"MAKE INDIANS OF OUR WHITE MEN":
BRITISH SOLDIERS AND INDIAN
WARRIORS FROM BRADDOCK’S TO
FORBES’S CAMPAIGNS, 1755-1758

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In May of 1757, five miles outside of Fort Loudoun in south-central Pennsylvania, a lone frontier settler was scouring the woods in search of his stray horses. Fort Loudoun was situated near a gap in the Kittatinny Mountain ridge to defend the Pennsylvania frontiers against combined French and Indian war parties from the Ohio country. Instead of horses, this frontiersman unluckily stumbled upon an Indian war party and immediately fled back to the fort and notified the Pennsylvania forces, perhaps running at a slightly faster gait than his lost horses. The fort commanders quickly sent out a war party of their own numbering sixty men who soon discovered the Indians holed up in a house at Black’s Mill. The officers “thought it expedient to postpone the Attack until the Break of Day” and during the night they divided their force into three columns and stealthily surrounded the Indian encampment. Daybreak, however, brought surprise to both the provincials and the Indians: When the soldiers “drew near to begin their Fire... some White Men who came with the Indians
sprang out and hollow’d to our People that those were our Friends, the Cherokees, come for our Assistance.” The meeting of colonial soldiers and Indians at Black’s Mill was a peaceful one, though it could have easily ended in bloodshed. The Indians emerged from the house, laid down their arms, and the colonial forces reciprocated. A “very friendly Meeting” ensued, and the Cherokee leader, Wawhatchee, complimented the crafty colonists: he “was highly pleas’d that our Soldiers discover’d themselves Men by so surrounding him.” The “friendly Meeting” of Pennsylvanians and Cherokees presents a stark constrast to our inherited stereotypes of helpless settlers and bloodyminded savages on the wartime frontiers of British America. It vividly demonstrates that the French and Indian War did not completely erase a history of cultural coexistence that had prevailed for the first half of the eighteenth century.

Throughout the main theaters of the Seven Years’ War in America, provincial troops and British regulars lived, fought, bled, and died alongside Indian warriors. This essay contributes new evidence on the patterns of wartime cultural interaction among British soldiers and Native Indian allies in the early years of the French and Indian War on the Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia frontiers. First, it demonstrates the great degree to which warfare along the Pennsylvania-Maryland-Virginia frontiers was a joint Anglo-Indian effort, not only in Braddock’s campaign (1755) and Forbes’s campaign (1758), but in a host of smaller but significant actions. Cherokees, Catawbas, Tuscaroras, Meherrins, Nottoways, Delawares, and Iroquois all participated alongside British and colonial American soldiers in joint war parties and scouting expeditions. Unfortunately, those Native allies of the British lack visibility in histories of eighteenth-century imperial warfare that have traditionally argued for the superior abilities of French-Canadian militia and their Indian allies. Moreover, recent historians have emphasized the growing violence and racism of the eighteenth-century British colonial frontiers: places where it is easier to envision Paxton Boys descending on the Conestoga Indians than a group of Cherokee and Pennsylvania soldiers enjoying a “very friendly Meeting.” Finally, previous scholarship on military campaigns has underscored General Braddock’s failure to secure Indian allies in 1755 and the imperious manner of British officers that ultimately alienated their potential friends. Dissonance between European and Indian military forces was unquestionably a constant noise throughout the French and Indian War. But were it not for the Cherokee and Catawba presence on the British frontiers in 1756 and 1757, French and
Ohio Indian dominance of the countryside would have been even more pervasive. Britain's southern Indian allies, in fact, were absolutely critical to the defense of the Virginia, Maryland, and Pennsylvania frontiers. 3

Indian and British military cooperation had tangible political and cultural consequences that significantly shaped the postwar world: Many scholars have noted the growing congruence between Indian and Euroamerican backcountry worlds during the eighteenth century, but the exact circumstances in which these similarities developed have not been fully explored. 4 The genesis of a shared warrior culture among Indians and backcountry fighters, as this essay shows, can be clearly seen in campaigns such as Gen. John Forbes's, when Cherokees, Catawbas, Delawares, British regulars, and colonial troops fought in the same ranks against the French and their Native allies. Forbes and his trusted subordinate, Col. Henry Bouquet, determined to "make Indians of our white men" by combining colonial troops with their southern Indian allies. 5 Although most Cherokees and Catawbas returned home before Forbes's army captured Fort Duquesne, the bonds they forged with the British regulars and colonials were both meaningful and memorable. Not long after the end of the war, Indian trader and diplomat George Croghan noticed an Iroquois war party passing by Fort Pitt with a male Cherokee captive in tow: he was "known by some of the Soldiers here who Spoke to him," because they had fought with him during General Forbes's campaign against the French in 1758.6 The knowledge and experience gained in joint military efforts in the Seven Years' War deeply informed subsequent frontier history. Colonists learned and emulated eighteenth-century Native warfare tactics. Indians witnessed the workings of regular forces and often returned home disgruntled or disillusioned with their British allies' conduct. What Adam Hirsch has written on seventeenth-century New England—that warfare was equally "a part, rather than a product of the acculturation process"—is equally true of the relationships formed between British soldiers and Indians during the Seven Years' War.7

Warfare thus intensified the level of personal and face-to-face interactions among British regulars, colonial soldiers, and Indian warriors: but these cooperative wartime ventures, ironically, became conduits for future imperial strife, cultural conflict, and racial antipathies on the frontier. When the Seven Years' War began, Cherokees and South Carolinians had a longstanding, if increasingly strained, alliance; but the Cherokees suffered tremendous devastation of their lands and communities in the Cherokee War from 1759 to 1761, which was itself another significant outcome of earlier Anglo-Indian
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military cooperation. The initial sparks for the conflict can be directly traced to the skirmishes between Virginia backcountry settlers and Cherokee veterans returning home from Forbes's army in 1758. Scottish Highlanders who had fought with the Cherokees as allies in 1758, ironically, would invade and burn Cherokee towns in 1760 and 1761.

This essay builds upon recent scholarship on American Indians, the Seven Years’ War, and early America’s frontiers and borderlands. In particular, historians have profitably combined military, social, and cultural history in useful ways. Studies on the relationship between war and society, particularly the social history of the British Army, have created an awareness of the presence of women, ethnic groups, and Indians in eighteenth-century British forces. Historian Peter Way’s pathbreaking article, “The Cutting Edge of Culture” traced the general outlines of cultural contact between Native peoples and British soldiers in the French and Indian War. He deeply researched the spectrum of social and economic interactions that Natives and soldiers experienced, and their often diverging views of warfare. Way argued that “in the process of commingling a synthesis occurred, producing New World cultural forms which led ultimately to the denigration of Native American society, but, to a much lesser extent, was also corrosive of hierarchical Europeanisms.”

More recently, Jon Parmenter has demonstrated how Iroquois participation in imperial warfare “exerted a profound shaping influence on the course of conflicts in northeastern North America.” This essay contributes to the ongoing reinterpretation of Native nations’ involvements in colonial and imperial struggles, particularly the Seven Years’ War and the changes it wrought in British, French, and Indian societies.

The conventional wisdom on Edward Braddock’s expedition, for example, is that it was fatally flawed from a lack of Indian participation and the commander’s arrogant reliance on his Regulars. What has not been fully appreciated, however, is the significant level of interactions that took place among British soldiers, Delawares, and Iroquois when the army was encamped in Maryland. Those encounters exposed conflicting cultural and diplomatic expectations on the parts of both British commanders and Native leaders. In March of 1755, the 44th and 48th Regiments of foot arrived in Virginia, under General Braddock’s command. Their mission was to eject the French from the Ohio Country and bring the region into Great Britain’s imperial orbit. But only four months after their arrival, the French and their Indian allies routed this Anglo-American force at the Battle of the Monongahela, on July 9, 1755. There is more complex story to be told about
Braddock's expedition, however. For the British regulars and many provincial soldiers recruited from seaboard cities, the campaign represented their first encounter with Indian peoples. Although the British forces were bereft of Indian allies for most of their march across the Appalachians, significant interaction did occur while the army was encamped at Fort Cumberland in Maryland. Those encounters among soldiers and Indians demonstrate the range of social, economic, and sexual interactions that often took place in the army. Ultimately, they would exert a strong bearing on the campaign's character and on the epic clash of July 9th.

On May 10, 1755, the 48th Regiment, strung out in column on the dust-choked roads of western Maryland, neared its destination, Fort Cumberland. General Braddock passed by his troops as the drummers beat out "the Grenadier March." In the early afternoon, the troops were halted to hear the special instructions of the regimental commander, Col. Thomas Dunbar. He informed the army "that as there was a number of Indians at Will's Creek [near Fort Cumberland], our Friends, it was the General's positive orders that they do not molest them, or have anything to say to them, directly or indirectly, for fear of affronting them." The column of British regulars soon arrived at the fort and found, in the words of one British officer, "Indian men, women and children, to the number of about 100, who were greatly surprised at the regular way of our soldiers marching, and the numbers." The astonished Indians—primarily Ohio Iroquois and a few Delawares—were hopeful that Braddock would affirm their relationship.

The anonymous British officer who recorded those descriptions captured the sense of wonder that he and other Europeans felt upon seeing Delawares and Iroquois for the first time. The Indians' surprise at the large number of redcoats was undoubtedly shared by many colonists. The Seven Years' War brought to America's shores an unprecedented infusion of professional European soldiers who had never before fought with indigenous allies. Colonel Dunbar's and General Braddock's strong orders notwithstanding, Indians, officers, and common soldiers exhibited a deep mutual curiosity. "In the day they were in our Camp," one British officer wrote, "and in the night they go into their own." The officer's curiosity about Native customs led him to venture into the Indian camp on at least one occasion. He commented on the Indians' body painting, decorations, clothing, weapons, and lodges, and the women's child carriers. He attended Braddock's conferences with the Indians where he witnessed native diplomacy and heard songs of war. Also curious about religion, he came to believe that "these people have no notion of religion, or
any sort of Superior being.” The officer’s conclusion—“I take them to be the most ignorant people as to the knowledge of the world and other things”—testifies to the limits of cross-cultural understanding in the armies.  

Nevertheless, these meetings were profoundly human, often intimate, and productive of conflict. When Richard Peters, an Anglican clergyman and provincial secretary of Pennsylvania, visited Fort Cumberland in May 1755, British officers’ conduct offended his religious sensibilities. Upon visiting “Scaroyady, Andrew Montour, and about Forty of our Indians,” Peters discovered that the British officers’ sexual relations with Native women were creating dissension: Indian families “got frequently into high Quarrels, their Squas bringing them money in Plenty which they got from the Officers, who were scandalously fond of them.” Peters “represented the Consequences of this Licentiousness to the General,” who issued orders to limit Anglo-Indian contact. Enlisted men also visited the Indians camp and traded with them. The servant of Captain Robert Cholmley crossed the Potomac River in a canoe and “Returning Back there was an Indien Came Over with me who was for making her go with his hands and I not understanding him Made us Boath in dainger.” Most likely, the servant and the Indian were returning from a visit to the Ohio Company’s trading post across the Potomac River.

Historians frequently attribute Braddock’s poor relations with the Indians to his arrogant confidence in skilled regulars alone, and his determination that “savages” would not inherit the land. But this evidence offers another possibility: his dislike of the Indians’ presence was due in part to his belief that they compromised British standards of discipline. The Delawares and Iroquois assembled at Fort Cumberland expected that Braddock would provide political refuge and physical relief for their refugee families. Such provisions were tangible evidences to them of the depth of British support for their alliance. But George Croghan emphasized that “Braddock wants the [Indian] Women and Children to be kept from the Camp.” The general issued orders that “no officer soldier or others give the Indians men women or children any rum or other Liquor or money upon any account whatever.” As added incentive to keep “soldiers [from] going into their camp,” Braddock imposed a draconian penalty of “200 lashes without a Court Martial” for his recruits, while offending officers would be court-martialed for disobedience of orders.

Braddock and the Indians, then, each held widely divergent expectations of how allies should behave in wartime. The British commander evidently came to see the Indian families at the fort as an unneeded nuisance: in his
Duquesne, Pennsylvania History.

view, they did not contribute to the army’s success, potentially damaged strict discipline, and drained much-needed supplies. In late May, Braddock asked the Indians to send their women and children back to George Croghan’s trading post at Augwick in central Pennsylvania. Not surprisingly, most warriors accompanied their families and the British army was left with only eight Ohio Iroquois (Mingo) scouts led by the sachem Scaroyady. The root of Braddock’s problem with Indians was thus his soldiers’ interactions with Indians as much as it was his pejorative attitudes. The British failure to care for their allies’ families—as Indians expected—cost them dearly. Although some Iroquois warriors promised to catch up with Braddock’s army at the Great Meadows, they had better reasons to stay at Augwick. Edward Shippen of Lancaster County wrote that the warriors’ failure to rendezvous with Braddock was due to their “fear of the French coming to their Cabbins to destroy their Families.”15

During the army’s long march from Fort Cumberland toward Fort Duquesne, sporadic contacts with allied and enemy Indians had a decisive effect on the British soldiers’ morale and mindset. Although only eight Indians accompanied the force on its march, they provided the army with intelligence of French and Indian activities, as well as exposure to native tactics and customs. Captain Cholmley’s servant mentioned that “Volintears and Indiens” went out together in joint scouting parties. One such party “advanced to the Great Meadows to see if the French was there as was Reported. They proposeReturning in 4 Days.” The servant also recorded frequent meals of bear, deer, and rattlesnake courtesy of native hunters. But anxiety grew among Braddock’s rank and file: The soldiers witnessed how enemy Indians had “many odd figures on ye trees expressing with red paint, ye scalps and Prisoners they had taken with them.” Captain Robert Orme also recorded the discovery of a recently abandoned enemy camp in their line of march. The Indians and French had “striped and painted some trees” and wrote “many threats and bravados with all kinds of scurrilous language” as a warning. Enemy scouts frequently harried the column during its march. The common soldiers’ edginess in the forest resulted in frequent shooting “in a very irregular and unmilitary manner.” Jittery soldiers also mistook Scaroyady’s son as an enemy, fired upon him, and killed him. Ultimately, the British regulars’ own worst enemy may have been the tongues of provincial soldiers: one British officer noted that his troops were apt to panic because of “storys they had heard of the Indians in regard to their Scalping and Mawhawking,” presumably from knowledgeable
colonials. During the July 9th fight, British soldiers stood their ground while Braddock lived, and even conducted a somewhat orderly retreat towards the Monongahela. But when Delawares, Shawnees, Ottawas, and other Natives fell on the leaderless and retreating column with tomahawks, war clubs, and war cries, the British infantry collapsed into a panicked mob. As British Lieutenant Matthew Leslie recalled, “the yell of the Indians is fresh on my ear, and the terrific sound will haunt me until the hour of my dissolution.”

In the aftermath of the Monongahela debacle, French, Canadian, and Indian war parties struck the Virginia, Maryland, and Pennsylvania settlements with great fury and fortitude. Braddock’s old military road became a conduit for French-Indian parties right into the heart of the British backcountry. The remnants of the army under Colonel Dunbar retreated to the Philadelphia vicinity, leaving the area devoid of regular units. The devastation wrought by the French and Ohio Indians was immense, and it accomplished a larger strategic end of driving back colonial farmers and bowing the most populous and wealthy British mainland colonies. The network of fortifications that colonists constructed in Virginia, Maryland, and Pennsylvania was often an ineffective cordon against enemy expeditions.

Southern Indians—Cherokees, Catawbas, and Tuscaroras—thus became crucial to the defense of Virginia, Maryland, and Pennsylvania when those colonies were under relentless assault from 1755 to 1757. Previous historians have not fully appreciated either the consistent presence of those Indian allies, or the degree to which they represented a formidable threat to French and Indian operations from the Ohio Valley. The Cherokees were the most important Indian allies of the southern colonies, and the most favored trading partners of South Carolina and Virginia, whose traders and officials often vied for influence. The Cherokee population in the mid-eighteenth century numbered between 9,000 and 11,000 inhabitants, with a warrior strength in the thousands. The northern British colonies focused their diplomatic efforts to secure the alliance, trade, and military protection of the Iroquois Confederacy. But Virginia and South Carolina expended tremendous diplomatic capital to secure the military alliance of the Cherokees and Catawbas in the 1750s. Two forts were constructed during the 1750s—Fort Prince George near the Lower Cherokee town of Keowee and Fort Loudoun among the Overhill Cherokee towns—to provide protection for their allies’ families against possible Franco-Indian attacks. The security provided by the forts allowed English officials to press the Cherokees to commit militarily to campaigns against the French elsewhere. For example, Virginia’s William Byrd III negotiated with
the Cherokees in 1755 and again in 1758 to secure the aid of their warriors. By the time he arrived in Cherokee country, hundreds of warriors had already departed northward. In the spring of 1758, when Byrd returned to Winchester with some fifty to sixty warriors, there were nearly four hundred Cherokees, Catawbas, and other southern Indians assembling at Winchester, Virginia. The Overhill leader Attakulla, the Little Carpenter, recalling his 1750 journey to England, spoke of “the grate King George our father, who desired us to help [our brothers] and I am very willing for to help my brothers, and both to die together.” But the Cherokees’ motives had more to do with combating traditional enemies such as the Shawnees, and securing gifts and rewards for their loyal service, than capturing a vital fortification like Fort Duquesne. Nor did they see themselves as bound to colonial armies for long periods of service.18

In total, there were probably close to two thousand or more Cherokee, Catawba, and Tuscarora warriors who served at various times from 1756 to 1758. They not only operated out of Fort Loudoun in Virginia and forts Cumberland and Frederick in western Maryland but later served in John Forbes’s army. Native warriors primarily scouted the Potomac and Juniata valleys, and reconnoitered Fort Duquesne and other French forts in the upper Allegheny valley. As historian Matthew Ward has observed, Franco-Indian war parties shifted their attacks southward into Virginia and Maryland in 1756 and 1757 because of the threat represented by diplomatic and military initiatives between those colonies and the Cherokees and Catawbas. Indeed, Indian allies afforded colonists their principal means of counterattack. In 1756, for example, Cherokees and Virginians ventured forth on a joint campaign in the Sandy Creek valley to attack the Shawnee town of Scioto. The expedition might have had a similar outcome as John Armstrong’s raid on Kittanning, but the expedition fell apart due to supply shortages. The Cherokee war leader Osteneco, however, was feted by Gov. Robert Dinwiddie, with a review of militia along Williamsburg’s Duke of Gloucester Street—an act that suggests how much Indian alliances were cultivated by Virginia’s royal governor.19

Both British and Colonial American officials and writers assigned tremendous significance to their Indian allies. Indeed, one of the foremost political issues of the prewar period was Britain’s need to secure more Indian alliances to overturn New France’s strategic dominance of North America. Specific Indian leaders, such as Little Carpenter (Cherokee) or Hendrick Theyanoguin (Mohawk) were known in an Atlantic context for their strong commitments.
to alliance with Britain. Moreover, stories of Native allies’ expeditions and feats were prominently and frequently reported in colonial newspapers from Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Williamsburg, to Charles Town.20 One colonial writer observed in the Virginia Centinel in 1757 that “three or four Hundred Delawares and Shawanese have kept three populous Provinces in Play, ravaged and depopulated whole Counties, butchered and captivated Hundreds of Families, and spread Terror and Desolation where ever they went . . . .” He believed that if Virginia could “secure the Friendship of these [southern] Nations, or even of the Cherokee alone,” it would “render them as active as us, as the Indian Allies of the French are for them, [and] they would undoubtedly prove the best Defence of our Frontiers.” Royal governors and Indian agents exhorted their Indian allies with inspiring and motivating rhetoric. Gov. Horatio Sharpe of Maryland, in a letter to Wawhatchee’s Lower Town Cherokees, exhorted them to “let our Men go out to War with you: Look on them as your Brethren: Teach them to fight after your Manner; and then, neither the French nor their Allies, will be able to stand before you.” Newspaper accounts of raiding and scouting parties sent from British forts bear out Sharpe’s plea that Indians school the colonial soldiers. The Pennsylvania Gazette reported a story of a 1756 raid near Fort Duquesne by eight Catawbas and five whites. They killed and scalped a number of enemy Indians, but suffered losses when they attempted to secure a prisoner. The Catawbas who returned praised the white soldiers who “died like Men.” Another particularly successful scout from Fort Frederick in 1757 involved Lt. Evan Shelby, Maryland militia, and a force of Cherokees led by Wawhatchee, whom Governor Sharpe had encouraged by letter. They tracked a Shawnee and Delaware war party for days, before they successfully ambushed and killed six out of sixteen men. A prominent Delaware war captain, Beaver’s Son, was mortally wounded in the ambush.21

Although not always successful, British-Indian expeditions did enjoy victories that counter the prevailing image of French and Indian dominance of the Pennsylvania-Maryland-Virginia frontiers. Certainly in the eyes of most British officials, the military aid of hundreds of Native allies was invaluable. Cherokee scouting parties brought back intelligence of Fort Duquesne, French prisoners, and the scalps of French soldiers and Indian warriors who could no longer operate unopposed in the environs of Fort Duquesne. In 1758, Gov. William Henry Lyttelton of South Carolina congratulated Conneecorte (“Old Hop”) and other Overhill Cherokees on “how well you fought last Summer upon the Borders of Virginia and Pennsylvania and
defended the poor Out settlers there against the Incursions of the French and their Indians."22

The Forbes Campaign of 1758 represents the highest level of Native participation in a British military operation in Pennsylvania. The particularly rich sources on the Forbes Campaign provide a powerful glimpse onto the everyday relationships among British regulars, provincial soldiers, and Indian warriors in army camps and in joint scouting expeditions. Forbes’s campaign also demonstrates how the presence of Indian allies exerted a deep influence upon the British army’s tactical adaptations, and how many colonists gained tremendous experience fighting in the woods. In November 1758, Gen. John Forbes captured Fort Duquesne at the junction of the Allegheny, Monongahela, and Ohio Rivers. Fort Duquesne’s downfall sounded the death knell of French power in the Ohio country and helped to swing the war’s momentum toward Britain’s favor. General Forbes and his subordinate, Col. Henry Bouquet, enjoy a favorable historical reputation as capable officers who more than successfully adapted to frontier conditions, and accomplished a difficult march across the rugged ridge and valley country of the Appalachians. Historian Peter Russell also attributes Forbes’s success to his “personal experience in Flanders, a staff analysis of Braddock’s defeat, and Turpin de Crissé’s recent book on guerilla warfare.” The general drew up “a campaign plan that was both thoroughly European and highly successful.” His network of fortified stations such as Bedford, Juniata Crossings, and Ligonier preserved supply and communication lines. He captured an abandoned, smoldering fort on November 25, 1758 with that peculiar blend of skill and good fortune that successful military commanders often enjoy. But Forbes also supported the diplomatic initiatives of Quakers to redress Native grievances and to negotiate a just peace. Israel Pemberton, an influential Quaker merchant in the Friendly Association for Regaining and Preserving Peace with the Indians by Pacific Measures, was at the forefront of the peace effort. The Quakers’ efforts toward peaceful negotiations culminated in the signing of the Treaty of Easton in October 1758 with the Ohio Indians and eastern Delawares. Fortunately for Forbes and his army, the Ohio Indians withdrew their support of the French just as the general was beginning his final drive on the Fort. These diplomatic initiatives produced manpower dividends for the British. George Croghan, who had witnessed Braddock’s dismissal of Iroquois and Delawares in 1755, would play a vital role in securing peace with the Delawares at the Treaty of Easton. He then recruited fifteen Delawares, raced across Pennsylvania, and joined Forbes’s army in late November as it was
beginning its final push on Fort Duquesne. Forbes sent 2,500 infantry ahead on November 20, with Croghan and the Delawares in the lead as scouts.23

Another vital ingredient in his success was the support of perhaps seven hundred Cherokee and Catawba warriors during the summer and early fall of 1758. A small band of roughly thirty Nottaways, Meherrins, and Tuscaroras from the Carolinas was also present. Forbes would not be as blind in the woods as Braddock had been. Forbes, in fact, fully realized that Indians were indispensable to victory and he genuinely sought their aid: "in this Country, wee must comply and learn the Art of Warr, from Ennemy Indians or anything else who have seen the Country and Warr carried on in it."24

Forbes’s conduct of the 1758 campaign to take Fort Duquesne was significantly different from Braddock’s earlier failure: The British general faced similar problems that Braddock did regarding stingy colonial assemblies and their recalcitrant constituents. But Forbes enjoyed a greater degree of inter-colonial cooperation in 1758: roughly 1,700 British regular troops in Forbes’s army were supplemented by about 2,700 Pennsylvanians, 2,500 Virginians, and a motley collection of companies from Maryland, Delaware, and North Carolina.25 Forbes thus had a larger army; the Ohio Indians were either neutral or willing to help the British defeat the French; there were greater numbers of Indians with his army; and most significantly, he purposefully allowed provincials and Indians to fight together in small war parties, an innovative measure which allowed them to fight on their own terms.

Still, there were significant tensions among the British commanders, colonial troops, and Indians that eventually disrupted their cooperation. Forbes believed that Indians and colonial rangers were mere auxiliaries and scouts who should obey his commands—an attitude that suggests a short cultural distance between himself and French regular officers such as Montcalm. Native warriors bristled at the overbearing discipline they witnessed. Although hardened to torture of captives, Cherokees were horrified by the sight of British soldiers being whipped or beaten for infractions. They feared that British authorities might deal with troublesome Indians in a similar manner. The methodical and slow pace of the campaign also frustrated the warriors, who favored immediate action in their limited time of service. Finally, Cherokees and Catawbas attached tremendous significance to gift giving: an act of provision and hospitality that demonstrated good will and commonality. But British officers’ parsimonious distribution of gifts, supplies, and provisions alienated their allies. Many Cherokees refused to submit to such treatment and headed for home in mid-August 1758, leaving the
army with not even a hundred Indian warriors. But even the Indians’ departure was not without conflict: Forbes sent parties after Little Carpenter and his men to have them arrested and disarmed as deserters.26

Forbes’s and Bouquet’s frustration with “real” Indians and disdain of provincial troops (“the scum of the worst people”) led them to undertake tactical innovations designed to make both groups more tractable as military forces. The British commanders not only planned to send out joint Anglo-Indian war parties but also to “make Indians of our white men,” as Bouquet argued. Forbes agreed with his subordinate’s approach and remarked that “the Shadow may be often taken for the reality”: he wanted to create a shadow of Indianized provincials who could be taken for—and perhaps stand in place of—the real and more taxing Indian warriors.27 The British officers’ adoption of Indian military styles stemmed from pragmatic and authoritarian military concerns rather than any fundamental respect for the efficacy of Indian practices.28 Often exasperated with his unruly Indian allies, Bouquet believed that allowing them to fight by their own methods and training the provincials to fight Indian-style would be easier than trying (in his words) “to coax that damned Tawny Race.” Forbes’s perception of American frontiersmen also predisposed him to view them in a subordinate role: “I am informed,” he wrote to Pennsylvania Governor William Denny in 1757, “that the Inhabitants upon the Frontiers of your Province being much used to hunting in the woods, would consequently make good Rangers.” The British general requested that Denny form some the “properest” men into “companys of Rangers with good Officers, who are well acquainted with the country, to command them.” During the campaign, Forbes urged Bouquet to “gett some brisk Officers among the provincials to try some scouting partys out to the Ohio at different places, at or near the same time, and pretty strong partys with a good many Indians along with them, in order to gett Intelligence or prisoners.” Forbes also wished to send British officers “who understand the woods and bush fighting” to oversee the colonial rangers and Indians. Significantly, the British commanders envisioned that joint war parties consisting of provincials, Cherokees, and Catawbas would be conducive to disciplined ends: “it breeds our people to [the Indians’] business, and keeps [the main army] quiet to continue our route and to make our Deposites, and palisaded campments.”29

A remarkable series of letters between Forbes, Bouquet, and George Washington unfolds the officers’ attitudes and their motives regarding the use of Indian and colonial troops. Realizing that they “are compelled to go groping into an unknown country,” Bouquet asked Forbes to “not take it amiss that I
import to you freely all the ideas that pass through my mind, in order to evaluate them." The Swiss officer noted that his commanding general was "very much detached from the prejudices of the past," and presented his idea "to make Indians of part of our provincial soldiers":

[The provincials] are very willing, the expense is nothing, and I believe the advantage would be very real. It would only be necessary for them to remove their coats and breeches, which will delight them; give them moccasins and blankets; cut off their hair and daub them with paint and intermingle them with the real Indians. It would be difficult for the enemy to distinguish them and I believe that the impression which this number would produce would be useful to us.

Bouquet’s comments reveal his belief that the short distance between colonists and the “real Indians” could be easily closed, to the “delight” of both. The general warmly approved his innovative subordinate’s ideas, replying that “I have been long in your Opinion of equiping numbers of our men like the Savages, and I fancy Col: [William] Byrd [III] of Virginia has most of his best people equipt in that manner.”

The young Virginia militia officer, George Washington, also shared Bouquet’s and Forbes’s views: he reported to the latter in early July 1758 that “My Men are very bare of Cloaths (Regimentals I mean) and I have no prospect of a Supply.” The Virginian added that

were I left to pursue my own Inclinations I woud not only cause the Men to adopt the Indian dress but Officers also, and set the example myself: nothing but the uncertainty of its taking with the General causes me to hesitate a moment at leaving my Regimentals at this place and proceeding as light as any Indian in the Woods.

Washington viewed “proceeding as light as any Indian” in very practical terms: “Soldiers in such a dress are better able to carry their Provisions; are fitter for the active Service we are engaged in; and less liable to sink under the fatigues of a long march . . .” But before the Virginia colonel could hope to take any credit for the idea, Bouquet informed him that “before the General could be acquainted with your New dress, he has approved it extremely upon a hint I gave him Some time ago.” Bouquet was immensely pleased at the success of his program. The provincials and Indians provided
British commanders with invaluable reconnaissance of French and Indian dispositions at Fort Duquesne, information on the road and trail networks ahead of the army, and protection of the army's flanks. Although the presence of Cherokee and Catawba allies, the combined Anglo-Indian war parties, and the adoption of Indian dress were issues of military practicality for British commanders, they profoundly affected the everyday lives of common soldiers. Army camps, forts, and patrols became places where soldiers and warriors regularly mingled and interacted.31

Thomas Barton, a journal-keeping Anglican minister who accompanied Forbes' army in the summer of 1758, reveals crucial evidence on the composition, size, duration, and leadership of the Anglo-Indian war parties. On Sunday, July 30, 1758, Barton preached from II Chronicles 14:11 to "about 300 Men": "help us, O Lord our God; for we rest on thee, and in thy name we go against this multitude." Barton soon discovered that the army going against the French multitude included Cherokees, Catawbases, and Englishmen fighting together in a common cause to defeat the French. From the moment Barton caught up with the main body, he logged in his journal an incessant stream of Anglo-Indian war parties coming and going.32 They were composed of provincial soldiers, British officers (mainly Highlanders), Cherokees, Catawbases, and some Nottawy and Tuscarora. For example, the journal entry for Sunday, August 6 records that "a Party of 30 White Men & 15 Indians were detach'd towards Franks-Town in Order if possible to head the Enemy, & 'tis expected some of them will proceed to the Ohio." The size of the war party varied tremendously, from "a small party of Indians with 6 White Men" on August 7, to a much larger expedition on September 4, when more than two hundred Indians and Anglo-Americans departed the main camp: "Lieu' Colonel Dagworthy with 100 of the Maryland-Troops; Major Waddle with 48 of the Carolina Troops; Captain Gooding with 60 Men from the Lower-Counties; and Captain Trent with a Number of Indians [approximately fifty] of the Catawba, Ottaway, & Tuscarora Nations set off towards Fort Du Quesne, to take possession of an advatagious Post near that Place." The long duration of the expeditions led to conflicts over leadership. Bouquet's orders to the scouting party that departed on August 6 were, "Two Subalterns & two Parties of 15 Volunteers each of the Virginia & Pennsylvania Regiments to go immediately out with the Indians & to carry Provisions for 8 days in Rice & Flour."33 It should be noted that although Bouquet sent officers to "command" the war party, the Indians were the true leaders and planners of the expeditions. The English completely deferred to Indian desires, methods, and directions. As
George Washington put it, “I cannot conceive the best white men to be equal to them in the Woods.” Some Cherokees at times preferred not to be encumbered by English warriors. At Fort Cumberland, George Washington reported that a “Warriour of the Party of Cherrokees insisted on Marching instantly, and that but one White man should go.” Bouquet noted that a party of twenty-five Cherokees “had a sergeant and some soldiers with them, whom they compelled to return, as they wished to be alone.” Such a rebuke was surely a reminder that Natives were not subservient auxiliaries, but autonomous warriors fighting for their own goals.34

Bouquet wisely took measures to ensure that no harmful accidents would occur during the long march across the mountain ridges and valleys of Pennsylvania, such as edgy troops firing at their Cherokee and Catawba allies. Bouquet issued orders early in the campaign that “in Order to prevent any Accident, No Party Guard Centry or any Person belonging to the Army are to fire upon any Indians without they are first fired upon.” The British later instituted a system of identification markers for friendly Indians. The Indians were “distinguish’d by a Yellow Fillet or Yellow Ribband, & some carry their Matchcoats on a Pole; Any Indians haveing the Above Marks and Signals are to be Receiv’d as Friends.” Abraham Bosomworth, an officer in the Royal American Regiment, reported that these badges were “very conspicuous, & easily seen at a distance in the woods.” It is significant that many provincial rangers became so indistinguishable from their native allies that they too had to wear identification markers. Forbes’ Campaign thus experienced few “friendly fire” fatalities between whites and Indians that might otherwise have damaged relations.35

The British regulars and provincial troops who remained in camp learned how to fight and maneuver in the woods and imitate Indian tactics. Barton noted that on August 8 “the Commanding Officer led out the Troops this Afternoon a Mile into the Woods, & there exercis’d them in Marching, & Countermarching &C.” These exercises were European military drills only in part: Barton also observed the troops “running & firing in the Indian Manner.” Once the troops had divided into small platoons, they fired six rounds, and then made “a sham Pursuit with Shrieks & Halloos in the Indian Way.” Barton noticed these novice warriors were “falling into much Confusion,” and had to be “again drawn up in Line of Battle.” Ensign Thomas Gist, of the Virginia forces, recalled that in early September “a detachment of seven hundred rank and file (consisting of Royal Americans, Highlanders, Virginians, Marylanders, and Pennsylvanians)” was “taught the art of bush fighting by our commander, Maj’ [James] Grant.”36
In addition to learning how to fight Indian-style, soldiers and Indians frequently interacted in the main camp in ways that demonstrated how identities and boundaries could become blurred. At Raystown, Bouquet placed “Two Sentries at the Indian Camp to prevent the Soldiers going amongst them.” This appears to have been a token and fruitless effort, for there was a constant barrage of orders forbidding soldiers to trade with the Indians. Thomas Barton found on August 28 that “the Indians are all drunk this Evening, which makes them very troublesome.” Perhaps soldiers eager to trade or greedy sutlers were involved, for two days later Bouquet reiterated that “all Persons whatever whether Officer or Soldier or Sutler or Indian Trader, who shall dare to give Strong Liquor to any of the Indians even for nothing . . . shall suffer the severest punishment a Court Martial can inflict.” In order to outfit themselves as Indians, the provincial soldiers also bartered with the Indians for their gifts. The blankets, paint, moccasins, and other presents intended for the Indians were among the prize commodities for many provincials. Bouquet threatened to punish “any person who is found to buy exchange or Receive in any Shape whatever from an Indian any of the Presents made them by His Majesty.” In a particularly ingenious ploy, three deserters tried to pass for Indians and receive gifts from the veteran Indian agent, Christopher Gist. They were apprehended “Going off with a Party of Indians With there Hair Cut & Painted . . . Got Presents from Capt. Guest as Indians.”

The bonds that existed between soldiers and Indians who fought together are often difficult to trace in historical sources: were it not for the capture of those three deserters, there would be no record of them “going off with a party of Indians.” But the highly detailed report of Ensign Colby Chew of the 1st Virginia Regiment provides an incredibly vivid portrait of the personal relationships that formed during the combined Anglo-Indian war parties. Ensign Chew, five provincial soldiers, and a body of Catawba warriors departed Raystown on August 7 to reconnoiter Fort Duquesne, returning thirteen days later. They followed an “Old Trading Path,” and the party “Discovered some Very late signs of Indians” on the fourth day of the expedition. The English soldiers in such parties quickly learned the art of tracking and had to learn the rudiments of Indian languages. Chew was apparently conversant with the Catawbas, for his report exhibited a marked knowledge of Indian customs. The next day, the party cautiously continued westward until “the Indians halted to Conjure, as they had all day seen fresh signs of the Enemy.” The Catawbas sent out a few scouts, who reported that “the Enemy had gone on Directly towards Fort Duquesne.” As the party neared
the French fort on August 15, Chew wrote, "the Indians this Night held a Council of war in wth it was Determin'd that all Except myself Sarj' Vaughan and five Indians should Return" because of low provisions. Again, Indian war captains made the decisions in this scout.38

On the 16th, Chew, Vaughan, and the five Catawbas proceeded to Shannopin's town, a Delaware village on the north side of the Ohio River a short distance downstream from Fort Duquesne. Chew recalled that "[we] hid ourselves in a Thickett till the Indians Conjord and Painted, after which we went down the River within : of a mile from the Fort." Chew's report vividly describes the bonds that developed between Indian and white warriors in combat:

The "Chief Warriour" then gave instructions to Chew that he would have given one of his own warriors: he made everyone "strip of all our Cloath Except our brich clouts and Mokesons, shook hands with us and told us to go and fight like men, for Nothing could hurt us." Chew seemed virtually indistinguishable from his Indian comrades, except on the mission's exact goal. While the Catawbas were "in great Expectations of Geting a scalp," Chew was in greater expectation of making some important discovery about Fort Duquesne. Chew prevailed on the party to climb to the top of a nearby ridge and spy on the fort's inhabitants. His mission completed, they "went back to the head Warriour and after some Consultations agreed to Return home."39

Chew's experience offers direct evidence on how colonial soldiers imbibed elements of Indian war techniques and dress. Some individual soldiers admired and respected the efficacy of Indian tactics that helped guarantee their lives and an English victory. Experience in bush fighting helped Forbes's men stave off the French and their Indian allies who launched a significant assault upon Fort Ligonier in October 1758. An English captive, James Smith, remembered that Indians returning from the failed attempt remarked that "there were a great many American riflemen along with the red-coats, who scattered out, took trees, and were good marks-men." Like Ensign Chew
in his moccasins and breechclout, most of the provincial troops adopted some aspect of Indian dress. After a hard summer of campaigning in the woods, Bouquet complained to Forbes that “our best woodsmen, accustomed to moccasins, cannot be used for lack of footwear.” He requested that “500 prepared skins from Philadelphia” be sent to make moccasins for the rangers. In addition to adopting Indian dress, the soldiers learned the rudiments of surviving and fighting in the woods just as Chew had. Lieut. James Reily’s journal reveals a soldier who was well versed in the art of tracking, Indian warfare tactics, and Indian dress. On one occasion he describes how he “immediately strip’d off to my Shirt & Moccassons, lest I might be track’d & pursued.”

Colonists and Regulars who fought with Natives also gained a greater familiarity with Indian languages, religious beliefs, and customs. Certainly the provincials in Chew’s party at least partially understood the Cherokee warrior’s conjuring and use of amulets. In a similar incident, Bouquet lamented that he could not inform Forbes of “the possibility of this passage [a road across Laurel Hill], as the Indian rascals I had sent to explore it with 4 Officers and 30 of our men deserted them under the pretext that their omens were bad.” Although Bouquet did not notice his slip of logic in the next sentence, the Indians’ omens proved to be true: it was a “lack of provisions” that forced the party to return. Soldiers also learned of the Indians’ traditional medicines gleaned from the woods. Bouquet related to Forbes the account of a Virginian who returned to camp, “almost dead from hunger, having gone 8 days without food.” A rattlesnake bit the soldier on his way back from Fort Duquesne, but the Cherokees administered snake root to him and continued home; Bouquet marveled that “he is almost cured.” With the numbers in each party usually evenly split, the provincial troops had to learn quickly the rudiments of either sign language or Iroquoian or Algonquian languages. Those who trusted their hands could often achieve a wonderful proficiency. Lacking an interpreter at Fort Littleton, Hugh Mercer was able to “imagine from [the Cherokees’] Signs” that “they have been gone Six Weeks from thence & have lost One of their Number in an Engagement near Fort [Presque Isle] on Lake Erie.”

The experience of James Smith, who hauled supplies to Braddock’s army in 1755, well exemplifies the broader themes of colonial-Indian encounters in wartime. Captured and adopted by the Ohio Indians in 1755, Smith lived nearly five years of his life quite happily as “Scoouwa.” He became knowledgeable about Indian society and grew to admire many aspects of it, especially “the Indian mode of warfare.” Captivity altered Smith’s attitudes
toward his captors; for the rest of his life, he bore an indelible Indian impress. In his heart and mind, however, Smith remained a European. When he returned to English society in 1760, his family was “surprized to see [him] so much like an Indian, both in [his] gait and gesture.”

But Smith’s likeness to Indians was both superficial and deceiving. For the remainder of his life, Smith not only used aspects of Indian society to fashion his identity but turned his intimate understanding of Indian ways against his former captors. At the outbreak of Pontiac’s War in 1763, his fellow colonists elected him to lead a company of rangers to defend the frontiers. Smith accepted the commission and chose as subalterns “two of the most active young men . . . who had also been long in captivity with the Indians.” Smith and his rangers dressed “uniformly in the Indian manner, with breech-clouts, leggings, mockesons, and green shrouds.” Smith’s rangers sported “red handkerchiefs” on their heads and they “painted [their] faces red and black, like Indian warriors” as they fought and killed their Indian enemies. He participated in the burning of Delaware and Munsee towns along the west branch of the Susquehanna River in 1763; he battled the Ohio Indians with Col. Henry Bouquet during the Muskingum campaign of 1764; he personally led the “Black Boys” in the “Sideling Hill Affair,” in 1765, when vigilantes destroyed Indian trade goods bound for Pittsburgh and threatened British regulars at Fort Loudoun. During the American Revolution, Smith accepted an officer’s commission and urged the Continental army to adopt Indian tactics as he waged war in the Ohio Country.

Although military cooperation had the potential to place the Anglo-Indian relations on a more harmonious footing, it clearly brought cultural conflicts and misunderstandings to the fore. These differences ultimately fueled the breakdown in Anglo-Cherokee relations so that open warfare erupted from 1759 to 1761. Just as the Seven Years’ War brought colonists and British regulars into conflict, so too did the war create conflicts between these nominal allies. Overlapping jurisdictions between colonial governments and Indian superintendents led to difficulties in British distribution of gifts, clothing, supplies, and payments for scalp bounties to the southern Indian warriors. Disputes over terms of service led John Forbes to treat the Cherokee leader Little Carpenter as a deserter deserving of punishment—an act that greatly angered the warriors. The Cherokees’ expectations of gifts and largesse for their service often led them to take what they wanted from colonial farmers and tavern keepers that they met on the paths of the Great Valley. Assaults, robberies, and murders plagued Cherokee-settler relations

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along the Great Wagon Road. Virginia settlers’ gruesome killing of eighteen Cherokee warriors returning from Forbes’ campaign in 1758 was one of the precipitating factors for the Cherokee War. Were it not for these wartime cultural encounters when Cherokees were operating hundreds of miles from their homes, it is likely that the Cherokee war would not have happened when it did. Open warfare broke out in 1759, and Cherokee warriors who had once fought as allies with Scottish Highlanders of the 77th Foot would face them as enemies when Col. Archibald Montgomery led his Highlanders into South Carolina to destroy their homes and settlements.44

It is all too easy to assume that conflict was inevitable between British soldiers and their Indian allies. But in 1758, the Rev. Thomas Barton caught a powerful glimpse of bonds formed through war. In early September, Barton visited Fort Cumberland, which he noted, was “so irregular that I believe Trigonometry cannot give it a Name”. While observing the area, he noticed “about 100 Yards S.W. of the Fort . . . a large square Post with a Piramidical Top, & a Plate of Lead with the following Inscription nail’d to one side of it:

To the Memory

Of Serjeant Wm Shaw, Serjeant Tim’ly Shaw, Jer’ly Poor, & Jam’ly Cope Soldiers Of the 1st Virginia Regiment, this Monument is erected: To testify the Love & Esteem paid them by their Officers, for their Courage & Gallant Behaviour. Nov: 1756—They went with 11 Catawbas to gain Intelligence, & in the First Encounter with the Enemy met with success their Courage deserv’d Incited by this Advantage, & fir’d with a Noble Ambition to distinguish Themselves: They engag’d a Party of the Enemy hard by Fort Du Quesne And fell gloriously fighting bravely, being greatly overpower’d by Superior Numbers. In Premium Virtutis Erigendum curavit

Adamus Stephen”

The Catawba warriors paid an even higher tribute to three of their fallen English comrades: “the white Men behaved as they did, and died like Men; the greatest Compliment they can pay white People, being to compare them to themselves.”45 These memorials to manhood, bravery, and cooperation suggest the deeper meanings that a shared warrior culture had for Indians and common soldiers.
Cooperation between British and Indian forces, then, was a prominent and significant characteristic of British military activity during the Seven Years’ War. Well over two thousand southern Indians—primarily Cherokees, Tuscaroras, and Catawbas—fought and often died with their colonial British allies. New France certainly possessed greater numbers of Indian allies. But in a qualitative sense, both British and French colonists had similar experiences in joint operations with their respective Native allies. British soldiers worked closely with Natives as scouts, admired their abilities, shared campfires and hardships, and argued and disagreed with one another. This essay has also demonstrated that warfare on the Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia frontiers had a deeply southern dimension. Cherokees, Catawbas, and Tuscaroras from the Carolinas became vitally important to the defense of frontiers to the northward, and British colonial authorities from South Carolina to Pennsylvania focused their diplomatic energies on securing their aid. The southern Indians’ decisions to participate militarily in the Seven Years’ War, however, yielded neither greater security nor stronger alliances with the British colonies in the long term. Cherokees suffered from two wars from 1759–61 and again in 1776, while the smaller Catawba and Tuscarora nations confronted growing numbers of German and Scots-Irish settlers encroaching on their lands. Moreover, as frontier warfare between Indians and whites intensified throughout the late-eighteenth century, whites increasingly carried out a destructive style of war against their enemies. As recent literature on the American Revolution clearly demonstrates, backcountry settlers or “white Indians” readily applied their knowledge of Indian warfare and dress against enemy Indians and even Euroamerican opponents who disputed their possession of land. Writ large in Anglo-Indian military cooperation during the Seven Years’ War were the foundations of white Americans’ long fascination with aspects of Indian culture, and appropriation of Indian military tactics and dress in asserting a new national and racial identity.

NOTES

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8. For works on British-Indian contact, see Peter Way, "The Cutting Edge of Culture: British Soldiers Encounter Native Americans in the French and Indian War," in Martin Daunton and Rick Halpern, eds., Empire and Others: British Encounters with Indigenous Peoples, 1600–1850 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 123–48 (quote at 125); and Chapter 5 of Stephen Brumwell's, Redcoats:
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15. Koppertman, Braddock at the Monongahela, 100–104; MCPF, 6: 460.


21. Extract from The Virginia-Centinel, in The Pennsylvania Gazette, March 17, 1757. Pennsylvania Gazette, January 6, 1757; Maryland Gazette, May 19, 1757, Pennsylvania Gazette April 14, 1757; For Tuscarora participation, see Maryland Gazette, June 2, 1757; On Catawba and Cherokee participation, see McDowell, South Carolina Indian Affairs. Corkran, The Cherokee Frontier, 75–162, contains excellent references to the successes and failures of Indian scouts.


24. Bouquet Papers 2: 136; the estimate of Cherokee and Catawba numbers is based on Dowd, “Gift Giving and the Cherokee-British Alliance,” 150.


29. MCPF, 8: 60; Bouquet Papers, 2: 206, 209, 104, 136. For examples of British officers among the combined Anglo-Indian forces, see Bouquet Papers 2: 209, 428–29, 477, 493.


42. Barsotti, Scoouwa, 17, 118–20.


45. Bouquet Papers, 2: 95, 102; “Thomas Barton and the Forbes Expedition,” 469–70; Pennsylvania Gazette, January 6, 1757. The Latin inscription translates as “in honor of their virtues Adam Stephen caused this to be raised.”
