Caugnawaga or Kahnawake near Montreal, which was also the site of the Seven Nations council fire, became a major conduit for the passage of intelligence, and a key community in the contest for Indian allegiance in the north.9 According to one report from Montreal in March 1775, the Caugnawaga refused British requests "to fight Boston," in part because of land ties to New England resulting from captive taking in the French and Indian wars. "They are a very Sensible Politick People and say that if they are obliged for their own safety to take up arms on either side that they shall take part on the Side of their Brethren the English in N. England; all the Chiefs of the Caugnawaga Tribe being of English extraction captivated in their imma-"10

That some Caugnawaga youths were attending Dartmouth College served as an additional disincentive to attacking the New England frontier. But the Caugnawaga were equally reluctant to fight for the Americans. Ethan Allen said they acted on sound political principles and, like the French, were "wasting the scale of power."11 The entry of France into the war produced the additional pull of old ties, and Caugnawaga visited General Rochambeau's

5 Namio, ed., Mary Johnson, 195; Grayson, Iroquois in the American Revolution, 4.
The American Revolution in Indian country

forces when they landed at Newport, Rhode Island, in 1780. But Caughnawagas also had ties to both sides in the Iroquois civil war.

In Maine and Nova Scotia, Passamaquody and Micmac, and Maliseets were reluctant to become involved in a war that had little to offer them. Massachusetts passed a resolution in July 1779 that five hundred Micmac and Maliseet (Saint Johns) Indians be employed in the continental service. Maliseet chief Ambrose St. Aubin and Pierre St. Thomas sometimes spoke as if they were engaged in a common cause to protect their lands and their liberties, but eastern Indians often defied the belligerents’ recruiting efforts. Delegates who attended the Treaty of Watertown in 1779 exceeded their authority in committing the tribes to the American cause. The tribes split as British power and British goods exerted increasing influence. About a hundred principal men of the Micmac, Maliseet, and Passamaquoddj tribes took an oath of allegiance to King George between September 1778 and January 1779. With chief Orono “beauty in our cause,” a company of Penobscots served with the United States and figured prominently in the action at Penobscot in 1779. A dozen Pigwackets from western Maine petitioned Massachusetts for permission to enlist.

In the strategically crucial Ohio country, Indians and whites began (or rather continued) killing each other as soon as the Revolution broke out. The Indians were the prime in a diplomatic tug-of-war between Henry Hamilton, the British commander at Detroit, and George Morgan, the American Indian agent at Fort Pitt. The Delaware, neutral at the outbreak of the war, soon came under pressure from American and British agents and from other tribes, particularly pro-British Wyandots under Half King to the north. The war and the question of American alliance became linked to old divisions over embracing Euro-American culture. Following the deaths of chiefs Costloga and Netawawkees in the fall of 1779, the Delaware council began to fragment. British policy had formerly sought to control the Ohio tribes by working through the Delaware Confederacy, who claimed ancient hereditary and maintained a lingering influence in the region. Now White Eyes and some other Delawares saw an American alliance as an opportunity to assert independence from the Six Nations and challenge their claims to lands west of the Ohio. A group of young Delaware warriors under Wandabsa defected to the British, but even General Hand’s infamous “squaw campaign,” in which American militiats attacked camps of Delaware women and children, did not destroy the tribe’s commitment to peace. The Delaware capital at Coshocton became a refuge for Indian people who wanted to distance themselves from those who had sided with the British. The United States signed a treaty with the Delawares in 1778 in an effort to secure their neutrality and a right of passage across their lands, but many Delawares complained they had been deceived into taking up the hatchet for the United States in a treaty that George Morgan described as “villainously conducted.” White Eyes and John Killbuck of the Turtle clan displayed continued pro-American sympathies, but Captain Pope of the Wolf clan moved with many of his followers to the Sandusky River in northwestern Ohio, closer to the Wyandots and the British. The Americans murdered White Eyes, their strongest supporter in the Delaware national council, and failed to provide the trade they promised and that the Delawares needed. Pipe gained influence among his hungry and disillusioned people, and the British were able to lure Delaware warriors into their orbit.


On Iroquois claims to hegemony and the Ohio tribes see Francis Jennings, The Ambiguous Iroquois Empire: The Cayuga Chase Confederation of Indian Tribes with English Colonies from Its Creation to the Tecumseh Consequences (Ithaca, N.Y., 1950), 55-78. western town, 55-78. western town, 55-78.
Nothing hurt the pro-American and neutral Delawares more than the United States's failure to supply them with goods and trade in time of war. "Great Stress is laid on your inability to supply our wants," Captain Pipe told Morgan in 1777; "we are ridiculed by your Enemies for being attached to you who cannot even furnish us with a pair of Stockings or a Blanket — this obliges us to be dependent in a great measure on them." Delaware chiefs who visited Daniel Brodhead at Pitt through two years later were mewing at the end of their tether: "The poor wretches are quite destitute of clothing, and unless they can be supplied by us, they will be compelled to submit to such terms as our enemies may impose on them." The Americans were unable to match bombard with either goods or action. In 1778, in council at Fort Laurens at the head of a bedraggled army and at the tail end of an abortive campaign against Detroit, General Lachlan McIntosh warned the Shawnees, Delawares, Wyandots, Ottawas, and Chippewas that they had fourteen days to come and make peace or else suffer the consequences, "upon which declaration they Set up a General Laugh." A detachment of Delawares served the United States through the final years of the war, and Brodhead warned Delaware chiefs not to be deceived by the British or alarmed by the Wyandots. "As to the speech of the half King it is a great discharge of wind, he dare not hurt a hair of your head." But war and hunger rendered continued neutrality impossible in the Ohio Valley. Anticipating a general war in 1780, Brodhead decided to strike first. "The Delawares have acted a double part long enough," he declared. American troops guided by Killbuck (who had turned increasingly toward the United States as his people turned to the British), attacked the cluster of villages around Coshocton and burned the Delaware capital. The inhabitants fled "half-naked" to the militant Wyandots and Delawares around Sandusky, who received them with open arms and British supplies. Killbuck's followers took refuge at Fort Pitt, where they not only suffered hunger and hardship but also were exposed to danger at the hands of American frontiersmen."


The Revolution comes to Indian country

Those Delawares who had converted to Christianity and lived in separate villages under the guidance of Moravian missionaries also clung to a neutrality that cost them dearly. The Wyandot Half King warned the Moravian Delawares in 1782 that "they were sitting between two powerful, angry gods, who, with their mouths wide open, were most ferociously looking at each other! and that they were in peril of being attacked and devoured by one or both of them. Two years later, American militia marched to the Moravian Delaware town of Nodderhorsten, rounded up the inhabitants, and bludgeoned to death ninety-six men, women, and children. In 1782, American borderers, perhaps the same party who massacred the Moravians, attacked the Delawares living on Smokey or Killbuck Island near Pittsburgh. In the ensuing confusion, the wampum belts and other records that constituted the tribal archives were lost in the river. They were never replaced, and Delaware unity suffered another blow."

Having audaciously endeavored to avoid entanglement in the war, Delawares had good reason to be bitter. In a speech recorded by Moravian missionary John Heckewelder at Detroit in November 1781, Captain Pipe, now fighting alongside the British, turned angrily on commander Arent Schuyler De Peyster, roundly denouncing Britons and Americans alike for dragging the Indians into their quarrel.

Father! Many lives have already been lost on your account! Nations have suffered and been weakened! Children have lost Parents, brothers, and relatives! Who have lost Habitations! It is not known how many more may perish before Your war will be at end!"

The neighboring Shawnees had been involved in long resistance against encroachment on their lands and had just fought a costly war against Lord Dunmore and Virginia. Early in the Revolution, Shawnee emissaries traveled to Cherokee country in an effort to form a confederacy against American expansion. However, the Shawnees themselves were divided over the question of further resistance. The Shawnee chief Cornstalk tried to preserve his people's fragile neutrality, but confessed he was unable to restrain his "furious Young Men." American frontiersmen displayed their peculiar penchant for murdering key friends at key moments. After Cornstalk was killed under a flag of truce in 1777, most Shawnees made King George's fight their own."


[2] John Miller, "Delaware Integrity: The History and Culture of the Conover," unpublished manu-

script, p. 416.

James H. O'Donnell, III, ed., "Captain Pipe's Speech: A Commentary on the Delaware Experi-
\n
ence, 1755–1793," Northwest Ohio Quarterly 64 (1990), 100–113.

Gaitley G. Calhoun, "We Have Always Been the Frontier: The American Revolution in Shawnee Country," American Indian Quarterly 16 (1992), 35–51; this volume ch. 8.
The American Revolution in Indian country

Closer to King George's outposts, Half King of the Wyandots played an apparently ambiguous role. When the Americans were planning expeditions against Detroit, he warned them to steer clear of the Wyandot towns or be unable to restrain his young men. He sent messages to the Delawares urging neutrality and warned them against listening to the British. At other times, he threatened the Delawares if they did not join the British, declared for the British in 1777, and stood as Britain's foremost ally in the Sandusky region as Wyandot war parties passed through Delaware towns en route to the American frontier. Moravian missionary David Zeisberger blamed the British, but another report was probably closer to the truth in identifying a consistent motivation. The Wyandots apparently were playing for time until they could mobilize. They were not as Sharp against you as ever.16

Further west, Indian people living on the Wabash, Illinois, and Mississippi rivers had not yet felt the full threat of American expansion, and many were cool to British overtures. Nevertheless, the revolutions of the Revolution were felt at the western reaches of the woodlands and beyond. On the Mississippi, British and Spanish agents competed for Indian allegiance, sending Bannocks, medals, and presents into Indian villages and courting the support of tribes as far distant from eastern battlefields as the Otoes, Iowas, and Missouris. In the spring of 1777, De Peyster, then commanding at Michilimackinac, sent his agents to drum up Indian volunteers from the Ottawas, Chippewas, and Menominees at Green Bay, then dispatched them to resist the American invasion of Canada. The Indians traveled to Montreal only to find that the invaders were already repulsed. Indians from the western Great Lakes territories, like their eastern counterparts, were reluctant to support the Revolution in Canada.

The Miami Indians were pulled by the opposing appeals of Americans and British. At opposite ends of the Wabash, and the Miami council at Kekionga struggled to maintain a united front against American expansion in the area. Wabash Indians and some Great Lakes tribes swayed to the crown when Henry Hamilton arrived in the region, but fell away after

16 Harper 1816:47; 1777:47; Frontier Advocate, 1817:183-4, 185-6; George Morgan Lottmack, vol. 1
The American Revolution in Indian country
to the British and became increasingly active in the northwest Indian
confederation.64 Sauk and Fox Indians on the upper Mississippi were counted British allies,
but also tried to maintain relations with the Americans and with Spaniards at
Saint Louis.65 Further west, the Santee Sioux were accustomed to sending
chiefs each summer to Machilimackinac to strengthen alliances. The Michilimackinac
Santee chief Waabaska, described by the British as "a prince of an Indian," 
apparently visited Governor Carleton in Quebec in 1776 and was given a
general's commission in 1778.66 The Anglo-American war was not always the
foremost concern in the minds of western Indians. Winnebagoes who turned out
for the British in 1779 were anxious lest the Chippewas and Sioux attack their
villages in their absence.67

A force of about a thousand British and Indians attacked Saint Louis in May
1780. The Indians were mainly western tribes, including about two hundred
Sioux under Wabaasha, Chippewas led by Matchekiont,68 and a group of Sauk
and Fox warriors recruited en route from their villages. The failure of the attack
did a serious blow to British prestige among tribes that were already vacillating.
The Sauk and Fox recruits proved reluctant allies at best, but a Spanish–
American expedition burned their crops and village at Saukenk on Rock
River in retaliation. Many Sauk and Fox people switched allegiance from Britain to
Spain in the fall. Meanwhile, the new Spanish lieutenant governor, Francisco
Cruzat, initiated a vigorous Indian policy based on the belief that securing
Indian friendship constituted the best defense for Saint Louis. When two
Indian chiefs from the Milwaukee region, known to the Spaniards as El Hetuano
and Naquilleum, visited Saint Louis and urged an expedition be sent against
the British post at Saint Joseph, Cruzat consented. A force of Spanish volunteers
and Indian allies took Fort Saint Joseph by surprise in February 1781, held it
for a day, and returned to Saint Louis after raising the Spanish colors. Spanish
prestige among the tribes climbed as Britain's declined. Tribal leaders surren-
dered their British flags and medals, and Cruzat replaced them with Spanish

66 Paul J. Brown, "A Letter to Governor Carleton, 1776: New Light on a Legendary Episode of
Dakota Indian Diplomacy on the Great Lakes Frontier," Michigan Historical Review 16 (1960),
41-48. Gray Chamney Anderson, Elements of Indian Kind, Dakota-white Relations in the
Upper Mississippi Valley, 1673-1860 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1964), 65; Halldorson
67 Halldorson Papers, 25756: 11-12; IHIC, vol. 11: 132.
68 Matcheko in Machilimackinac (c. 1753-c. 1805) had participated in the capture of Fort
Michilimackinac during Pontiac's War. Making his peace with the British, during the Revolution
he had ventured in Burgoyne's expedition as well as raids into the Illinois country. David A.

The Revolution comes to Indian country

69 Abraham P. Nathan, "The Anglo-Spanish Frontier in Illinois Country During the Revolution,
1779-1783," Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society 32 (1939), 245-69; Dan Ritchey, "The
British-American Attack on St. Louis, May 17, 1780," Illinois Historical Review 16 (1965), 35-
45; Lawrence Kuehn, "The Western Front of Revolution," Wisconsin Historical Quarterly 7
(1959), 168-89; idem., "The Spanish Expedition against Fort St. Joseph in 1781: A New Inter-
pretation," Mississippi Valley Historical Review 19 (1935), 173-92. In the Mississippi Valley, in
The American Revolution in Indian country

formed new communities on the Chickamauga River. The Chickamauga "towns became the core of Cherokee resistance, attracting warriors from other towns and supporting the war effort of the Shawnees and their northern allies. Other Cherokees suffered as a result of Chickamauga resistance, some helped the Americans, and the Revolution became a Cherokee civil war.

Elsewhere in the south, the Chickasaws were accounted ancient friends of the British, but, distant from the main theaters of conflict, they took little part in the early fighting. The Chocowas, with a population of perhaps thirty thousand in 1775, and a key strategic position on the lower Mississippi, attracted the attention of British and Spanish rivals. The Anglo-Spanish contest allowed the Chocowas to play European powers against each other as they had in the past as a way of maintaining independence and securing trade goods, but once again the nation split into factions. The majority supported King George, but the Six Towns district, closest to New Orleans, favored Spain. According to James Colburt, there was "hardly a Blackbird in the Six towns but his Medals, Georg, & Red Coats given them." British agents always feared losing them, and Chocowas from opposing districts came into conflict during the Revolution. Moreover, before British agents could set about securing Choctaw warriors as allies against the Americans, they had first to arrange an end to a Choctaw war against the Creeks that they themselves had fomented several years earlier when British Indian policy had aimed at keeping Indian tribes divided against themselves rather than united against the Americans. By 1783, Choctaw were fighting alongside British soldiers. Several hundred Chocowas fought in the defense of Pensacola against Spanish attack early in 1781, where Spaniards found the woods "bowed with Indians." However, the Choctaw chief Franchameribate was infuriated that British soldiers did not march those of his warriors."

37 See this volume, ch. 5.
39 See this volume, ch. 8.

The Revolution comes to Indian country

According to British Indian Superintendent John Stuart, the key location of the Indians of Georgia and Alabama meant that they had "always been courted by different interests." Creeks expressed their desire for neutrality early and often, but the Revolution brought renewed diplomatic pressures. At Pocotala in December 1775, Governor Patrick Towly told the Creeks that British loved Indians like a mother loved "the Child bluffing the Nipple," whereas Americans pretended to love them but "would kill & destroy them afterwards." At Augusta in May 1779, American trader-agent George Galpin assembled two hundred Creeks and urged them to stay out of the war. Though Goina and some other Lower Creek towns accepted Galpin's talks, British agent David Taitt said the Creeks were "willing with rum and threw the nation into "great confusion" when they returned home. The Augusta meeting was testimony to the divisions among the Creeks rather than to any real possibility of neutrality. Stewart and Taitt waged diplomatic warfare against Galpin, who distributed gifts from his ending post at Silver Bluff. Galpin's diplomatic efforts were undermined by Georgian aggressions against the Creeks, and most Upper Creek towns were pro-British. In the spring of 1776 Creek warriors were reported to be "Enraged to a degree of Madness to be at the Mad Children as they term the rebels." But the Creeks were at war with the Chocowas, and the Cherokee experience, reinforced by American emissaries, gave them warning of the dire consequences that their entry into the Anglo-American conflict might precipitate. The Spanish also continued to exert influence in Creek towns, and opposing coalitions almost came to blows over what strategy to pursue.

Creeks eventually turned out for British campaigns against both the Americans and the Spaniards, and the neutralist party began to disintegrate. Creeks who had migrated to Florida earlier in the century and were in the process of becoming Seminoles generally supported the British; nevertheless, the Creeks were cautious participants at best in this white man's war. In David Taitt's assessment, most Creeks opposed the Americans "yet do not seem heursy in joining against them but would much rather wish to enjoy the advantages of neutrality by being paid from both parties." John Stuart complained they were "a mercenary People, Convenience & Safety are the great Ties that
Carrying the war to Indian country

The American Revolution was not only a civil war for many Indian people, it was also mounted to a total war in Indian country. Indian and non-Indian nations were at war, on the brink of war, or arranging alliances in expectation of war. American history has paid little attention to the impact of this war on the Indians' home front. Operating out of Detroit and Niagara, the British enlisted Indian allies and terror tactics to democratize American frontier settlements, but Indian country suffered more than its share of killing, ravaging, and destruction. George Morgan recognized that whatever policies the United States might try to pursue toward the Indians, "many persons among ourselves wish to promote a War." Indian leaders appealed to American leaders to "restrain your foolish young Men," just as whites appealed to Indian chiefs to restrain their warriors, with equally ineffective results. American commissioners warned Creek headmen in 1777 "We look to you to stop the killing, or our own beloved men & warriors will not hinder a just retaliation." The chiefs could do little and retaliation began nonetheless. According to Richard White, "Murder gradually and inexorably became the dominant Indian policy" as backcountry settlers took the law into their own hands, killing mediation chiefs and noncombatants, and undermining the work of George Morgan and the policies of Congress.

When war came, American strategy—like that of the French and the British before them, and of the Spanish in dealing with recalcitrant tribes west of the Mississippi at this time—aimed to carry the war into Indian country, destroy Indian villages, and turn Indian crops late in the season when there was insufficient time for raising another crop before winter. Despite the adoption of commercial hunting and the addition of fruit, potatoes, cattle, pigs, and domestic fowl to their diet and their economy, the sacred "three sisters" of the Iroquois—corn, beans, and squash—remained the staff of life for many woodland Indians. Trader James Adair said corn was an Indian people's "chief produce and main dependence." Corn was also at the core of many tribes' spiritual well-being: Cherokee recollected the mythical female origins of their agriculture in the story of Sola, a woman whose name means "corn"; and annual Green Corn ceremonies ensured ritual purification of the community. Like the buffalo in Plains Indian culture and economy, corn for eastern woodland Indians was the basis of life and prosperity but was also an Achilles' heel, providing enemy armies with a target that could be hit time and again with devastating effect. In the Revolution, American armies waged war against Indian cornfields. Daniel Brodhead maintained that marching a thousand men into Indian country was a more effective means of protecting the frontier than employing three times as many garrisoned men. General Armstrong agreed that carrying the war to the Indians' homes and families had an adverse effect on their morale: the Indians might flee their towns, "but their huts and cornfields must remain, the destruction..."

49 O. T. 1791, 113, DEB, vol. 12, 239–40; Michael D. Green, "The Creek Confederacy in the American Revolution: Caucasian Participators," in Coker and Rux, eds., Anglo-Spanish Confrontation of the Gulf Coast During the American Revolution, 44–73. See also David T. Cokte's, The Creek Frontier, 1500–1755 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1976), 277, 281–5, 286, 290, 295–97; Dooly, Spiritual Resistance, 24; Kathryn Holland Boulding, Domesticity and Defile: Creek and Indian Trade with Anglo-America (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993), 155, 183, 207; Coker, Seminole, Social Order and Political Change, 9; Coker, 205–6; Coker, 210; William, 231; Jonathan Bryan's assessment in 1785 that, except for a few of the Canoe towns, the Creeks were well disposed to the Americans; Bryan to Greene, Aug. 25, 1785, Dooly, Creole, 784; Dooly, 784–785, Dooly, 784–785.


51 Morgan Letterbook, vol. 1, 76.
The American Revolution in Indian country

whereof greatly affects their old men, their women, and their children. Amesti- 
can troops and militia tramped through the Susquehanna, the Allegheny, the 
Scioto, Miami, and Tennessee valleys, leaving smoking ruins and burned corn 
cields behind them. As John Shy has pointed out, colonial military forces were 
used less often for protection of settlements than for exacting retribution and 
retaliation.

American soldiers and militia matched and sometimes exceeded their Indian 
adversaries in the use of terror tactics. George Rogers Clark informed Fernando 
de Lavey, lieutenant governor of Spanish Illinois in November 1778, that "the 
Absolute orders of Congress to the Army now in Indian Country is to Show no 
mercy to those that have been at war against the States." Clark believed no 
punishment was too great for Indians and those who fought alongside them. He 
declared that "to exceed them in barbarity was and is the only way to make war 
upon Indians and gain a name among them," and carried his policy into grimy 
effect at Vincennes by binding and tomahawking Indian prisoners within sight 
of the besieged garrison. William Henry Drayton and Andrew Williamson of South Carolina advocated that captured Indians become the slaves of the captors 
but the legislature refused, fearing Indian retaliation for such a procedure. 
Since Indian prisoners brought no reward, soldiery killed them for their food and 
Captain William Moore's contingent took three Cherokee's in their campaign 
against the Middle towns in 1776. Moore argued that the prisoners should be 
kept under guard until Congress approved their sale, but he was 
oblige to give in to the demands of his men since "the Greater Part swore 
Bloodily that if they were not Sold for Slaves upon the Spot, they would kill


The Revolution comes to Indian country

and Scalp them Immediately." South Carolina paid 275 for male scalps; Pennsyl-

vania offered 1,000 for every Indian scalp. Kentucky militia who invaded Shawnee villages dug up graves to scalp corpses.

Barry had the Cherokees launched their attacks on the backcountry settle-

ments than the colonists carried fire and sword to the Indians' towns and 
villages, bringing the nation to its knees. As usual, the war in Cherokee country 
was among war between men and women, mainly by burning homes and 
scorched by livestock. At one town, William Moore's men burned "Cerr, 
Pumpkins, Beans, paws, & Other Trucking things. Of Which We Found Abundance 
Every house." Colonel Andrew Williamson attacked the Lower towns with 
a thousand men from South Carolina, then joined forces with Rutherford and 
spent two weeks laying waste the Cherokee Middle settlements. Colonel William 
Christian invaded the Overhill towns from Virginia, driving the people into the 
mountains and burning their food supplies. American soldiers destroyed "cursed 
buildings, great apple trees, and whitman-like improvements" as well as "fast 
quantities of corn, and horses beyond our numbering." In April 1779, Evan Shelby invaded Chickamauga Cherokee country. The damage inflicted, according to Thomas Jefferson, included "killing about half a 
dozon men, burning 1 towns, 20,000 bushels of corn ... and taking as many 
goods as sold for twenty-five thousand pounds." That summer, British agent 
Alexander Cameron was poised to raise a Cherokee force "as soon as our corn 
in the nation would be hard enough to be converted into flour," but in the
The American Revolution in Indian country

meantime Andrew Williamson and seven hundred cavalrymen invaded Cherokee country. The Cherokees promptly dispatched two chiefs "to treat for peace and save their corn." Williamson agreed to spare the corn only if the Cherokees handed over Cameron; the Cherokees refused, and Williamson burned their houses and cut down their corn. The Cherokees were reduced to "living upon nuts and whatever they can get besides."53 Corn concerned all the combatants in this war. Shelby's expedition against the Chickamauga towns and crops was timed so that the militia could get home to their own crops for the summer harvest.54

In December 1780, Arthur Campbell burned "upwards of one thousand Houses, and not less than fifty thousand Bushels of Corn" among the Overhill Cherokees. John Sevier burned fifteen Middle Cherokee towns in 1780, and the following summer and fall destroyed new Lower Cherokee towns on the Coosa River. Sevier's son, who accompanied him, recalled in his old age the rampages through the towns on the Hiwassee River and Chickamauga Creek in fall 1783: "We destroyed their towns, stock, corn, & everything they had to support on."55 American armies marching through Cherokee country in pursuit of Chickamauga raiders did not always distinguish between Cherokee friends and Cherokee foes, thereby swelling Dragging Canoe's ranks with new recruits. British reports claimed Cherokee women and children were butchered in cold blood and burned alive.56 Changing land-use practices and an altered landscape increased Cherokee vulnerability as villages no longer enjoyed forest cover, and as open fields provided easy avenues for cavalry attacks. Andrew Pickens's South Carolina militiamen, riding down on such a village in 1781 and wounding specially smitted short swords, hacked to death the defenseless occupants as they fled on foot across the open spaces that now fringed their town.57 A Cherokee headman summed up the cost to his people of supporting the British against "the madmen of Virginia": "I ... have lost in different engagements six hundred warriors, my towns have been twice destroyed and my corn fields laid waste by the enemy."58

Some Iroquois towns in the Mohawk and Susquehanna valleys fell victim to

The Revolution comes to Indian country

Onondaga and Cayuga towns had been destroyed or abandoned. Iroquois towns on the upper Susquehanna lay in ruins, and all but two of the larger Seneca towns had been destroyed.*** The Iroquois pulled back and sustained minimal casualties, but an Onondaga chief later claimed that when the Americans attacked his town, "they put to death all the Women and Children, excepting some of the Young Women, whom they carried away for the use of their Soldiers & were afterward put to death in a more shameful manner."**** Members of the Clinton - Sullivan expeditions also hunted and destroyed Iroquois false-face masks.††

Deprived of food and shelter, Iroquois women and children faced starvation as one of the coldest winters on record gripped North America. Refugees fled to British posts for support, and thousands of Indian men, women, and children huddled in miserable shelters around Fort Niagara.†‡ Fleeting retaliation from Iroquois relatives and British enemies who burned their villages in 1778, many Oneida abandoned their villages and sought protection near Schenectady, where, living in wretched refugee camps, they endured the prejudice of the American garrison.††

Meanwhile, Shawnee Indian villages suffered similar assaults as American commanders and Kentucky militia endeavored to carry out governor of Virginia Thomas Jefferson's wishes that they be driven from their lands or exterminated.†+++ In May and June 1779, with the Shawnees badly weakened by recent out-migrations, John Bowman led an inglorious campaign against the principal town of Chillicothe. A handful of warriors repelled and harassed the attackers, but chief Black Fish suffered a mortal wound. A severe winter followed, and Shawnee emissaries urged the British to provide the support they had promised.‡‡

When George Rogers Clark invaded their country in the summer of 1780, the Shawnees burned Chillicothe themselves rather than let it fall to the enemy. Luring the Americans onto ground of their own choosing, they fought a fall-
scale battle at Piqua on the Mad River until Clark turned his artillery on the village council house, where many Shawnees had taken refuge. Clark described the town as "composed of well built cabins located along the river, each surrounded by a strip of corn."

The Shawnees had prepared for a battle and had gathered their corn. When the British troops arrived, they set fire to the corn, destroying it. This action was a strategic move to disrupt the Shawnees' food supply, but it also resulted in the destruction of much of the corn. The Shawnees were particularly dependent on corn for sustenance, and the loss of their crops would have significant impacts on their lives.

In this context, the Shawnees' response to the British actions is critical. The destruction of their crops would likely have led to a severe disruption of their daily lives, affecting their ability to obtain food and sustain their communities. This would have implications not only for the Shawnees but also for other Native American tribes who relied on similar resources.

In summary, the battle at Piqua was a significant event in the broader context of the Revolutionary War. It demonstrated the British military's ability to adapt to and exploit Native American strategies, and it underscored the importance of food resources in sustaining Native American communities. The consequences of this battle were far-reaching, shaping the course of the conflict and the subsequent history of the region.
two sons in the war." At the war's end, in council with the British at Detroit in May 1783, the Delaware chief Silver Heels voiced what must have been a sentiment widely held in Indian country: "We Indians are the only sufferers this War, as we day by day loose our people while you are quiet in your Fort."  

The war on the Indians' home front
Even when the war was not fought on the Indians' home ground, it produced reverberations in Indian communities. News of battles lost and won spread far and wide through Indian villages, often faster than British and American agents could convey or contain it. Rebels and redcoats regularly attributed news adverse to their cause as the false singing of "bad birds." News of Henry Hamilton's capture by George Rogers Clark in 1779 reached Wabashis and the Sioux as they went on route to fight for the British, and stopped them short at Prairie du Chien. Likewise, news of Clark's attack on the Shawnee villages in 1782 reached the Indians at Detroit and Niagara before the British had it. British attempts to suppress news of Burgoyne's defeat and the Peace of Paris had no chance of success.

Whether warriors fought on their own ground or in some distant campaign, communities suffered from their absence. Men who fell in battle were not only warriors; they were "part-time soldiers" who were also husbands, fathers, sons, and providers. Warriors who were off fighting could not hunt or clear fields, women who were forced to flee when invasion threatened could not plant and harvest. Indians still tried to wage war with the seasons: warriors preferred to wait until their corn was ripe before they took up the hatchet, and according to one observer "quit going to war" when hunting season came. But war now dominated the activities of the community and placed tremendous demands on the people's energy at the expense of normal economic and social practices. Even before Sullivan's campaign, there were food shortages in Iroquois longhouses. British Indian agent John Butler reported in September 1778, "As the Young Men were already either out at War, or ready to go with me, they had nothing to subsist upon but the remains of last Years Corn which was near expended, their hunting being neglected." A month later the Mohawks were getting sick from eating nothing but salt meat. At a time when the need for food increased greatly, Indians could not cultivate the usual quantities of corn and vegetables, and what they did grow was often destroyed before it could be harvested. 

Crops also suffered from natural causes in time of war. The late 1770s marked the beginning of a period of "sporadically poor crops" among southeastern tribes. Partial failure of the Creek corn crop in 1776 produced near famine at a time when the influx of Cherokee refugees placed additional demands on food supplies, and there was "an absolute Famine" in the Creek nation in July 1778. Choctaw crops failed in 1782, increasing the people's reliance on deer hunting. A bushel of corn sold for $8 in the Wyandot towns in the winter of 1781-2, and Moravian Indians in exile around Sandusky had nothing to eat but wild potatoes and the meat of their dead cattle. As the famine deepened, many Moravian Delawares returned to their homes on the Tuscarawas in search of food, where they fell victim to American frontiersmen. famine returned to the Ohio Valley in 1784. Hunting became vital to group survival but fewer hunters were available, fighting scarred away game, and hunting territories could be perilous places in time of war. There was never enough game to support the unusually large concentrations of Indians at refugee centers like Niagara, Sandusky, and Detroit.

The war severed trade routes and cut off Indian peoples from goods on which they had become dependent. Indians as far from the conflict as the southern plains felt its repercussions in the disrupted flow of trade goods into the area. With normal subsistence and commercial activities thrown out of joint, Indian communities became increasingly dependent on British, American, or Spanish allies to provide them with food, clothing, and trade. Metamonne-hougha, a Miami, voiced the views of Indian women on the situation in conference with Major De Peyster at Detroit in September 1781:

"Father I am Deputized by the Women of our Villages, to pray you to send them Provisions for to Support their families, as they had consented with a good heart that their sons enter into your cause against the Virginians, they therefore expect you will take care of them and [their] Children."

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14 NAC, C-1423, vol. 12: 162.
16 holograph papers, 1736: 22; MPHHC: vol. 1: 34; BFHC, vol. 1: 170, 176.
17 holograph papers, 1736: 80, 193; Co. Q: 47, 381.
18 White, Middle Ground, 378; Draper, Mrs. A.D.: Report as the Upper Ohio, 190.
The American Revolution in Indian country

Rival powers waged economic warfare to compel Indian allegiance, and harsh economic realities increasingly curtailed the tribes’ freedom of action and governed their decisions. Tribes that supported the Americans or remained neutral suffered as much as those that fought on the side of the British. Two years into the war, 1779, two-thirds of the population who had remained on their North Carolina homeland had lost their homes. The war was not easy on the Cherokees who remained friendly with the Americans: "in a deplorable situation, being naked and defenceless for want of goods and ammunition," besides being caught between Tories and Americans who assumed they were hostile. In December 1779, a group of Cherokee en route to Richmond elicited the sympathy of William Christian, one of the generals who had carried devastation in their towns in the summer of 1776. The miseries of those people from what I see and hear seem to exceed description; here are men, women & children almost naked; I see very little to cover either sex but some old bear skins, and we are told that the bulk of the nation are in the same naked situation. But this is not the greatest of their evils; their crops this year have been worse than ever was known, so that their corn & potatoes, it is supposed will be all done before April, and many are already out, particularly widows and fatherless children, who have no men near connected with them."

The next month the Cherokee chief Oconostota begged Colonel Joseph Martin to take care of the Cherokees and provide them with trade at low prices. Disease took an additional toll, sometimes carrying off key leaders at critical times. An epidemic swept away many Schoharie Mahawks in 1775; another appeared to be present in Shawnee villages in 1776. Smallpox raging at Onondaga in the winter of 1776–7, struck Indians wintering near Michilimackinac in 1777, killing Creeks and Cherokees in the fall of 1779 and the spring of 1780, and struck the Cherokees again in 1783. It visited the Onondaga refugees at Schenectady in December 1780 and hit the Genesee Senecas the following winter. Smallpox reduced the Wyandots to a hundred warriors by 1781. Cold and disease killed three hundred Indians in the refugee camps at Niagara in the winter of 1779–80. While redouts and rebels killed each other by the hundred

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The Revolution comes to Indian country

At the eastern seaboard, a huge smallpox pandemic slaughtered Indian people by the thousands in western America. Between 1779 and 1782 the contagion, which also ravaged central Mexico and the Guatemalan highlands, traveled north across the Rockies and the plains, then spread into the forests of eastern Canada. Hudson’s Bay Company employees gathered beaver robes from the corpses of their customers around the bay. The uncertainties and disruptions of war produced plummeting birth rates in some white communities, and it would be unusual if falling birth rates did not also contribute to overall decline in Indian population in these years.

The revolutionary era intensified political changes in Indian communities. As in colonial society, voices of innocence were often drowned out by the clamor of the military. Endemic warfare and outside influences continued the elevation of war chiefs, who traditionally exercised only temporary authority, over the village chiefs who looked after the concerns of the community in normal circumstances. The abnormal was now normal, and war captains like Pipe and White Eyes of the Delawares, Mohawk Joseph Brant, and Dragging Canoe among the Cherokees spoke with an increasingly loud voice in their nation’s councils. Tenochilahawga, an Onondaga chief, explained: "Times are altered with us Indians. Formerly the Warriors were governed by the wisdom of their uncles the Sackemas but now they take their own way & dispose of themselves without consulting their uncles the Sackemas - while we wish for peace and they for war." Onondaga chiefs lamented, "We Sackemas have nothing to say to the Warriors. We have given them up for the field. They must act as they think wise." War and disease aggravated the situation. Cha-aha, a Wea war chief, told Henry Hamilton in a council at Detroit in 1778, "I am a War Chief, but speak on Wapsipin that came from our Village Chiefs or those remaining of (Shawnee)."

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The American Revolution in Indian country

them, for you know the loss we have met with.\textsuperscript{189} New leaders like Puggy and Dragging Canoe attracted followers that cut across village, tribal, and kinship ties. Older chiefs complained increasingly that they could not control their young men — or as was often the case in the polygynous communities created by the Revolution, control somebody else's young men.

The interference of outsiders further complicated tribal politics and undermined traditional patterns of leadership as British, Americans, and Spaniards cultivated client chiefs. Medals, uniforms and other tangible signs of authority added to a chosen leader's prestige, and the practice of handing out commissions was so common that it became standard practice to identify Ochoco and Chickasaw leaders as "great medal," "small medal," and "gorget" chiefs. Access to guns and gifts became important criteria of leadership and a key to securing the voluntary obedience that underlay so much of Indian political relations. Daniel Broadhead complained that the Indian chiefs appointed by the British commander at Detroit were "shoddy in the most elegant manner," whereas chiefs appointed by Congress went naked and were scorned by the Indians. A Seneca chief warned the British he would be unable to exert any authority over his warriors unless they provided him with goods to distribute to them.\textsuperscript{190}

The British elevated Mohawk Joseph Brant, protege of Sir William Johnson and friend of the Prince of Wales, to a position in which he exerted tremendous influence in Indian councils and during and after the Revolution.\textsuperscript{191} Americans and British alike tried to turn Joseph Louis Gill of the Abenaki at Odanak into a client chief.\textsuperscript{192} The Americans interfered with traditional succession among the Delawares in favor of pro-American individuals and exerted their influence in the choice of a successor to White Eyes.\textsuperscript{193} Among the Creeks, Alexander McGillivray, who was descended from the influential Wind Clan on his mother's side (and from the Scottish Clan Chattan — the Clan of the Cat — on his father's side) owed much of his growing power to British connections.\textsuperscript{194} The British in Saint Augustine courted the Seminole chief Cowkeeper as the key figure in securing the allegiance of Indians in East Florida.\textsuperscript{195}

\textsuperscript{189} "Letters from the Canadian Archives," Collections of the Illinois Historical Society 3 (1893), 39.
\textsuperscript{190} LC, CO 576: 112; DAR, vol. 15: 453; Drexler Map, 1812; Halihan Papers, 42176, 78-9. For information on Chocoy's "medal chiefs" see White, Roots of Dependency, chs. 2-3, 106-80.
\textsuperscript{191} White, Mohawk People, p. 181.
\textsuperscript{192} Halihan Papers, 42177: 38-40. Brant, see Isobel Thompson Kaylor, Joseph Brant, 1742-1807: Man of Two Worlds (Ottawa, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1964).
\textsuperscript{193} See ch. 13 of this volume.
\textsuperscript{194} Wedge, Delawares, p. 342, n. 21; Frontier Record, 378, 619-20, n. 3; Frontier Journal, 194.
\textsuperscript{196} See this volume, ch. 9.
The Revolution comes to Indian country

The Revolution came to Indian country in the summer of 1775, when the British sent a large force to expel the French from Fort Duquesne. This was the first time that the American Revolution had reached the Indian communities. The British hoped to gain the support of the Indians to help them win the war against the French, and they sent a large number of soldiers to the Indian villages to make this happen. The British also offered the Indians a large amount of trade goods in exchange for their support.

The Indians were divided in their response to the British. Some were happy to see the French gone, while others were unhappy to lose their trading partners. The British tried to win the support of the Indians by giving them gifts and promises of land. However, the British did not keep their promises, and the Indians were not satisfied with the British offer.

The British also tried to gain the support of the Indians by offering them a large amount of trade goods in exchange for their support. However, the British did not keep their promises, and the Indians were not satisfied with the British offer.

In the end, the British were not successful in gaining the support of the Indians. The Indian communities remained neutral in the war, and the British lost the war against the French.

The British were not successful in gaining the support of the Indians. The Indian communities remained neutral in the war, and the British lost the war against the French.
The American Revolution in Indian country

in reference to the Cherokees during the colonial wars earlier in the century, what outsiders perceived as factionalism could have proved an asset in frontier diplomacy, enabling different parties to cultivate relations with different powers and prevent domination by any one. The Seven Nations of Canada practiced this strategy with some success in the Revolution, as did Chickasaws, Pueblos, and others on the peripheries of the war. But it was a dangerous game, and for Indian people living in frontier war zones, divided country all too often brought only disaster. By the end of the Revolution, Indian country was pockmarked with ruined villages from the Mohawk Valley to the Tennessee. Indian people who survived the war faced an uncertain future as they set about rebuilding war-torn lives. Many of them also had bitter scores to settle with fellow Indians as well as with white adversaries.

Walt, Roots of Dependency, 64.

Odanak:
Abenaki ambiguity in the North

The Revolution tolerated few neutrals. In time and in general, most Indian peoples came around to siding with the British, but in individual communities the situation was always more complex. A struggle that split non-Indian communities throughout the colonies generated similar repercussions in communities in Indian country, but not necessarily for the same reasons. The Abenakis at Odanak in Quebec had ties to other Indian communities in New England and Canada, and, via the Seven Nations confederacy, to the Iroquois in New York. They also occupied a key location on the Saint Lawrence River, which placed the community in a tug-of-war between the British in Quebec and the Americans in northern New England, both of whom regarded them with suspicion. The people of Odanak lacked consensus about what course to pursue in the Revolution, and Abenakis served in small-scale operations on both sides during the war. But beneath the surface confusion and ambivalence, all Abenakis at all times shared the goal of preserving their community and keeping the war at arm's length. All they disagreed on was the means to that end. Neutrality was a perilous strategy, more likely to make the village a target than a haven when British and Americans alike adhered to the notion that if Indians were not fighting for you they would fight against you. Many Abenakis opted instead for limited and sometimes equivocal involvement in the conflict. The family-band structure of Abenaki society meant that different people could espouse different allegiances without tearing the community apart. Individual participation on both sides, though limited and part of no master strategy, also allowed flexibility as the fortunes of war shifted. The Revolution would not leave the Abenakis alone, but they could divert it into less destructive channels.

Odanak, or Saint Francis, emerged as a mission village and refugee center in Quebec during the previous century. The mission of Saint François-de-Sales on the Chaudière River was established in 1683. In 1700 Father Jacques Bigot moved the mission to the Saint Francis River, where some Sokokis and other Abenakis had already settled. During the French and Indian wars, Sokokis, Cowassocks, Penmucks, and other Abenaki peoples driven from Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine migrated to the northern reaches of their home-
The peace that brought no peace

For all the devastation the American Revolution brought to Indian country, Indians remained a force to be reckoned with at the war's end. In reading the reports of American invasions of Indian country, it is easy to assume, as did some American commanders, that burning Indian villages and destroying crops constituted a knockout blow. But burning homes, razing fields, and killing noncombatants does not necessarily destroy people's will to fight or even their ability to win. Geoffrey Parker's observation about the resilience of peasant communities victimized by European wars — "in Vietnam, what was easily burnt could also be easily rebuilt" — sometimes held true for Indian communities during the Revolution. Many survived the destruction of their villages. George Rogers Clark recognized the limitations of the American south-and-destroy missions, and an officer on Sullivan's campaign agreed that burning crops and villages was not the same as killing Indians: "The nests are destroyed but the birds are still on the wing." A British officer reviewing the American campaigns against the Iroquois and the Cherokees agreed that such a system of warfare was "shocking to humanity," and as sound military strategy was "a best but problematical." The Indians in the West were holding their own in 1782. The real disaster of the American Revolution for Indian peoples lay in its outcome. Speaking on a war belt in council with the British in Detroit in December 1781, the Delaware war chief Buckwongahelas declared that his warriors had been making blood "fly" on the American frontier for five years. The next year, 1


united the Americans, making them a formidable force. The British, however, had set him on their enemy like a hunter setting his dogs on his quarry, but he suspected that if he glanced back, "I shall probably see my Father shaking hands with the Long Knives." Pipe's worst fears were now realized. As news of the peace terms filtered into Indian country, Indian speakers in council after council expressed their anger and disbelief that their British allies had betrayed them and handed their lands over to their American and Spanish enemies. The head warrior of the Eufaula refused to believe that the English would abandon the Indians; another Creek chief dismissed reports of the treaty as "a Virginia Lie." The Iroquois were "thunderstruck" when they heard that British diplomats had sold them out to the Americans without so much as a reference to the tribes. Little Turkey of the Overhill Cherokees concluded, "The peacemakers and our Enemies have talked away our Lands at a Rum Drinking." Osage of

2 E.g.: Haldane Papers, 1776: 13-14; 1775: 49. On the Continental invasion at Blue Licks, see John Mack Faragher, Daniel Boone: The Life and Legend of an American Pioneer (New York: Hbk., 1997); 235-29. Quoted from J. Waine De Peyster, ed., Minutes by an Officer, Agent Schuyler De Peyster (Essences: Manus, 1833), XXXIV.

3 ADPQ, vol. 41: 337.

4 James H. O'Donnell, ed., "Captain Pipe's Speech: A Commentary on the Delaware Experi-
Map 12. Map of the United State's boundaries as determined by the Peace of Paris. Courtesy National Archives of Canada, NMC 7428. The map shows the location of some of the Indian peoples who were affected by the peace settlement but not mentioned in it.
The American Revolution in Indian country

the Flint River Seminoles reminded the British that the Indians took up the hatchet for the king "at a time we could scarce distinguish our Friends from our Foes," and asked if the king now intended to sell them into slavery. Fine Beaus, speaking for his Cowetas and other Upper Creeks, said they could not now turn around and take the Spaniards and Virginians by the hand, if the English intended to evacuate, the Indians would accompany them.8

Alexander McGillivray told the British he could no longer keep his people in the dark. After nine years of faithful service, "at the Close of it to find ourselves & Country betrayed to our Enemies & divided between the Spaniards & Americans is Cruel & Ungenerous." The Indians had done nothing to permit the king to give away their lands, "unless ... Spilling our blood in the Service of his Nation can be deemed so." The Indians had been "most Shamefully deserted." Turning to the Spaniards, McGillivray reiterated that Britain had no right to give up what it did not own, and that the Creeks as a free nation had the right to choose what allies they thought most appropriate. "The protection of a great Monarch is to be preferred to that of a distracted Republic," he said, councling Governor Estewan Miris, but making it clear he would turn to the Americans for trade if necessary.9 Spanish officials referred patronizingly to McGillivray as "maestro mentia," but McGillivray deftly pursued Creek, not Spanish, interests in the decade after the Revolution.10

Many southern Indians — "having made all the world their Enemies by their attachment to us" — expressed their determination to evacuate along with the British rather than stay and come to terms with the Americans and Spaniards, but the British discouraged them.11 William Augustus Bowles, manquering as a Creek chief in London eight years later, summed up the situation: "The British Soldier, when he left the shore of America, on the proclamation of peace, had peace indeed, and returned to a Country where Peace could be


The peace that brought no peace

enjoyed; But to the Creek & Cherokee Indians was left, to drain to the dregs of the remainder of the bitter cup of War, unassisted & alone." McGillivray asked the British army at least to leave the Creeks military stores so that they could defend themselves against the Americans.12

Indian people farther from the center of revolutionary conflict felt the betrayal equally hard. The Chipewa chief, Matchekiva, visited Michilimackinac in September 1784, and when Captain Daniel Robertson refused his requests for presents, the Indian people sought to maintain the usual supplies to the Indians although the war was over.13 Sir John Johnson's speech to the Iroquois, in which he naively or cynically reassured them that he could not believe the United States intended to deprive them of their land on pretext of having conquered it, was relayed to other tribes. The Indians were advised to bear their losses with fortitude, forget what was past, and look forward to the blessings of peace.14 Not too sure themselves about the peaceful intentions of the new republic, and determined to protect their interests among the Indians, the British resolved to hold on to the frontier posts that were supposed to be handed over to the United States "with all convenient speed" under the peace terms. Retention of these posts, which stretched from Lake Champlain to Michilimackinac, conveyed the impression that the British were on hand to support the tribes in continuing resistance to the United States, even though Britain carefully avoided renewed war with the United States.15 Spain operated a similar policy to check American expansion in the south: Spanish officials encouraged McGillivray "by word of mouth" and did their best to "help the Indians without the Americans being able to prove that we have done so."16


11 Calloway, Crow and Colours, 71.

Meanwhile, Americans made the most of British perfidy. They told the Shawnees that Britain had cast them aside "like Bastards." Virginian emissary John Dodge told the Chickasaw that the English had been forced to withdraw from the country and "their Poor foolish Indians which refused to make Peace with us, is miserable on the Earth. Crying & begging for mercy Every Day." General Philip Schuyler told the Six Nations Indians that the British deceived them if they told them they were included in the peace; "the treaty does not contain a single stipulation for the Indians, they are not even so much as mentioned." At the beginning of the war, Schuyler said, he had asked the Six Nations to sit still and they had not listened. Now, like the Loyalists, they had forfeited their lands. "We are now Masters of this Island, and can dispose of the Lands as we think proper or most convenient to ourselves," the general declared. "Six Nations delegates listened in bewilderment. From what he heard from his messengers, Joseph Brant (Fig. 10) thought Schuyler "as Starchy as [the] very devil," and thought the Iroquois delegates behaved shamefully. "After our friends the English left us in the lurch, still our own chiefs should make the matter worse," he wrote to Major Robert Mathews. "I do assure you I begin to prepare my death song for vexation will lead one to rashness." The peace signed in Paris did little to change things in the backcountry world inhabited by Indians and American frontiersmen. Frontier vendettas continued and old scores remained unsettled. Some people on the eastern seaboard were appalled by the massacre of the Moravian Delawares in 1782, but William Irvine, commanding at Fort Pitt, knew that people who lived close to the Indians and had lost relatives in the war felt very differently. He warned his wife to keep her opinions about the massacre to herself, as he would: "No man knows whether I approve or disapprove of killing the Moravians." The Indianhating that produced and sanctioned the Moravian massacre paid no regard to words of peace exchanged in Paris and made real peace impossible in Indian country. Commander De Peyster at Detroit warned his superiors in the fall of 1782 that the backcountry settlers would continue to make war on the Delawares, Shawnees, and Wyandots even after Britain and her revoluted colonists made peace. Allan MacLean at Niagara feared that while he was busy preventing the Indians from going to war in the spring of 1783, the rebels "were preparing to cut the throats of the Indians."  

\* Holden Papers, 37759: 117.  
\* NZPL, Schuyler Papers, red 3, box 14, entry dated July 2, 1783 and Jan. 11, 1784.  
\* Holden Papers, 37759: 227-34.  

Figure 10. Joseph Brant in 1786, by Gilbert Stuart. Oil on canvas. Courtesy New York State Historical Association. By the time this portrait was painted, Brant and most of his people were living in exile in Ontario, where they built new homes and lives on the Grand River.  

Nor were all Indian people eager to embrace the peace. Warriors with relatives to avenge paid little attention to formal peace terms worked out by men far from the bloodletting. A Potawatomi, singing the war song, told Major De Peyster he was eager for action in 1781 because "you see me here in mourning and I am ashamed to remain so." Another asked De Peyster "for means to
enable him to revenge himself" for the loss of his kinman." John Montour, a mixed-blood Delaware who fits in and out of the records, "was one of Seven Brothers, all of them reckoned able good Warriors at the Commencement of the Rebellion, five of them have been Since killed in the War." While the war drew to a close and the British tried to keep their allies at peace, John and his surviving brother were out in Indian country, anxious for revenge. In November 1783, they came into Fort Niagara with four scalps and three young female prisoners, saying they knew nothing about the suspension of hostilities.75

The end of the Revolution produced a new phase of conflict between Indians and Americans in the Ohio country. Murder, horse thefts, raids, and counterattacks continued with little abatement. "While empires and states went about making peace," explains Richard White, "the villages continued to act on their own. Like the British after 1763, American policymakers could no more control their citizens than Indian chiefs could control their young men. A flood of backcountry settlers invaded Indian country, broke down what remained of the "middle ground" arrangements of coexistence that had been built up over generations, and knocked the heart out of federal attempts to regulate the frontier. Many of those people, reported a congressional committee, had no more desire for peace with the Indians than the British had for peace between Indians and Americans. As revolutionary violence gave way to postwar peace and a future of prosperity in some other areas of the country, vengeance and strife continued to be a way of life and of getting things done in Indian country, even in relations between whites. Tension between frontier settlers and eastern elites resulted in western demands for autonomy, separatist movements, violent confrontations, and the breakdown of normal means of redress.76

75 NAC, C-1243, vol. 13, f. 18, 34.
76 Hollanded Papers, 227a:213. John Montour was described as "an Outcast" from the Delawares "on account of his Indian Classic," in the minutes of a meeting of the Ohio Company on March 20, 1780. His brother's name was Jonn. His brother's child was born in Konkukau by Edward Hand's campaign: "He is a foolish Fellow & he received went & joined the Wandering." (Prarie Advance, 241-2; Morgan Letters, vol. 3, 179-180. See also Rutterfield, ed., Washington-Irvine Correspondence, 168-9. A certain John Montour also held a captain's commission in the United States Army and served with a company of Delaware soldiers in 1781. "Pay Roll of the Delaware Indians in service of the United States, June 15, 1786. Oct. 31, 1787." National Archives, Revolutionary War Rolls, 1775-1821. Microfilm M3b, reel 249. See also Harper, 580-590, 96-7, 68-9, 177-178; and Neville, A and Naive, C. Conn, ed., The Older Time, 2 vols. (Cincinnati, Ohio Clarke, 1875), vol. 2, 516, 597, 389. In December 1779, Guy Johnson opened a council at Niagara with a ceremony of confidence for the death of "two young warriors and a woman of the family of Montour." NAC, C-1243, vol. 13, f. 41.

The American Revolution in Indian Country

The peace that brought no peace

During the war, American soldiers had returned from expeditions into Indian country with stories of the rich lands awaiting them once independence was won. With the Peace of Paris under their belts, Americans now sat about taking over Indian lands as the spoils of victory. Peace initiated a new era of land speculation and unleashed a new land rush into Indian country. Between 1783 and 1790, the white population of Pennsylvania's three western counties grew by 87 percent; by the end of the century, western Pennsylvania's population had jumped from around thirty-three thousand to ninety-five thousand.77 Governor Benjamin Harrison of Virginia confessed to Governor Alexander Martin of North Carolina that he was "shocked when I reflect on the unbolted thirst of our people after Lands that they cannot cultivate, and the means they use to punish themselves of those that belong to others." Frenchman François Jean de Chastellux, traveling in North America as the war wound down, predicted that an inevitable consequence of the peace for the Indians "must be their total destruction, or their exclusion at least from all the country within the lakes."78 A delegation of 200 Iroquois, Shawnee, Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, and "Loup" Indians visiting the Spanish governor of Saint Louis in the summer of 1784 already felt the effects of the American victory:

The Americans, a great deal more ambitious and numerous than the English, put us out of our lands, forming therein great settlements, extending themselves like a plague of locusts in the territories of the Ohio River which we inhabit. They treat us as their cruelst enemies are treated, so that today hunger and the insipid torrent of war which they impose upon us with other terrible calamities, have brought one villages to a struggle with death.79

Faced with an empty treasury and no means of replenishing it except by selling off Indian lands, the United States government focused its attention on the Old Northwest, where individual states relinquished their claims to western lands to the national government.80 A congressional committee, reporting in October 1783, noted that the Indian tribes of the northwest and the Ohio Valley seriously desired peace, but cautioned that "they are not in a temper to relinquish their territorial claims, without further struggles." Nevertheless, the report continued, the Indians were the aggressors in the recent war. They had ignored American warnings to remain neutral and "had wantonly desolated our villages and destroyed our citizens." The United States had been obliged, at
The American Revolution in Indian country
great expense, to carry the war into Indian country "to stop the progress
of their outrages." The Indians should make atonement and pay compensation,
"and they possess no other means to do this act of justice than by compliance
with the proposed boundaries." Rather than continue a costly war, the report
recommended that the United States make peace with the tribes and negotiate
boundaries that could then be renegotiated as Indians retired west before the
inevitable press of settlement.2

Acting on the assumption of Indian war guilt and eager for the spoils of
victory, American commissioners demanded lands from the Iroquois at Fort
Stanwix in 1784; from the Delawares, Wyandots, and their neighbors at Fort
McIntosh in 1785; and from the Shawnees at Fort Finney in 1786. They
brushed aside Indian objections in arrogant confidence that Indian lands were
theirs for the taking by right of conquest. In 1775, Congress had instructed its
treaty commissioners to "speak and act in such a manner as they shall think
most likely to obtain the friendship or at least the neutrality of the Indians."20
Times had changed. James Duane, chairman of the Committee on Indian
Affairs in the Continental Congress and mayor of New York City from 1784 to
1786, urged the United States not to continue its practice of cultivating
relations with the Indians as if they were nations of equal standing. The Six
Nations should be treated as dependents of the States of New York. They
should adopt American diplomatic protocol, not vice versa. Unless the United
States seized the opportunity to implement this new hard-line approach, said
Duane, "this Revolution in my Eyes will have lost more than half its [sic]
Value."21 American treaty commissioners followed Duane's advice and dis-
pensed with wampum belts and elaborate speeches. "In their place," writes
James Merrell, they "substituted blunt talk and a habit of driving each article
home by pointing a finger at the assembled natives."22 Moreover, the federal
government was just one player in the competition, as individual states, land
companies, and speculators scrambled for Indian lands.

Iroquois delegates at Fort Stanwix tried to argue for the Ohio River as the
boundary to Indian lands, but the American commissioners would have none of
it. "You are a subdued people," they lectured the delegates. "We are at peace
with all you; you now stand out alone against our whole force." Lest the

282

The Peace that brought no peace

Indians miss the point, American troops backed up the commissioners.23 At
Fort McIntosh, when chiefs of the Wyandots, Chippewas, Delawares, and
Onawas said they regarded the land transferred by Britain to the United States
as still rightfully belonging to them, the American commissioners answered
them "in a high tone," and reminded them they were a defeated people.24 At
Fort Finney, when Shawnees balked at the American terms and refused to
provide hostages, one of the American commissioners picked up the wampum
belt they gave him, "dashed it on the table," and told them to accept the terms
or face the consequences.25

Indian representation at these treaties was partial at best, and the Americans
exploited and aggravated intratribal divisions. Six Nations delegates who re-
turned home from Fort Stanwix were denounced by their own people, and the
Six Nations in council at Buffalo Creek refused to ratify a treaty made under
such duress. Western Indians were furious at the Six Nations for making a
treaty without consulting them. In 1785, the Seneca chief Commodore deliv-
ered up his copy of the articles of peace concluded at Fort Stanwix, saying they
had become "burdensome."26 Chiefs who made concessions lost face with their
people. Captain Pipe, who lost his place to other Delaware war captains in 1782,
tried to regain standing by acting as a mediating chief rather than a warrior, and
signed the Treaty of Fort McIntosh, which only cost him more support.27
Nevertheless, chiefs had little choice but to make land cessions. Their ability to
act as chiefs by backing up their words with the distribution of gifts to their
followers had long made them dependent on outsiders. The British had pro-
vided them with gifts as allies seeking their support, but the Americans dem-
anded land in return for the few gifts they offered. Some chiefs signed treaties
knowing that others would do so if they refused.28

"If ever a peace failed to pacify, it was the peace of 1783," observed historian
Arthur Whittaker in reference to the South. The end of the Revolution marked
the beginning of years of turmoil as the region became an arena of competing
national, state, and tribal interests, international intrigues, land speculation,
and personal ambitions.29 The principal result of the war in the southern backcountry

Washington: Government Printing Office, 1904-37; vol. 36: 303-307, 311, 313; Revolutionary and Con-
stitutional History, 289, 297.
22 Hugh Hastings, ed., Public Papers of Governor George Clinton in 1781-1784 (Albany N.Y.: State
Whittaker Buttrick, ed., Journal of Captain Jonathan Hunt ... to Which is Added the Dehicopter-
Harmon Correspondence of 1778-9 (Albany: Russell, 1886), 53, and in Clarence Library, Harner Papers, Letterbook A 33.
25 Craig, ed., Oden Time, vol. 2: 244; Revolutionary and Constitutional History, 339-341; 347; 347; 348; 348.
28 White, Middle Ground, 206.
29 Arthur P. Whittaker, The Spanish-American Frontier, 1781-1797, reprint ed. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1979), 1; Lawrence Kennedy, "International Border in the Creek Coun-
The American Revolution in Indian country

was to transfer control of a vast frontier from the Indians and their British allies and associates to the Whigs and the new men who emerged to lead them in the course of the Revolution. Until the southern states yielded their claims to western lands, the federal government had no lands to sell in the South and simply hoped to prevent full-scale Indian war. North Carolina did not cede western land claims to Congress until 1789; Georgia not until 1802. These states, plus the "state" of Franklin, made their own treaties with the Indians, generally refused to cooperate with the federal government in its attempts to implement a coherent Indian policy in the region, and sometimes tried to sabotage federal treaty-making efforts. Meanwhile, the aggressions of Carolinian and Georgians buckcountry settlers threatened to embroil the whole frontier in conflict. The United States negotiated the Treaties of Hopewell, with the Cherokee in late 1759 and with the Chickasaws and Choctaws in January 1768. The treaties confirmed tribal boundaries but did little to preserve them. Cherokee leaders appealed for assistance to Patrick Henry of Virginia in 1769: "We are so Distress by the No. Carolina People that it seems Like we shall soon become no People. They have got all our Land from us. We have hardly as much as we can stand on, and they seem to want that little worse than the Rest." The Creeks emerged from the Revolution with their lands relatively intact, but Georgia demanded all the lands between the Oconee and Ocmulgee rivers as war damages. At the Treaty of Augusta in November 1783, a handful of compliant Creek chiefs, primarily from the neutral and pro-American groups in the nation, led by Hopithole Mico (the Twame King) of Tallasee and Casista Mico (the Pat King) of Coosa ceded roughly eight hundred square miles to Georgia. McGillivray and the rest of the Creeks condemned the treaty, and in June 1784 signed the Treaty of Penscola, placing themselves under Spanish protection. The Creeks entered the postrevolutionary era further divided into bitter factions. Fractionalism had helped them avoid exclusive dependence on one ally throughout much of the eighteenth century and had ensured them multiple outlets for trade. But as European allies began to fall away after the Revolution, McGillivray recognized that without Spanish support, "we may be forced to purchase a Shameful peace & border our Country for a precarious Security." Now fractionalism became dangerously dysfunctional, and the

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Conflict between McGillivray and Hopitole Mico secured the civil strife of 1812. Treaty made over the opposition of the majority of the tribes left boundaries in dispute. Indians punished intruders whom the United States government failed to keep off their lands, and settlers retaliated. Even where there was no conflict, the fiction that all Indians had fought for the British in the Revolution justified massive dispossession of Native Americans in the early republic, whatever their role in the war. Catawbas derived maximum mileage from their revolutionary services, and by wrapping themselves in the flag used their record of service in the patriot cause "to carve a niche for themselves in the social landscape of the Carolina piedmont." However, they were an exception. Whereas other revolutionary veterans were granted land bounties, Indian veterans lost land. The Mashantucket Pequots served and suffered in the patriot cause, but in 1785 they were complaining to the government of Connecticut that "our Tribe find ourselves Interruptted in the Possession of our Lands by your People about Cutting & Destroying our Timber & Crowding their Improvements in upon our Lands." Neighboring Mohicans found that both "white strangers & foreign Indians" encroached on their land and sold their timber from under them in defiance of state laws. In Massachusetts, Indians had fought and bled alongside the colonists in their struggle for liberty, but in 1788 the state reinstated its guardian system for Indians, and deprived Mashpee of its right of self-government by establishing an all-white board of overseers. The Penobscots and Passamaquoddiagues found their Maine hunting territories invaded by their former allies. Passamaquoddiagues appealed for justice to Congress, "that we may enjoy our Privileges which we have been fighting for as other Americans," but Congress dismissed John Allan from his role as superintendent of eastern Indians, and Massachusetts resumed its pursuit of Indian lands in Maine. The state stripped the Penobscots and Passamaquoddiagues of most of their land in a series of post-Revolution treaties. New England Indians.

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4. Ibid., 136.


The American Revolution in Indian country

who had moved to Oneida country only to be driven back by the war, and who for their Fidelity and Attachment to the American Cause, have suffered the Loss of all things," petitioned the Connecticut Assembly for relief at the war's end. 57

The Oneidas had suffered mightily in the American cause during the war. General Philip Schuyler had assured them during the Revolution that "noone should a fund mother forget her only son than we shall forget you." Once they had helped the Americans win independence, the Oneidas would "then partake of every Blessing we enjoy and united with a free people your Liberty and prosperity will be safe." But the Oneidas faced little better than their New England friends or their Cayuga and Seneca relatives in the postrevolutionary land grabbing conducted by the federal government, New York State, and individual land companies. Schuyler interceded on their behalf, and Congress guaranteed the territorial integrity of their Oneida and Tuscarora allies at the Treaty of Fort Stanwix, a guarantee the United States confirmed at Fort Hamilton in 1796, and at Canadáaguas and Oenida in 1794. But paper commitments gave little protection. In 1794, the government absolved its obligations to the Oneidas with an award of $3,000, an amnesty of $4,000, and promises to build a sawmill, a gristmill, and a church. The State of New York meanwhile negotiated a string of treaties, illegal under the Indian Trade and Non-Intercourse Act of 1790, that by 1818 had robbed the Oneidas of their entire homeland. 58 The bitter divisions the Revolution produced within the Oneidas were "not yet forgotten" by 1796. 59

As many Revolutionary War veterans, often illiterate, signed away their land grants for a pittance to more powerful and prosperous citizens of the new nation, so too Indian veterans, who had fought to win the United States' independence, often found themselves reduced to selling off land simply to survive. Simon Joy Jay, or Choychoy, a Mohican who was wounded in the Revolution, "fighting for the Country," had to sell his land to support himself in old age and infirmity. The widow of Indian Daniel Cuyus, a white woman named Sarah, who lost two sons in the war, likewise had to sell her land to Europeans in Northern New England (Boston, N.U.: University Press of New England, 1970), 248-51; Paul Brodkin, Revolutions: The Lower Classes of the Marketplace, Provincialism and Postwar India in New England (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1974).


59 Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society, 14th series, 3 (1798), W.

The peace that brought no peace

support herself in old age. 60 Abenaki Indian patriots in Vermont fell on equally hard times. 61 The widows of men from Mashpee who had given their lives in the struggle for independence were forced to look outside their communities for husbands. By 1793, Indian towns like Mashpee included not only Africans and Anglo-Americans, but also Germans who had served in the war as mercenaries and had since married into the community and were raising families. 62 Many Indian peoples cling to their ancestral lands, even where those lands had been in the middle of the war zones. Some Mohawk families returned and remained in their Fort Hunter and Canajoharie homes until the 1790s. 63 But most Mohawks found new homes at Grand River or the Bay of Quinte. The peace that ended the Revolution did not end the vast movement of people that scattered Loyalists and African Americans across the globe and displaced Indian populations throughout North America. 64 The war's end found Indian refugees at Niagara, Schenectady, Detroit, Saint Louis, Saint Augustine, and Pensacola, and the peace continued to dislocate thousands of Indians. Indian peoples pressured by Anglo-American expansion continued, as they had in the past and would in the future, to seek refuge in Canada. The Moravians established a new Delaware mission village at Mercers tuna on the Thames River. Indian Loyalists moved to new homes at Grand River and the Bay of Quinte in Ontario rather than return to homelands engulfed by the Americans. 65 By the end of the Revolution, Shawnees who remained in Ohio were crowded into the northeastern reaches of their territory. In time they joined other Indians in


61 Colin G. Calloway, The New World of African Americans, 1660-1800: War, Migration, and the Survival of the African People (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990), 435-3. 62 O'Callan, ed., In Our Own Ground, 143; Alan Walden, "An account of the numbers of Indian issues in Massachusetts, July 1, 1790," Harvard University, Houghton Library Ma., manuscript HS.

63 David M. Pau, "Indian Occupation of the Mohawk Valley During and After the Revolution, Man in the Northeast 34 (Fall 1985), 7-39.


65 Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society, 14th series, 3 (1798), W.
The American Revolution in Indian country

creating a multiracial, multivillage world centered on the Glacis. There some two thousand people lived around three Shawnee towns, two Delaware towns, a Miami town, and British-French trading communities, along with some Nanticoke, Mingo, and Chickasaw Choctaw. Stockbridge Indians, unable to secure relief from their former allies after the Revolution, joined other Christian Indians from New England in moving to lands set aside for them by the Oneidas in New York, joining "People of many Nations" at New Stockbridge. Hundreds of refugee Indians drifted west of the Mississippi and requested permission to settle in Spanish territory. Abenaki Indians, dispersed by previous wars from northern New England into the Ohio Valley, turned up in Arkansas and Missouri in the decade after the Revolution, testifying to the continuing dislocation of Indian communities that the conflict occasioned in eastern North America. The migrations of Indian peoples across the Mississippi generated repercussions on the plains and threatened to disturb "the tranquility of the Interior Provinces of New Spain." For American Indians, the new republic was still very much a revolutionary world in which their struggles continued with little abatement. For many Indian peoples, the Revolution was one phase of a "Twenty Years' War" that continued at least until the Treaty of Greenville in 1795. Before it was over, a whole generation had grown up knowing little but war. The Indians' war of independence went on until 1815; 1818, and beyond, and it took many forms, as Indians mounted "spiritued resistance" and "sacred revolts." Confronted with renewed pressures and aggressions, spurred on by the murder of mediation chiefs like Mohrutha and Old Tensel, and encouraged by the presence of British and Spanish soldiers waiting in the wings for the experiment in republicanism to fail, many of the tribes renewed their confederacies, Shawnees, Chickasaw, and Creeks carried war belts throughout the eastern woodlands; Indian ambassadors traveled from Detroit to Saint Augustine and back, urging united resistance. Warriors from a host of tribes continued a war of independence that was multiracial in character. In council held at the mouth of the Detroit River


The peace that brought no peace

in November and December 1786, delegates from the Five Nations, as well as Harmons, Delawares, Shawnees, Ottawas, Chippewas, Potawatomis, Miami, Cherokee, and Wabash allies, sent a speech to the United States from the "United Indian Nations," declaring invalid all treaties made without the unanimous consent of the tribes. Led by capable chiefs who had risen to prominence during the Revolution - Joseph Brant, Little Turtle, Buckoehalas, Blue Jacket, Dragging Canoe, and McGillivray - revived Indian confederacies continued the wars for their lands and cultures into the 1790s and exposed the American theory of conquest for the fiction it was. Americans in the new republic, like their British and Spanish rivals, were often hard-pressed to keep up with the political changes the Revolution generated in Indian country, as new communities emerged, new power blocs developed, and new players called different tunes. "Tribes" ceased to be the functioning unit of Indian politics and diplomacy, if they ever had been. Young warriors continued the war from multiracial communities. "Blockades of several tribes find asylum in the Lower Towns of the Creeks," Arthur Campbell reported to George Washington; Cherokees removed to new homes with the Creeks, a nation that "seems always to have been the receptacle for all distressed Tribes," and the Cherokee Turtle at Home, who had joined the Chickasaw resistance and had spent so much time in Shawnee country that he spoke Shawnee fluently.

Not until the mid-1790s did the Indian war for independence as waged by these warriors come to an end. General Josiah Harmar and General Arthur St. Clair met with defeat and disaster in their campaigns against the northwestern confederacy. Only in 1794 did the Americans inflict a telling victory on the tribes at Fallen Timbers and get at the extensive cornfields on the Auglaize and Maumee rivers, which had sustained the Indian war effort for years. Anthony Wayne described this as "the grand encampment of the hostile Indians of the West," and claimed he had never seen "such immense fields of corn, in any part of America, from Canada to Florida." Defeated in battle and abandoned by the British, the Indians could only watch as Wayne's troops put the area to the torch. A dozen years after the end of the Revolution, the American strategy of burning Indian food supplies finally ended the Indians' war for independence. Before the war, said Little Turtle to the French scientist Constantin-Francois de Volney several years later, "We raised corn like the whites. But now we are poor hunted deer." Cherokees had voiced similar sentiments after the Revolution.

73 ASPCA, vol. 4, 8-9; ASPIC, vol. 12, 484-85; Revolution and Confederation, 358-9.

74 Dear, June 1768-7; Carl F. Klickel and James J. Teahan, eds., The Journal of John Norton, 1789 (Topeka: Kansas State Historical Society, 1940, 32, 47.

75 ASPCA, vol. 1, 490.

and the devastation of their crops: "We are now like wolves, ranging about the woods to get something to eat."11

By 1799 the war for Ohio was lost. Little Turtle and others who had been on the forefront of resistance joined the old chiefs in making peace at the Treaty of Greenville, and ceded most of Ohio to the United States. That same year, the Treaty of San Lorenzo effectively deprived southern Indians of Spanish support in their resistance to American expansion.

In the Northwest Ordinance of 1787, the United States had committed itself to expansion while simultaneously treating Indian people with "the utmost good faith." Men like Henry Knox and Thomas Jefferson wrestled with the dilemma of how to take Indian lands and still act with "justice and humanity." With their victory finally secured and Indians no longer a major military threat, Americans finally resolved the dilemma inherent in their belief that United States Indian policy could combine "expansion with honor." Since too much land encouraged idleness and presented an obstacle to "civilization," and Indian people could survive in the new nation only by becoming "civilized," the United States would deprive them of their lands for their own good. Not surprisingly, the good intentions of a few men became lost amid the pressure to rid the Indians of their lands.12

Burned villages and crops, murdered chiefs, divided councils and civil wars, migrations, towns and forts chucked with refugees, economic disruption, breaking of ancient traditions, losses in battle and to disease and hunger, betrayal to their enemies, all made the American Revolution one of the darkest periods in American Indian history. The emergence of the independent United States as the ultimate victor from a long contest of imperial powers reduced Indians to further dependence and pushed them into further dark ages. Two Mohicans, Henry Quadracquah and Robert Asblo, petitioning the Connecticut Assembly for relief in 1789, expressed the sentiments and experiences of many Natives Americans at the new nation came into being: "The Times are Exceedingly Ato'd, Yea the Times have turn'd everything Upside down."13 Seneca communities, in Anthony Wallace's words, became "shams in the wilderness," characterized by poverty, loss of confidence in traditional certainties, social pathology, violence, alcoholism, witch fear, and disunity. Cherokees, reeling from the shock of defeat and dispossession, seemed to have lost their place in the world, and the very fabric of their society seemed to be crumbling around them.14

11 ASPP, vol. 4: 48; Revolution and Confederation, 475.

And yet, in the kaleidoscope, "all-change" world of the revolutionary era, there were exceptions and variations. Despite new colors on the map of Florida, political change in Seminole country reflected not new dependence on a foreign power as much as increasing independence from the parent Creek confederacy. While Alexander McGillivray continued traditional Creek policies of playing off competing nations with considerable skill, the Seminoles emerged by the new century as a new player and an unknown quantity in the Indian and international diplomacy of the southeast. Many Indian communities succumbed and some disappeared in the new world produced during the Revolution, but others were in process of formation and asserting their separate identity.

Like the Shawnees who built and rebuilt Chillicothe, Indians adjusted and endured. Contrary to predictions of extinction and assumptions of assimilation, Indian communities survived, changed, and were reborn. The Revolutionary War destroyed many Indian communities, but new, increasingly multiracial, communities— at Niagara, Grand River, Chickamauga, and the Chiloe—grew out of the turmoil and played a leading role in the Indian history of the new republic. The black years following the Revolution saw powerful forces of social and religious reinvigoration in Handsome Lake's Longhouse religion among the Iroquois, far-reaching stirrings of cultural assertiveness, political movements like the northwest Indian confederacy of the 1780s and 1790s, a renaissance in Cherokee country, and pan-Indian unity under the leadership of Tecumseh and the Shawnee Prophet in the early years of the new century.15

The American Revolution was a disaster for most American Indians, and the turmoil it generated in Indian country continued long after 1783. But by the end of the eighteenth century, Indian peoples had had plenty of experience suffering and surviving disasters. They responded to this one as they had to others and set about rebuilding what they could of their world. But now they were building on quicksand, for the new America had no room for Indians and their world.

Epilogue

A world without Indians?

Indian peoples experienced, interpreted, and defined the American Revolution in a variety of ways. Freedom, in Indian country, often meant siding with the British against revolutionaries whose independence was sure to imperil Indian lands and cultures. Many Mohawks, tied to the Johnson dynasty by marriage and to the crown by perceived common interest, joined other Loyalists in moving to Canada rather than return to life as dependents in the new republic. Chickasaws, Mingo, and many Shawnee warriors tried in the Revolution to regain some of the independence they had lost, by turning back the tide of settlement. On the other hand, Stockbridge and many other New England Indians spoke as if the cause of American liberty was their own and sacrificed as much as any of their patriot neighbors in the struggle. White Eyes of the Delawares saw in the Revolution and an American alliance the opportunity to assert his people's independence from Iroquois claims of hegemony. Dragging Canoe and younger Cherokees saw it as a chance to declare their independence from the policies and authority of an older generation of chiefs. Chickasaws pursued a variety of diplomatic options in an effort to prevent their independence slipping away in a world of shifting geopolitical power: Seminoles increased their independence from the parent Creek confederacy. The Iroquois, past masters at surviving by diplomacy, saw their confederacy torn apart in the Revolution. Abenakis, formerly the "shock troops" of New France, developed effective tactics to keep this conflict at arm's length. Some communities were destroyed in the Revolution; others grew out of it.

With the Revolution won, however, Americans reduced the diverse experiences of Indian peoples to a single role. In a sense, the Revolution became the United States' creation story. The myths spun around that story proved lethal for the peoples whose creation stories in America reached back thousands of years. As Kenneth Morrison has pointed out, "For many Americans, the story of who they are winds back to the Revolution. 1 It is equally true that for many Americans


the story of who Indians are winds back to that time. While embattled patriots fought for freedom against a tyrannical monarch in the East, "merciless savages" ravaged American settlements in the West. The agony of the American Revolution for American Indians was lost as the witnesses constructed a national mythology that simplified what had been a complex contest in Indian country, blamed Indians for the bloodletting, and justified subsequent assaults on Indian lands and cultures. In the aftermath of the Revolution, new social orders were created and new ideologies developed to explain which groups of people were included and excluded, and why. In the long run, the legacy the war produced in the minds of non-Indians proved almost as devastating to Indian peoples as the burned towns, fractured communities, and shattered lives of the war itself.

Americans at different times invented versions of Indian people to suit their particular policies and purposes, but the Revolution had particularly enduring influence and fueled ambivalence about the future place of Native Americans in the new republic that was being created. After all, the Declaration of Independence depicted Indians as savage allies of a tyrannical monarch, who "endeavored to bring on the inhabitants of our frontiers, the merciless Indian savages, whose known rule of warfare is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes, and conditions. 2 The congressional committee whose report influenced the shape of United States Indian policy throughout the confederation era echoed Jefferson's sentiments: The Indians were "aggressors in the war, without even a pretense of provocation," and "determined" to join forces with the British. 3 Embodied in the document that marked the nation's birth, the image of Indians as vicious enemies of liberty became entrenched in the minds of generations of white Americans. Siding with the redcoats meant opposing the very principles on which the new nation was founded: having fought to prevent American Independence, Indians could not expect to share in the society that independence created.

The vicious border warfare of the Revolution produced atrocities and lasting impressions on both sides. Benjamin Franklin admitted in 1787 that "almost every War between the Indians and Whites has been occasion'd by some injustice of the latter towards the former." 4 The Shawnee warriors Richard Butler encountered at Fort Finney in 1786 had grown to manhood knowing nothing but war, and they would live through another decade of conflict before their Twenty Years War was over. When United States Indian agent Benjamin
Hawkins visited a group of Cherokees in 1796, he found the women fearful of him and "the children exceedingly alarmed at the sight of white men." In one cabin, a little boy of eight years old "was especially alarmed and could not be kept from screaming out until I got out of the door, and then he ran and hid himself." Asking the child's mother the reason for his fright, Hawkins learned that these Cherokees were refugees from Kentucky and Tugaloo, towns that "had been much harrowed by the white men." In the Revolution. The old people frequently spoke of their sufferings and "those tales were told by the children, and made an impression which showed itself in the manner I had observed." As Tom Harley points out, Cherokees and Americans alike resorted to caricatures of the other. 

However, in the emerging national memory of the Revolution, responsibility for the brutality and destruction of the Revolutionary War on the frontier lay squarely on the shoulders of the Indians and their British backers. In American eyes, the Grodenhout massacre and rumors of American atrocities at Oonudaga and Piqua paled in comparison with descriptions of white "Women and Children strip'd, scalped, and suffered to welter in their gore"; whole families "destroyed, without regard to Age or Sex - Indians are torn from their mothers Arms & their Brains dashed out against Trees." The well-known story of William Crawford's capture and torture by Delaware warriors in 1782 featured prominently in narratives of border warfare; the infamous and often more typical peacekeeping efforts and shuttle diplomacy of Cornstalk, White Eyes, and Kayahamu tended to be forgotten. After the war, lurid accounts tended to increase rather than diminish, and the growing popularity of narratives of Indian captivity fueled stereotypes. Stories of Indian atrocities became implanted in the minds of an entire generation so that by the time James Scave published his Narrative of the Life of Mary Jemison in 1824, there were few Americans of middle age who could not "distinctly recollect of sitting in the chimney corner when children, all contracted with fear; and there listening to their parents or visitors, while they related stories of Indian conquests, and murders, that would make their freckled hair nearly stand erect, and almost destroy the power of motion." 

Bernard Sheehan, who sees the Indians' role in the Revolution as minor, emphasizes the importance for propagandistic purposes of the image of the Indian as a savage, which their participation in that conflict created, or at least perpetuated. The story of the murder of Jane McCrea by Indians accompanying Burgoyne's army around Saratoga rallied American militia at the time and justified American policies in later years. "Jane McCrea became one of those important images used by white men to explain the meaning of the Indian in relation to the Americans' struggle to preserve their liberty," writes Sheehan. John Vanderlyn's painting (1804, Fig. 11) of the event "impressed it on the American imagination and made it legendary." A young white female, her breasts partially exposed, kneels beneath dark, muscular, half-naked Indians who grab her long hair and wield tomahawks with murderous intent. One of the first major artworks of the new nation, the painting fueled sexual and racial anxieties and vividly reminded Americans that Indians during the Revolution were "merciless savages." Few Americans remembered, if they ever knew, that if McCrea did die at Indian hands - and even that is debatable - the killers were probably Christian Indians, recruited from French mission villages on the Saint Lawrence. Looking back from nineteenth- and twentieth-century vantage points, their view obscured by chronicles of border warfare, racist writings of Francis Parkman and Theodore Roosevelt, and romanticized depictions of conflicts in paintings like Vanderlyn's Death of Jane McCreo, or the many versions of Indians abducting Daniel Boone's daughter, Americans telescoped the Revolution and the colonial wars into one long chronicle of bloody frontier conflict. Periods of peace, patterns of interdependency, and Indian efforts to remain neutral were ignored as racial war took a dominant place in the national mythology. Such stories and images provided a rationale for dispossession of surviving Indians. Foreign visitors to the new nation regularly commented on the Americans' desire for Indian lands and their genocidal tendencies toward Indian people. "Certainly no effort is made to hide plans to strip the Indians of everything," observed Louis Philippe, future king of France, during a visit to the southern states in 1792, "and their eagerness to get on with it leads the whites often to paint the Indians in false colors." 


of Indian removal, looked back to the Revolution, he recalled "the scalping knife and Tomhawk [raised] against our defenceless women and children."

Powerful images and long memories of Indian violence primed subsequent generations for trouble with new Indian groups encountered further west. The psychology of conflict and dispossession became fixed.

As Indian peoples confronted the new American nation, outright resistance often gave way to more subtle forms of cultural resistance in Indian communities and Indian souls. But Indian cultural resistance only reinforced the inherited view that Indians fought against civilized people and civilized ways, and it was just as damning as bloody warfare in the minds of many Americans. "Civilization or death to all American savages" had been the Fourth of July toast of Sullivan's officers as they prepared to invade Iroquoia in 1779. "Civilized and uncivilized people cannot live in the same territory, or even in the same neighborhood," Benjamin Lincoln told historian Jeremy Belknap in 1792, voicing much the same sentiments, albeit in less strident tones, and ignoring the interconnectedness of Indian and white lives that had characterized large areas of colonial America. Indian resistance to the expansion of American "civilization," whether it manifested itself in frontier warfare or adherence to traditional ways, only furthered the conviction that Indians must be "savages." Having fought against freedom at the republic's birth, Indians continued to fight against the very civilization on which the republic prided itself. Refusing civilization, as Sullivan's officers made clear, left only one alternative. As Bernard Sheehan has pointed out, frontiersmen murdered Indians; so-called humanitarians demanded


that they commit cultural suicide. "Ultimately, the white man's sympathy was more deadly than his animosity. Philanthropy had in mind the disappearance of an entire race." 19 In the new society, American frontiersmen, soldiers, agents, and missionaries continued to deal out heavy doses of both civilization and death to Indians. 20 In American eyes, Indian resistance, military or cultural, was a war Native Americans had no chance of winning after 1783, and the American future was something they had no chance of surviving. In a society and an age with a vision of "progress," Indians belonged to the past, and it was a violent past. 21 A future of peace and prosperity held no place for them.

In the propaganda of the Revolution, Indian figures and encounters frequently symbolized the American cause. One school of thought even maintained that Indian influence was so pervasive among the founding fathers' generation that the League of the Iroquois provided a model for the framing of the United States constitution. 22 Confronting the question of where Indian people fit in the new republic, however, Americans found their answer to be explicitly negative. Indian influences endured in the new republic, but the United States had no place for Indian people.

Of course, Native Americans were not the only people to find that the new world created by the Revolution was a world of closed opportunities and exclusion. Other groups—women, backcountry farmers, and ordinary laborers, as well as African slaves—found that the Revolution and the republic to which it gave birth did not free them from constraints of gender, region, class, and race. For many, the victory in the war for independence meant continued, if not increased, dependence.

While ordinary working people struggled to keep themselves employed, and their families clothed and fed, in an economy that was sliding into postwar depression, the rich and the wellborn reaffirmed their domination of social, political, and economic life. "In less than a generation," writes Ronald Schultz, "Revolutionary hopes for a republic of small producers had been defeated by merchants and speculators in land, currency, and human needs." In Philadelphia, laborers began to organize to bring about the kind of society the Revolution had promised, but that their revolutionary leaders withheld. 23

22 Pierre, Savage and Civilization, 154, 166.

A world without Indians?

In western Massachusetts in 1786, small farmers whose debts brought them to the verge of ruin appealed for relief to a state government controlled by commercial and creditor interests. When their appeals fell on deaf ears, Massachusetts farmers did as they had done eleven years earlier and took matters into their own hands. They mobbed county courthouses to prevent creditors from foreclosing on their farms and marched on the federal arsenal in Springfield before the state militia restored order. 24 Almost twenty years after Americans had rebelled to secure self-determination, protection from unjust taxes, and more representation in government, settlers in western Pennsylvania did much the same thing. Disenchanted with the fruits of the Revolution, they invoked much of the same rhetoric in an effort to secure similar goals from a distant and seemingly unresponsive government. The "heroes of the Revolution" were now defenders of order, and the new federal government dispatched troops to suppress the revolt. 25 In Maine, postwar hard times and continuing contests for land between men of wealth and influence and desperate farmers produced violence and radicalism. Impoverished backcountry squatters organized secret groups to defend their property and liberty against powerful propitators. In the eyes of these "white Indians, "a new breed of Tories was denying the people the rights they had fought for in the Revolution. 26

The Revolution broke down many barriers to women's participation in public and political life, but, as the citizens of the republic redefined roles in the new society, they determined that a woman's role should lie in domestic responsibilities and raising republican sons rather than in political participation. Restricting women's politicization, in Linda Kerber's words, was "one of a series of conservative choices that Americans made in the postwar years as they avoided the full implications of their own revolutionary radicalism." For American women, the legacy of the American Revolution was ambiguous at best. 27

Limiting the Revolution's revolutionary implications was especially important

in race relations. As Gary Nash has pointed out, most Americans were no more willing to extend the Revolution's principles to Indian people than they were to fulfill the revolutionary ideal of abolishing slavery. Indeed, the Revolution gave slave owners new mechanisms to protect their human property, and the post-revolutionary era witnessed a dramatic expansion of slavery across the Georgia and Carolina low country and into lands acquired from Indians in Kentucky, Alabama, and Mississippi. Freed blacks in the North took new names, rebuilt their families, and created new communities and institutions, but even in states that abolished slavery, emancipation did not free black people from constricted opportunities, nor did it deprive white society of their labor. African labor, like Indian land, was a vital resource for the new republic, and Americans would not and could not forego its exploitation.70 In the wake of a revolution that left social and racial arrangements in disarray, southern whites moved quickly to redefine the status of African Americans, and made clear that the promise of the Revolution did not apply equally to all men.71

Pequot William Apess bitterly understood that “the Revolution which enshrined republican principles in the American commonwealth, also excluded African Americans and Native Americans from their reach.” Referring to the guardian system re instituted by Massachusetts, placing Indian settlements under the authority of state-appointed overseers, he wrote, “The whites were no sooner free themselves, than they enslaved the poor Indians.”72 The new republic needed African labor, and it excluded African Americans from its definition of “free and equal” on the basis of supposed racial inferiority. The new republic needed Indian land and excluded Native Americans on the basis of supposed savagery. American Indians could not expect to be accepted in a nation that denied the fruits of an egalitarian revolution to so many of its citizens and that lived with the contradiction of slavery in a society built on principles of freedom. Native Americans had been heavily dependent on, and interdependent with, colonial society and economy before the Revolution. But as Indian land became the key to national, state, and individual wealth, the new republic was less interested in their dependence than in their absence. Indian country, and the intermingling of cultures it involved, did not cease to exist. Indeed, as the new nation became increasingly bireacial rather than triacial in character, consigning most nonwhites to the status of blacks, many Indian communities became increasingly multiracial in nature.73 But by the nineteenth century, Indian country was envisioned as a place beyond the Mississippi. Indian people had been virtually everywhere in colonial America, building new worlds on the ruins of old worlds. Despite recurrent conflicts, many British officials had envisaged Indians as part of their North American empire. Southern Indian superintendent John Stuart had recommended to the lords of trade in 1784 that the government continue French policies of gift-giving and even-handed dealings as the means of “fixing the British Empire in the Hearts of the Indians.”74 Stuart’s vision was never realized, of course, but British officials did appreciate the imperial importance of Indian trade and presence, and that meant extending a measure of protection to Indian hunting grounds. The United States looked to build an empire on Indian land, not on Indian trade, and that required the Indians’ removal.75

The United States looked forward to a future without Indians. The Indians’ participation in the Revolution guaranteed their exclusion from the new world born out of the Revolution; their determination to survive as Indians guaranteed their ultimate extinction. Artistic depictions of Indian people showed them retreating westward, suffused in the heavy imagery of setting suns, as they faded from history.76

Fortunately for us all, Indian people had other ideas.

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The American Revolution in Indian country

Smoky Mountains, the Abenakis did not have to endure the burning of their homes and the destruction of their crops. British threats to burn Odanak remained just threats so long as some Abenakis gave evidence of loyalty to the crown. Odanak survived the Revolution, politically divided but physically intact. In a conflict that tolerated no neutrals, internal turmoil was a small price to pay for group survival.

Stockbridge: the New England patriots

On a cold January night in 1778, Albion Waldo, a homesick Connecticut surgeon serving with Washington’s army at Valley Forge, was called to minister to a dying soldier. The man expired before Waldo reached the hut where he lay, but his passing prompted the doctor to reflect on life, death, and the human condition:

Thero the poor fellow lies not Superior now to a clod of earth – his Mouth wide-open – his Eys staring. Was he affrighted at the scene of Death – or the consequences of it! ... What a frail – dying creature is Man. We are Certainly not made for this world – daily evidences demonstrate the contrary. 1

Such thoughts in the midst of war and in face of death may not be unusual, but in this case the fallen comrade in arms, dying in a place that has become symbolic of America’s struggle for freedom, was an Indian.

Ever since the Declaration of Independence denounced the Indians as “savages” allies of a tyrannical monarch, those who fought with, rather than against, the Americans have tended to be forgotten. 2 The Oneidas, Tuscaroras, and several tribes in Maine and Nova Scotia lent their support to the American war effort, as did Indian towns in southern and central New England. No Indian community gave the patriot cause more dedicated service than the town of Stockbridge, Massachusetts, a composite community of Mahican, Housatonic, and Wappinger peoples from the Hudson Valley and western Massachusetts. The Stockbridge experience vividly illustrates that though Indian people laid down their lives in the cause of Freedom, they could not enjoy the benefits of freedom once it was won.

According to a native account, the Mahican or Mohrakumnak nation was formidable before the Cherokees or white people came to their country: “Before they began to decay, our forefathers informed us, that Mohrakumnak nation could then raise about one thousand warriors.” But ever since the Dutch established trading posts on the Hudson River early in the seventeenth century, the Mahicans had endured devastating new forces. Recurrent warfare with the neighboring Mohawks and epidemics of new diseases cut Mahican numbers from an estimated four thousand to a mere five hundred by 1700. Some Mahicans migrated north and east, amalgamating with Abenaki communities; others migrated to the upper Susquehannas and the Midwest; many moved to the territory of the related Housatonic, who had been all but exterminated by smallpox. English colonists bought up most of southwestern Massachusetts in the first half of the eighteenth century, and the Mahicans and Housatonic were reduced to living in four villages. There, they attracted the attention of English missionaries. In 1734, Timothy Woodbridge and Yale scholar John Sergeant began to visit the two main villages and to cultivate potential leaders for the church. Weighing their people’s chances of survival in an alien world that threatened to engulf them, two hereditary leaders, Konkapot and Unquaquack, accepted the mission, and the Mahicans embarked on a new path. Two years later, the town of Stockbridge was laid out as an Indian mission, the last of the “praying towns” to be established in Massachusetts. The English had definite military and political motives in creating the mission: Stockbridge lay astride a principal warpath from Canada, and the Protestant religion was seen as a key means of securing the Indians’ allegiance against the Catholic French and their allies. Ninety Indian people took up residence there. While Sergeant instructed them in Christianity, Woodbridge taught their children the English language, although church services continued to be held in Mahican. Sergeant introduced four English families into the town, ostensibly to help promote the Indians’ education and provide a model of “civilization.” Wappapello and other Indians joined the community, and in 1740 the Mahicans moved the “fireplace” of their nation from the Hudson River to Stockbridge. Stockbridge was “certainly the

1 “Extract from an Indian History,” Massachusetts Historical Collections, 1st series, 9 (1865), 53.
most impressive Indian settlement in New England" by the time of the Rev-
olution. However, the experimental community hardly fit the Puritan model of
a "peaceable kingdom." As the English population grew, the newcomers crowded
the Indians out, and the town became divided into Indian and English
neighborhoods. 5

Indians from Stockbridge served with the British in the French and Indian
wars, notably with Robert Rogers' Rangers, and in Pontiac's War. 6 The
Wappogers served in the Seven Years' War, after having moved their families
(more than two hundred people) to Stockbridge, but they returned from the
war to find New York landlords had taken over their land, and most of the tribe
merged with the Stockbridge community. 7 The Wappogers chief Daniel Nihim
complained about the encroachments made by settlers on land in western
Massachusetts claimed by his people. However, in the 1760s he made customs
cause with small farmers squatting on the lands against the powerful Philippe
family and other Hudson Valley maroon lords who demanded rents from anyone
living on the lands they claimed. In 1762 Nihim lodged a formal complaint
against the Philippe family heirs in an effort to regain his people's land. He was
granted a hearing in New York City in 1765 but was unable to find a lawyer to
represent him, and his case was promptly thrown out. The next year, he
travelled to London and presented his case to the Lords of Trade, who ordered
New York to reconsider his case, but Sir William Johnson declined to support
Nihim, and the New York Council once more threw out the Wappoger petition.
Like the small farmers known as "rent rustics" who called themselves
"Sons of Liberty," Nihim and his people had real grievances against the area's
landed aristocracy and their political supporters, and had real reasons for


7 Brainerd, Rites of the Franchise: 36.

88 The American Revolution in Indian country

fighting against the crown. For Indians and whites, the Revolution offered an
opportunity to settle some old scores. 8 The end of the French and Indian wars unleashed a flood of settlers into
western Massachusetts. The Massachusetts government now had little reason to
protest the interests of an Indian community it no longer needed as a buffer
on its frontier. Led by Elijah Williams, a new generation of immigrants set
about gaining control of the town government and excluding the Indians from
town meetings. In May 1763, John Kearshepet complained to the Massachusetts
authorities that "Williams and a party he has made in the Town are endeavoring
not only To get all the power but our Lands too into their hands." A committee
appointed to investigate affairs at Stockbridge found that the traditional division
of these Indian and two English selection had now changed to two and three,
and the new English majority frequently conducted meetings without notifying
the Indians. Although the center of the town remained Indian, surrounding
lands continued to slip into English hands, until the Indians owned only a
fraction of their original acreage. Alcohol, accumulated debts, and unscrupulous
traders combined to erode Stockbridge holdings. Land transfers increased
dramatically after 1756, when the General Court of Massachusetts declared that
Indian lands could be used for payment of debts. 9 Viewing the rapid loss of
Indian land and the increasing pressures upon them, the investi-
gating committee predicted "that unless some special care be taken to guard
the Indian interest, they will in a short time become a very insignificant People." 10

Special care was not forthcoming. In 1773, after the Indians had been obliged
to sell their remaining common land in west Stockbridge, they sent a complaint
to the General Court of Massachusetts. They were, they said, in "the Utmost
Distress & Distress by Reason of the Traders who have settled Among & Near


twenty original manuscript deeds (1738-80) with accompanying survey documentation, convey-
ing lands from Indian proprietors to English settlers. See also Indian Proprietors Records, 1729-60, Stockbridge Town Hall.

us as well as other Designing People who aim at Getting Away All that The Indians are possessed of. The Court responded by ordering that no person could take legal action against the Stockbridge Indians for any debt or payment of more than 23 shillings, but it was too late. Three years later the Stockbridge Indians submitted a petition to the Massachusetts House of Representatives, “praying for Reasons therein mentioned, that a Law may be passed to prevent their being sued for Debts for the Term of two Years, and that Tavern-Keeper may be restrained from selling them Spirituous Liquors.”

On the eve of the Revolution, Indian people at Stockbridge were selling land to pay off debts and to support themselves in old age and illness. As late as 1763, Indians owned more than 75 percent of the town’s land, much of it still held in common; but by the end of 1774 they had given up most of it, retaining perhaps no more than 6 percent of the original. There were now more than fifty white families in Stockbridge who owned virtually all of the western part of the township. While men like Elijah Williams had grown wealthy in the process, the Indians had become ghettized on about twelve hundred acres. In 1772 the district of West Stockbridge was separated from the town and incorporated. Timothy Woodbridge, who was “looked upon as the Patron of the Indians,” died the same year.

Native tradition and resident missionaries agreed that the Mahicans were held in veneration by western tribes like the Delawares and Shawnees, and the Stockbridge-Delaware connection evidently remained strong. But the Indians at Stockbridge were now a shadow of their former selves. The Rev. John Sergeant said they numbered about two hundred, while another five hundred or so, dispersed and living mainly in New York, “consider Stockbridge as their capital.”

Ted J. Brauer estimated that, in addition to perhaps a hundred Mahicans scattered through the Hudson Valley and an unknown number in Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Indiana, the Stockbridge population stood at about three hundred in 1774, a figure that included Waupping, Nipmuck, and Tuscarora.

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12 Journal of the House of Representatives of Massachusetts, 15, pt. 3 (1776–77), 242 (the date of the petition is resubmitted in 1777 in the Journal).
The American Revolution in Indian country

no longer had enough land to live on in New England. The outbreak of the Revolution drove them back, however, and most took refuge at Stockbridge. They requested that Connecticut provide them with a teacher "as we Shall reside in the neighborhood of Stockbridge till these troubles be over." 34

By the time of the Revolution, therefore, the Indian community had had a long and varied contact with the surrounding non-Indian population. Stockbridge had become an Indian and English township, in which town offices were shared but where the newcomers steadily deprived the original native inhabitants of their land base. The Indians were now under additional pressure from the influx of returning Christian Indians from Brothertown. As Patrick Frazer points out, the revolutionary struggle that gave birth to a new nation coincided with the Stockbridge Mohicans' struggle to survive as a nation. 35

Stockbridge Indians volunteered as minutemen even before the outbreak of the Revolution. Thirty-five men enlisted in Captain William Goodrich's company, with Jossiaokam Moshkin (Moton)<ref id="2">Moton</ref> as second lieutenant; others appear to have formed their own company of minutemen. 36 In February 1775 the Massachusetts Provincial Congress sent the Stockbridge Indians a message of friendship and promised a blanket and a red ribbon to every warrior who joined the service. In March the Continental Congress accepted the services the Stockbridge offered and enlisted them as minutemen, assuring them that they were fighting in the common cause. Captain Solomon Uhamsawammut requested that his men be allowed to fight Indian fashion rather than train like English soldiers. 37 Seventeen Stockbridge Indians enlisted in the Provincial army and joined Washington's troops at Cambridge in the spring of 1775. Local merchants provisioned them "on their way to ye Armie," and their arrival attracted the interest of diarists in both camps. 38 One informed General Seth Pomeroy that the Stockbridge Indians might "be of great Service should the King's Troops march out of Boston," and believed rather unrealistically that they could also call on an additional five hundred Mohawks. 39 The Indians brought their women and children along with them, and asked their allies to curtail the amount of liquor available to them so "that we may get so much as will be good for us and no more." Acknowledging their "spirituos to drink spirituous liquors to excess when we are under temptation," they wanted to avoid rendering themselves " unfit for good action and service to our fellow-men, and also disagreeable to those that have anything to do with us." 40

According to the English New England Company, which saw its charges slipping away, the Stockbridge Indians had been brought to Boston when the British naval vessels were there "on purpose to insult them, and were taught, by turning up their backsidts, to express their defiance of them." 41 The Stockbridge presented in the patriot army gave the British the excuse they needed for employing Indian support elsewhere. General Gage, writing from Boston to northern Indian Department superintendent John Stuart in September 1775, declared, "The Rebels have themselves offer'd the Door; they have brought down all the Savages they could against us here, who with their Rifle men are continually firing on our advanced Sentries." 42

Initially, the Stockbridge's most important services were diplomatic rather than military. In April, Captain Solomon, "after sitting near two days in Council," responded to a message sent him by Congress. "I am sorry to hear of this great quarrel between you and Old England," he said. "It appears that blood must be shed to end this quarrel. We never till this day understood the foundation of this quarrel between you and the Country you came from." He offered "to take a run to the Westward, and fee the minds of my Indians brothers, the Six Nations," arguing that he could do the American cause more good as an ambassador to the Iroquois than by marching off immediately to Boston. 43 In a rather insidious attempt to engage the Indians in the fighting, Massachusetts invited the Stockbridge to send "any of your warriors who wish to see what our army is doing." 44 That spring Abraham Ninhum and two other Stockbridge went as emissaries to the tribes around Montreal, carrying a message from Ethan Allen, and a speech of their own urging neutrality. British regulars arrested the messengers and took them to Montreal, where they were sentenced to be hanged. The Caughnawaga protested angrily and the Stockbridge were released. Returning to Caughnawaga, they delivered their speech: "Now I think

35 Frazer, Aboriginal of Stockbridge, 253.
40 Retonwawaw, 1775: 66.
The American Revolution in Indian country

"in the best way for you and I to sit down, and smooke our Pipes, under the Shade of our great Tree, and have our Ears open and see our Brethren fight." The Caughnawagan agreed.41

At the Treaty of Albany, held with the Six Nations in August and September, 1775, Captain Solomon assured the American commissioners of his people's commitment to the patriot cause: "Wherever you go we will be your Sigs. Our Bones shall lay with yours. We are determined never to be at peace with the Red Coats while they are at Variance with you. . . . If we are conquered our Lands go with yours, but if we are victorious we hope you will help us to recover our just Rights."42 The Mohawks warned the Stockbridge men of taking up the hatchet, but the Stockbridges asserted their independence and ignored the Mohawks' advice. "If any ill Consequences should follow, you must conclude you have brought it on yourselves, and that it is your own fault," responded the Mohawks.43

The Indian commissioners for the northern department recommended that Indian companies be raised, and addressed the arrangements for raising the Stockbridge company. One of the commissioners, Timothy Edwards, who lived at Stockbridge, was to work with the town committee and appoint suitable white men as officers for the Stockbridge company.44 The Continental Congress hesitated to employ the Indians, and at one point ordered that arrangements for raising them be terminated, which caused the Stockbridges some uneasiness. But finally, on August 2, 1776, Congress authorized Washington to employ the Stockbridges if he thought proper, and to engage them either with his or the northern army, or both.45 The Stockbridges were issued with red and blue caps to distinguish them from enemy Indians.46

In the fall, two Stockbridge Mohicans, in the pay of the Americans, went as delegates to the Delaware and Shawnees at the council held at Fort Pitt. In doing so, they were employing long-standing diplomatic avenues and continuing what was apparently a traditional Mohican role in dealing with the tribes of the Ohio and Great Laken country. "It was the business of our fathers," said Hendrick Aupaumut, "to go around the towns of these nations to renew the agreements between them and tell them many things which they

44 "At a meeting of the Commissioners for transmitting Indian Affairs for the Northern Department held at Albany, 15 June, 1776," Schuyler Papers, vol. 7, box 13.
The American Revolution in Indian country

responsibility for the mission now that the New England Company had withdrawn its support.22

As the war progressed, Stockbridge warriors served in New York, New Jersey, and Canada.23 They earned a reputation for zealous service in the patriot cause.24 Captain Ezra Whitney's Stockbridge company served with the garrison at Ticonderoga, and several Stockbridges fell into British hands along with other sowlers from Benedict Arnold's fleet after the defeat at Valcour Bay in 1776. When Carleton's Indian allies found the Stockbridges in iron, the British expected they would want to kill them. Instead, Carleton's warriors treated the Stockbridges kindly and arranged for their release. It was reported that they made a private agreement to return to Canada if the Stockbridges would also return home, so that Indians could avoid killing Indians in a white man's war.25 Stockbridge Indians reenlisted in 1777 and served with Horatio Gates's army against Burgoyne in the operations around Saratoga, although most of the warriors returned home to help with the harvest before the British general surrendered.26 Meanwhile, Abraham Ninham traveled to Philadelphia to petition Congress that he and his companions be employed and supplied with clothing while on service. Congress assigned them to Gates's army and paid them $200.27 Once with Gates's army, Ninham asked the general to discharge Stockbridge Indians who had enlisted in different regiments in the Continental Army and allow them to serve in one company. "Do not think that I want these Indians away from their Soldiering," Ninham told Gates, "but we want be together always & we will always ready to go anywhere you want us to go long as this war stands &c."28

The Stockbridge served with Gates's army at White Plains in the summer of 1778 as the British and Americans spurred around New York City. On August 31, the Stockbridge contingent was cut to pieces in a vicious skirmish at Kingsbridge or Indian Field, in what is now Van Cortlandt Park in the north Bronx. Caught front and rear by the British cavalry and infantry, they fought gallantly, even pulling riders from their horses, but the ambush was a disaster for Stockbridge. "They fell into our hands completely," recalled a Loyalist officer of the Queen's Rangers. Daniel Ninham, who had joined his son Abraham's command, was reported to have called on his people to fly, "that be himself was old, and would die there."29 "No Indians, especially, received quarter, excluding their chief called Ninham and his son, save for a few," a Hessian officer noted in his diary. "The chief, his son, and the common warriors were killed on the spot," reported another. Estimates of the Indian casualties ranged from nineteen missing to almost forty killed or "desperately wounded."30 A list of Stockbridge Indians killed in battle, subsequently submitted to Congress, gave the names of seventeen dead, besides a number of others who died of illnesses sustained while on campaign.31

After the skirmish, Lieutenant General Johann Von Ewald of the Schleswig Jutie Corps went over the field and examined the dead Indians, whose "strong, well built, and healthy bodies" stood out from those of the Europeans, "with whom they lay mingled on the ground." Ewald's description of the fallen Stockbridge warriors, indicates a substantial degree of traditional cultural survival after almost half a century of mission life (Fig. 23). Their costume was a shirt of coarse linen down to the knees, long trousers also of linen down to the feet, on which they wore shoes of deerskin, and the head was covered with a hat made of burl." Their weapons were a rifle or musket, a quiver with some twenty arrows, and a short battle-ax which they knew how to throw very skilfully. Through the nose and in the ears they wore rings, and on their heads only the hair of the crown remained standing in a circle the size of a dollar-piece, the remainder being shaved off here. They pulled out with pinces all the hairs of the beard, as well as those on all other parts of the body.32

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27 George Papers, vol. 6: 310.
The surviving Stockbridge soldiers requested blankets, coats, and money, and returned home, but they remained in dire straits. They petitioned the General Court of Massachusetts for assistance for five widows of men killed in the August battle, "who were without help from their Husbands, who at this season of the year provided for their families by hunting." While the town of Stockbridge sent its quota of food and clothing for the war effort, the Indians complained that "by this War we can find Cloathing as we used to." John Sergeant echoed their request and in January 1779 Massachusetts directed the Board of War to furnish the minister with twenty blankets for the Stockbridge, "five of which he is to deliver as a donation to five widows of the said tribe, whose husbands were lately slain by the enemy near White Plains;" the rest Sergeant was to distribute to those in greatest need. A year later, however, the people were still suffering: Joseph Shausquetuquett and other Stockbridges sent a petition to the Massachusetts House of Representatives, "praying that some way be provided by which they may be enabled to procure Cloathing."  

Despite the slaughter of their warriors at Kingsbridge, and despite persistent hardships at home, thirty-two Stockbridges volunteered to take part in John Sullivan’s expedition against the Iroquois later that year. Washington authorized their employment, although he stipulated they were not to receive more than a privates’ pay except where it was necessary to distinguish the chief by "some little pecuniary."  

With Abraham Nimham dead, Washington promoted Hendrick Aupaumut to be captain of the survivors. In 1786, Aupaumut and thirty-three warriors served in Washington’s army. Aupaumut had enlisted in the Stockbridge company in 1775 at eighteen years of age. He consistently supported the American cause during the Revolution, acted as a peace ambassador from the United States to the western tribes in the 1790s, and opposed Tecumseh’s Indian confederacy in the first decade of the nineteenth century.  

Writing to Congress in September 1776, Washington reported that twenty Stockbridges had been serving as volunteers since the beginning of July. They had been generally attached to the light infantry "& have conducted themselves with great propriety and fidelity." Seeing no immediate prospect of action, the

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Indians wanted to return home and requested some financial compensation for the time they had been with the army. Washington thought it best to gratify their wishes as he had no cloth to give them. The United States' inability to supply the Stockbridge's traditional influence among other tribes. By 1784 the patience and neutrality of the Delawares was finally snapping, and Daniel Broadsad, commanding at Fort Pitt, hoped that sending a few Stockbridges there "would make a material change in the Councils of the Western Tribes." But since the Americans' failure to supply the Delawares had been a material factor in the loss of Delaware allegiance, Broadsad cautioned that the Stockbridge emissaries "ought to come in good Clothing."

As the war drew to its close, the Stockbridges continued to offer their services. But Washington now politely declined, saying their help was not needed, but complaining in private that "their services never compensated the expense." In mid-1782, Joseph Chew, the British secretary for Indian Affairs, received word that the Stockbridges were back home and that if the British sent them a message forgiving their past behavior, they would "remain at home, attend to their own affairs, and have nothing more to do with the Rebeks, notwithstanding Mr. Kirkland's endeavours to keep them in their service."

The victory they had fought and bled for brought little benefit to the Stockbridge Indians. The home community had suffered considerable hardship during the war years. Impoverished widows, left with their husbands' debts, continued to sell off lands even as Stockbridge men were away fighting for the American cause. Not only did the Stockbridges lose leaders in battle, but Solomon Udauma wasamnmut died in February 1777. The government then is said to have deeded the property of Joseph Quaquaummut or Quamen, who shared it with Hendrick Aupaumut and councilors Peter Paquaummut and John Kanikap, both Dartmouth graduates. Moreover, whites had taken over the local government by the end of the Revolution. The town records, which had previously listed Indian and white selectmen alike by name only, in 1783 identified Hendrick Aupaumut and Juakinsim Naumisquohn as "Indian Selectmen," indicating that Indian participation was declining. There were no Indian selectmen by 1784.

Education of the Stockbridge children continued during the war – Daniel Simon, a Narragansett Indian and Dartmouth graduate, was teaching there in 1778 with classes of between thirty and fifty students, and John Kanikap

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88 PGC, reel 92, item 38, vol. 4: 232.
89 PGC, reel 92, item 47, vol. 4: 421; Writings of Washington, vol. 23: 75, 80.
91 Massachusetts Historical Collections, 1st series, 4 (1793): 85. A list of Stockbridge warriors killed in battle during the Revolution is given in Massachusetts Historical Society, Pickering Papers, reel 82: 473.
92 Lane, Savage Ours, 139; Massachusetts Historical Collections, 1st series, 5 (1784): 13.
council with the Oneidas, received the promise of a tract of land six miles square, and returned home to prepare their people to move. In a petition to the Massachusetts government, they declared:

In this late War we have suffered much, our Blood has been spilt with yours and many of our Young Men have fallen by the Side of your Warriors, almost all those Places where your Warriors have left their Bones, there our Bones are also deceased. Now we who remain are become very poor. Now Brothers. We will let you know we have been invited by our Brothers the Oneidas, to go and live with them. We have accepted their invitation.

They asked Massachusetts to appoint "a few of our Neighbors, whose we believe to be our Friends to have Power to take Care of the little Interest of Land we have in this Town," and to examine all their past land sales to white people to make sure "that what hath been cheated." Tunxis & other poor Indians formerly of Connecticut," who had gone to Oneida in 1774 and been driven away by the Revolution "to 300p. where they could find a Place" among the Stockbridges, also requested assistance from the Connecticut General Assembly to return to Oneida. There: "instead of being further burdensome, we hope to be of some advantage to the United States."

George Washington furnished the Stockbridges with a certificate attesting that during the war "the aforesaid Mahheukamun Tribe of Indians have remained firmly attached to us and have fought and bled by our side; That we consider them as friends and Brothers," and recommending the Indian and non-Indian inhabitants of the western country to treat them as friends and subjects of the United States. Most of the young men went out to the Oneida country in the spring of 1784 to plant and make other preparations for the women and children to follow; the majority of the Stockbridges had migrated west to their new lands by 1785. About forty people, mainly of the Konkapot and Mtekkam families, stayed behind until the spring of 1788, leaving after Shay's Rebellion brought additional disruption in western Massachusetts. Stockbridge-style decorated splint baskets continued to be made there in the years after the Revolution, but most of the Stockbridge people were gone.

41 Love, Samuel Davis, 244-5.

42 Copy of a petition from Stockbridge Indians, Sept. 2, 1785, Stockbridge Library Historical Room, "Stockbridge Indian" box, m-71-73 (1).


45 Kirkland to James Bowdoin, March 16, 1784, Samuel Kirkland Papers, Hamilton College, 5p.


47 Love, Samuel Davis, 244.


49 Love, Samuel Davis, 244.


51 Kirkland to Isaac Bowen, March 16, 1784, Samuel Kirkland Papers, Hamilton College, 5p.

52 Ibidem, Samuel Davis, 105.

53 Ibidem, Samuel Davis, 245.

54 Kirkland to Isaac Bowen, March 16, 1784, Kirkland Papers, 85c.

55 Ireland, Samuel Davis, 105.

56 Kirkland to Isaac Bowen, March 16, 1784, Kirkland Papers, 85c.

57 Ireland, Samuel Davis, 245.

58 Brown, Riding on the Frontier's Crest, 40, 45-6.
Stockbridge had moved, was soon up for grabs as the federal and state govern-
ments, local settlers, and a variety of private companies and land speculators
competed to get control of the lands of their former allies.27

At the treaty conference held at Fort Herkimer in June 1786 between the
state of New York and the Oneidas and Tuscaroras, the Oneida sachem Gog
Peter asked Governor Clinton to help "our younger Brethren," the Stockbridge:
"They have Claims to the Eastward, which their Lands are all gone, & they
know not how.28 In 1785 four Stockbridge chiefs visited Congress, but Con-
gress passed the buck to Massachusetts and dismissed the chiefs with "some
presents, covering according to the Indian custom, the bones of those who have
been killed in the war with shrouds, blankets or clothing to be delivered to the
widows or families of the deceased; the amount of the whole not to exceed 120
dollars.29 In that year the Stockbridge population at New Stockbridge num-
bered 450.30

Two years later, after a harvest failure in which the Indians' wheat was
"blasted," and frost killed their corn and bean crops, Samson Occom, David
Fowler of Brantford, and Peter Paquaunquet of New Stockbridge embarked
on a fundraising tour. "The late unhappy wars have Stript us almost Naked of
every thing," they said, "our Temporal enjoyments are greatly lessened, our
Numbers vastly diminished, by being warmly engaged in favour of the United
States. I think we had no immediate Business with it... we are truly like the man
that fell among Thieves, that was Stript, wounded and left for dead in the high
way.31

New York land speculator John Livingston cited the Stockbridge experience
as a warning of what the Oneidas could expect: "You see how the Stockbridge
Indians are served," he told them in 1788. "They have lost their Lands and are
obliged to beat Sticks along the Rivers into Booms.32 At the Treaty of Fort
Schuyler in September 1788, the Oneidas, while ceding lands of their own to
New York, stipulated that their neighbors at Brantford and New Stockbridge
were to enjoy their settlements forever.33

The Oneidas, Tuscaroras, and Stockbridges continued for years to petition
Congress for compensation for the losses they had sustained while serving in

30 Love, Samson Occom, 243. Cf. a population estimate compiled from information supplied by Iroquois chiefs at the Treaty of Canandaigua in 1794, which gave the number of Stockbridge Indians living in Oneida country at 315; Pickering Papers, reel 62: 245.
31 Quoted in Love, Samson Occom, 270.

The small amount of compensation that the Stockbridges did receive caused
resentment among the Oneidas and fueled growing divisions among the
Stockbridges themselves. In 1792, Congress granted the Oneidas an annuity
of $3,800, but granted $200 (the amount requested by Apsaymut) to the Stockbridges.
Samuel Kirkland said the Oneidas were mortified to receive less money than
the Stockbridges "whom they consider a small & unimportant people." Moreover,
there was "much disputing & ill blood" among the Stockbridges themselves
about how the money should be divided. Since Samson Occom arrived at New
Stockbridge as minister in 1787, there had been religious divisions among the
people. John Korkapot and one party preferred their old pastor, John Sergeant;
Apsaymut and the other party supported Occom. Rival churches formed, mir-
ning the emergence of what Brasser terms "White-oriented" and "Indian-orientated"
factions. According to Kirkland, Occom's faction tried to control the money
and keep everyone else in the dark, but the rest of the people stepped in and put the money into the hands of "their proper chiefs." Apsaymut had changed considerably since he returned from the West, noted Kirkland: he was

35 Carse, ed., "Embassy to the Western Indians," 128. The original narrative of Apsaymut's embassy is in Pickering Papers, reel 59.
now much less friendly and had taken to drink. Kirkland suspected he had fallen under the influence of Joseph Brant during his trip.\textsuperscript{46} Divisions in the community reached such a point that Peter Paugnasapesset seems to have been poisoned by members of an opposing faction.\textsuperscript{47}

Others in the community continued to seek what was due to them for their efforts in the Revolution. In May 1794, Abraham Konkapot, Isaac Wassuppey, and Andrew Wassunahwey or Maxwel tried to petition the Massachusetts assembly for wages due to them. Nhimsh had taken the three soldiers out of their original company on Washington's orders, and they had served under their chief until he was killed in the battle near White Plains. After the war, they had applied for their pay before they left Stockbridge, "but to our great surprise found we were returned deserters." Only after much trouble and expense were they able to obtain a certificate "that we were honest men."

In 1755 the United States concluded a treaty with the Oneidas, Tuscarora, and Stockbridge. The Indians dropped their claims in return for a sawmill and a gristmill, training in use of both, $1,000 to build a church and $5,000 to be distributed among the Oneidas "as well as some very few miserable persons of the Stockbridge Indians."\textsuperscript{48} Payment of the $5,000 was made by the Americans, and that the tribes had done the right thing in supporting the American cause. "Remember, they have paid all your demands, when many thousands of you white Brethren, who lost all their property in the same War, have not received anything in return," said one of the commissioners.\textsuperscript{49}

But the pressure on Indian lands in New York continued unabated. In 1810, John Mushkis led about seventy-five Stockbridge Indians west to new homes on the White River in Indiana. From there they continued to petition the government for protection, reminding President Monroe in 1819 that they had sent their warriors "to join your great chief, Washington, to aid him in driving back into the sea the unnatural monsters who had come up from there to devour you, and ravage the land which we a long time before granted to your fathers to live on."

The United States in 1819 had little interest in remembering the sacrifices made by a small tribe in helping to secure the Revolution. In 1822, another

\textsuperscript{46} Kirkland to Timothy Pickering, May 31, 1794, and June 1, 1795, Kirkland Papers, 141-144.
\textsuperscript{47} Pickering Papers, 141-144.
\textsuperscript{48} McCullum, Letters of Whiskak Indians, 120; Pickering Papers, 141-142.
\textsuperscript{49} State Archives, Unnumbered Senate Legislative Series. I am grateful to Daniel Mandell for bringing this incident to my attention and for supplying me with a copy of the document.