INDIAN WAR ON THE UPPER OHIO
1779-1782
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The controversy over the question of the “conquest” of the “Old Northwest” has never been settled. Nor is this paper written to settle it. The purpose is rather to make it plain that in the closing years of the Revolutionary War the Northwest was not conquered from the Indians. The effort is made to demonstrate that the tribes most directly in contact with the Americans—the Delawares, the Shawnee, and the Wyandot—had, by the end of 1782, successfully defended their hunting grounds from the invasions of the armies of the United States. To speak of a “conquest” of the Northwest from the Indians during the Revolution by American armies is to speak idly. The Indians never considered any of this territory as conquered, annexed, or legally occupied until the Treaty of Greenville of 1795.

The years from 1779 to 1782 represent one of the lowest stages of effectiveness to which American Indian policy ever sank. The policy, if it could be called a policy, consisted mainly of attempts at retaliation for Indian attacks that could not be stopped by the poorly organized defense. From one failure to another American prestige among the Indians declined until, in the famous torture of Colonel William Crawford in 1782, American cruelty at the Moravian massacre was avenged and American impotence flaunted in the face of the leader of a beaten army.

In the summer of 1779 the Indian situation on the upper Ohio seemed to be anything but discouraging to the United States. The reverberations

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2 A more detailed and strictly narrative account of these years is in Edgar W. Hassler, Old Westmoreland: A History of Western Pennsylvania during the Revolution, 95-188 (Pittsburgh, 1900).
of the victories of George Rogers Clark had produced a decidedly pro-American feeling among the tribes, much to the dismay of the British at Detroit. These victories had neutralized the adverse effect of the humiliating spectacle the Americans had made at Fort Laurens. The Wyandot had abandoned their alliance with the British. The Shawnee had been beaten in May by Colonel John Bowman’s expedition. To the northeast of Pittsburgh the Six Nations had been severely drubbed by the expeditions of General John Sullivan and Colonel Daniel Brodhead.

But appearances were deceiving. None of these victories was as real as it seemed. Clark’s “conquest” was extremely hollow, having been made possible more by the friendliness of the French and Indians than by his own strength. Sullivan had not captured Niagara and the British still enjoyed the uninterrupted passage of the St. Lawrence-Great Lakes route. Thus they were able to do what the Americans could not do for the Indians of the Northwest, that is, to deliver them supplies. It was not to be long, therefore, before the Wyandot were to return to their British alliance and were to bring the Delawares with them. As for the Shawnee, Bowman’s punishing of them was merely a temporary inconvenience and only served to increase their hatred of the Americans. Nor, as the sequel will show, were the Six Nations entirely eliminated as factors in the Revolutionary War.

If Brodhead’s expedition may be accorded the honor of being called successful, it was the last of this nature during the Revolution on the upper Ohio. It was to be followed by an amazing number of abortive expeditions and emphatic defeats. The student of frontier affairs should be clearly aware of that great paradox of 1783, the acquisition by a nation whose armies had been continually beaten of lands whose Indian inhabitants had successfully defended them against that nation. It is this paradox that forms the central point of this study.

The first incident in this development came close upon the heels of Brodhead’s Allegheny expedition. On his return to Fort Pitt from the destruction of the Seneca towns Brodhead was full of the idea of extending his conquests to Detroit. It had been the assurance of the friendship of the Indians in this latter sector, chiefly of the Wyandot, that had been the main factor in deciding him in favor of the Allegheny expedition.
And it was felt that, after the conquest of the unfriendly Six Nation Indians in the Niagara area, the conquest of Detroit would be a comparatively easy matter.

Before he set out up the Allegheny Brodhead had planned to pay his respects to Detroit. He had made arrangements to meet the Wyandot in September, 1779, at what was to be the fifth treaty of Pittsburgh. Like McIntosh the year before at the fourth treaty of Pittsburgh, Brodhead hoped to enlist the active support of the Indians in the advance to Detroit. Unlike McIntosh, he did not deceive himself and the Indians by forcing an agreement that provided the basis for a futile and disastrous advance into the Indian country. The Wyandot were not even willing, as the Delawares had been, to let the American army pass through their country, but told them to go to Detroit by way of Lake Erie. Thus when Brodhead told the Wyandot, "You ought to assist your Brothers of the United States to destroy them [the British]," he got a direct refusal. "Be cautious," replied the Wyandot, Half King, "not to go the nighest way to where he [the British] is, lest you frighten the owners of the lands who are living through the country between this and that place [Detroit]... go by water, as it will be the easiest and best way." This opposition clearly made the expedition impossible as the United States was no more able to conquer Detroit by way of Lake Erie in 1779 than it was in 1812. Thus at the fifth treaty of Pittsburgh little more was accomplished than the formal exchange of pledges of mutual friendship and of condolences for past tragedies.3

In this situation Brodhead vainly appealed to eastern sources for aid. He knew that the chief reason for the unwillingness of the Indians to fight for the United States was that they were getting nothing out of it. They could hardly be expected to fight American battles without the necessary guns, ammunition, and other supplies. As he informed George Morgan, "I conceive it to be next to an impossibility to carry on a secret expedition against that place [Detroit], whilst the English have goods to engage the Indians in their interest, and we have nothing but words." "The Delawares, Wyandots, & Maquichees tribes of the Shawnese Na-

tion," he wrote to President Joseph Reed of Pennsylvania on September 23, "seem disposed for peace . . . And if I was possess of a few Goods & some trinkets, I should doubtless engage them to go against the Enemy. Indeed, the Delawares seem ready to follow me wherever I go." At the same time he appealed to the Continental authorities by writing to Timothy Pickering, secretary to the board of war, asking him, "if possible [to] enable me to engage one nation of Indians to wage war against the other."4

Brodhead was, of course, asking too much. In spite of the peacemaking of the fifth treaty of Pittsburgh, disconcerting evidence was beginning to come in that the Wyandot were resuming hostilities because they found no supplies coming from the Americans and because George Rogers Clark had failed in his plans to extend his "conquests" to Detroit. In the East, British armies were overrunning South Carolina so that on October 18, 1779, General Washington advised Brodhead to moderate his plans. "It is not in my power," wrote Washington, "circumstanced as things are at this critical moment to say how far it may be practicable to afford sufficient aid from hence." Brodhead was, therefore, instructed to occupy himself with collecting information about routes and about the status of the defenses at Detroit so that when the advance on Detroit eventually did take place, he would be ready. To this he replied with characteristic zeal that he would "endeavour to have everything in perfect readiness" for the advance.5

Another unfortunate incident occurred in this month of October, 1779, that illustrates how isolated the upper Ohio really was. This was the destruction by the Indians of a five-boat convoy of provisions and supplies ascending the Ohio River at a point opposite what is now Cincinnati. This convoy was bound for Pittsburgh and contained a large amount of supplies for military uses. They had been bought by the government of Virginia at New Orleans and intrusted to the protection of Colonel David Rogers and a detachment of sixty men. Rogers made the supreme mistake of landing his boats at the Ohio River crossing at the mouth of the Licking River after having sighted an Indian band that he judged to be smaller than his. He ran into a well-planned ambush of over 130 In-

Indians led by Simon Girty. Girty's band descended upon Roger's party with fury and succeeded in killing about forty men, including Rogers himself, and in carrying off several as prisoners. Only one boat escaped into midstream; the rest were plundered and sunk. The disaster was of great significance not only in depriving the militia of western Pennsylvania and Virginia of supplies but in counteracting in some degree the effect of the victories of George Rogers Clark earlier in the year.6

During the winter of 1779–80 developments took place that showed how really impotent the United States was on the northwestern Indian frontier and that forecasted the failures of the years that followed. These developments showed how impossible it was to make the frontiersmen assume more than what they judged to be their share of the responsibilities in the capture of Detroit. The frontier required a Continental army from the East and, lacking one, refused to expose itself to Indian attacks by permitting its fighting men to be stationed at remote forts on the Allegheny far removed from the homes and firesides of its families. The zealous Brodhead did not thoroughly understand the situation and proceeded on the assumption that the local militia would do exactly as he ordered, even when he sought to make them do what they thought Congress should do.

A part of Brodhead's plan for the campaign of 1780 was to concentrate the Continental troops at Fort Pitt. In doing this he felt it necessary to call in the Continentals at the Allegheny River posts of Fort Armstrong and Fort Crawford and to substitute militia troops or rangers, as they were called, from Westmoreland County. He therefore issued orders to Captains Joseph Irwin and Thomas Campbell, over the head of militia Colonel Archibald Lochry, to station small detachments of rangers at these two posts. The Allegheny River was part of the northern boundary of Westmoreland in that day and, if militia were placed at these remote posts, protection would be drawn away from the centers of settlement, which would then be exposed to the murderous attentions of stray bands of Indians. Captain Irwin, supported by his son-in-law, Colonel Lochry, refused to obey Brodhead and kept the rangers in posts nearer home, that is, Hannastown and Fort Wallace on the Conemaugh.

On appeal to President Reed of Pennsylvania, Irwin and Lochry were sustained.\(^7\)

Brodhead retaliated with the only weapons at his disposal. If the militia officers were to do without Continental orders they might also do without Continental supplies. To be sure it was by resolution of Congress that the rangers were to be provided from Continental stores. But supplies were scarce and Brodhead, of course, felt that the Continental troops should have first chance at what there was. Hence, when, on December 13, 1779, Lochry requested Brodhead "to Give Orders for their \[the militia\] Being Regularly Supplyed in Provisions," the latter had a ready answer. "As to the Provisions," he said, "I do not know where they are to be supplied; and, as you seem to be vested with authority to station the Troops, you will, doubtless, be able to get them supplied, by directing your orders to the proper Commissaries." The result was that the Westmoreland rangers had to be quartered on the people of the county.\(^8\)

This was not Brodhead's only weapon. Having failed to get the rangers stationed on the Allegheny he sought to have them dismissed from militia service so that they might be reënlisted as Continental troops. He therefore wrote to Lochry on December 29, 1779, "I think it adviseable to discharge the Ranging Companies so soon as they are mustered and paid ... I wish you to impress on the minds of the officers of these Companies that they cannot now more essentially serve their Country than by encouraging their men to enlist during the war." Brodhead's officers thereupon went out and succeeded in enlisting a few of the rangers. Such cavalier actions enraged Lochry. The implication behind Brodhead's actions was that the frontiersmen were obstructing the efficient administration of Indian affairs. Lochry informed Brodhead that he would resist any attempt to take militia men away from his service. He wrote to President Reed asking for orders to reënlist the rangers for another year. When Captain Campbell and Captain Irwin were arrested by Brodhead's order for not permitting the departure of the rangers who had enlisted as Continentals, Lochry refused to permit his captains to be taken to Pittsburgh. The incident was finally closed when President Reed on

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\(^8\) *Pennsylvania Archives*, first series, 8:42, 50, 78.
February 14, 1780, came to the assistance of Lochry and forbade the taking of troops from ranging service before their terms expired. Brodhead had failed completely to compel the frontiersmen to sustain an aggressive Indian policy that Congress would not support. During the entire winter of 1779–80 he was obliged to leave Forts Armstrong and Crawford ungarrisoned.\(^9\)

The year 1780 brought additional humiliations to Brodhead. It began with roseate expectations on the part of the colonel that Detroit would be in his hands before the end of the year. On April 4 he wrote to George Rogers Clark, "I think it is probable that before next Winter I shall have the pleasure of taking you by the hand somewhere upon the waters of lake Erie."\(^10\) It ended with the utter failure of any expedition of any kind even to get started. The basic reason for this failure was the adverse fortunes of American armies in the East. On March 14 Washington advised Brodhead to drop all ideas of an advance on Detroit and to confine himself to short excursions against hostile tribes. In June the situation in the East was so bad that disastrous orders were issued to all Continental commissioners in the West to cease to draw on Congressional funds. Nor could the commonwealth of Pennsylvania do any better. On April 29 President Reed informed Brodhead that the legislature had voted four companies for the frontiers but that they could not possibly be sent because the eastern armies were using all the supplies. The predicament of the eastern government was well described by Reed's letter of April to the Reverend Joseph Montgomery of Sunbury. "The Frontiers," he wrote, "exclaim with Anguish, & we are now reduced to the painful Necessity of listening to Distress we cannot relieve & Claims we cannot satisfy—the poor People like the Waggoner in the Fable, must put their own Shoulders to the Wheel as well as call on Hercules—On these Occasions our Aid is so distant that I do not recollect any Instance when it has proved effectual."\(^11\)

According to Washington's orders of March 14 the program for the year 1780 was modified to the conducting of whatever short excursions


\(^10\) Pennsylvania Archives, first series, 12: 216.

\(^11\) Kellogg, Frontier Retreat, 147; Pennsylvania Archives, first series, 8: 170, 217, 218; 12: 234.
against hostile tribes Brodhead judged necessary. The three tribes that occupied Brodhead's attention this year were the Six Nations, the Shawnee, and the newly belligerent Wyandot. As for the Six Nations, the fact that these Indians caused Brodhead concern is in itself testimony that the Susquehanna-Allegheny expeditions of 1779 had not completely accomplished their purpose of permanently silencing these Indians. Less than six months after his return from the destruction of the Seneca towns Brodhead wrote to President Reed by letter of February 11, 1780, "I sincerely wish to see a reinforcement from the main Army, for I am really apprehensive of a visit from Niagara." Early in May the visit came, when warriors of the Six Nations appeared among the settlements on Brush Creek, a branch of the Monongahela east of Pittsburgh, and spread destruction. From then until the burning of Hannastown by Guyasuta in 1782, the western Pennsylvania frontier was never without the menace of the depredations of these warriors, who were supposed to have been silenced in 1779. Throughout all these years this menace had the effect of permanently preventing the men of Westmoreland County from joining any of Brodhead's expeditions that would take them far from home. Brodhead's comment of May 13, 1780, to Washington on the Brush Creek attack was equally true of the seasons that followed. He wrote that it "will probably prevent my receiving any aid from the militia of that County." It is clear that the Six Nations needed another return "visit" from the Americans, one that Brodhead could not make and that, he lamented, Congress would not help him to make.14

Something, however, had to be done. This was clear from the murderous effects of the attacks of the Indians, whose early spring "visits" spread terror throughout the upper Ohio Valley. A meeting of county militia officers was arranged "to establish either some general defensive plan, or to consult & fix upon some well calculated offensive operations against one or more of the hostile Tribes." Just what decision was reached is not certain but Brodhead, who was present, felt warranted in making preparations for a short expedition against the Shawnee and in setting May 22 as the date and Wheeling as the place for the rendezvousing of 825 militia. It was hoped that the expedition would be at an end in time for the

militia to return to harvest their crops and that it would be a "home stroke" from which "a lasting tranquility will ensue to the inhabitants of this Frontier."

But the effort failed. Its success would have required the arrival of the artillery and clothing promised by the Continental authorities. The clothing situation was so bad that, at the request of his officers, Brodhead, on April 27, sent a special party to Philadelphia to get the clothing long overdue from headquarters. He postponed the expedition until June 4 pending their return. As for the artillery and other military stores, Brodhead, after sending a hurry-up call, was obliged to do without them because he could not get them transported over the mountains from Carlisle. Another element necessary to the success of this expedition was the presence of four regiments from the eastern Pennsylvania militia that had been promised. But at the last moment the crisis in the East prevented the sending of these troops. And finally the attack of the Six Nations made it impossible for Westmoreland to contribute any militia to the venture. Brodhead therefore countermanded his orders to the militia, adding the significant remark: "In the meantime I shall endeavor to give every possible protection to the Settlements and amuse the Indians by speeches."

Accordingly he sent Major Geoffrey Linctot among the tribes with speeches "threatening them with the force of France, Spain & America, if they did not immediately desist from further hostilities."

A second time in this year of stalemate did Brodhead attempt the impossible. In the middle of July he called for a rendezvous of the militia at Fort McIntosh on August 10 to attack the Wyandot at the same time that George Rogers Clark was to attack the Shawnee. In order to tempt the frontiersmen to part with the supplies necessary for the expedition he devised an ingenious paper-money scheme. The Continental purchasing agents were to pay for the supplies with certificates that were either to be redeemed in gold after three months or to draw interest in paper at five per cent. But the frontiersmen were not to be deceived. On July 31, Brodhead, in announcing the postponement of the Fort McIntosh rendezvous, wrote to the militia officers "I have the mortification to assure

13 Kellogg, Frontier Retreat, 154; Pennsylvania Archives, first series, 12:219, 223.
you that the public Magazines are quite empty & that I cannot yet see a prospect of obtaining a sufficient supply for the sustenance of the Troops."

In making his third and last attempt of the year Brodhead was obliged to resort to that most desperate of all expedients for the collection of supplies, that of impressment. He was reluctant to use this weapon and did so only after receiving express authority from President Reed of Pennsylvania and from the Continental board of war. On September 23 Brodhead wrote to Richard Peters of the board of war, "This Day the last meat that could be obtained by purchase is issued to the Troops, and to-morrow a party will march out with a Commissary to purchase or take—I think it must be by force—some Cattle &c." The experiences of these impressment parties, one under Captain Uriah Springer, one under Captain Samuel Brady, and one under Major William Taylor, were most illuminating. In the middle of October Springer reported that the people above Redstone actually intended to rise up in arms against him. Others upon the approach of the troops drove their cattle into the mountains. It was useless. By November 3, Brodhead had to surrender to this ominous apathy of the people. "It is clear to every body," he wrote to Ephraim Blaine of Cumberland County, "that a supply of meat cannot be had even for ready money equal to half the present consumption, to say nothing of what quantity ought to be laid in to enable me to act vigorously the ensuing campaign." The impressment parties could not get enough food to subsist themselves. On November 15 Brodhead wrote to Major Taylor, "Am really sorry to find that after so much time has been spent, you have not procured either by purchase or compulsion as much provisions as was necessary for the subsistence of your own party." Disgusted with this turn of affairs, Brodhead called in the parties and decided that the only way to provision Fort Pitt was to send out parties to hunt for game and wild fowl.

To this miserable depth had affairs sunk in Pittsburgh in the closing years of the Revolution. By December, 1780, the American force at Fort

15 Pennsylvania Archives, first series, 12: 243, 244, 246-254; Darlington, Fort Pitt, 236; Jared Sparks, ed., Correspondence of the American Revolution Being Letters of Eminent Men to George Washington, 3: 32-34 (Boston, 1853).
Pitt was almost as pitifully impotent as that at Fort Laurens had been two years before. Parties were sent to range the hunting grounds as far down the Ohio as the Little Kanawha in search of game for the garrison. North of the Ohio the aid of the Moravian Indians was sought. But even these efforts proved futile and only four hundred pounds of wild meat were delivered to Fort Pitt by December 16. "This being a subversion of my intentions," Brodhead wrote to Captain Samuel Brady on December 16, "has determined me to recall both the officers and soldiers." Obviously the third rendezvous named by Brodhead in August had long since been given up.17

The more closely one analyzes the situation at Pittsburgh in the fall of 1780, the more one is convinced that the country might easily have been restored to British rule if military events on the frontier and in the East had brought about complete British success. The American garrison at Fort Pitt was reduced to the most humiliating privations and weakness and would have been an easy prey to a popular uprising in behalf of the triumphant British. Brodhead reported to Washington on September 14, "The whole Garrison, with Serjeants to lead them, came to my quarters a few days ago to represent that they had not rec'd any bread for five days together. Their conduct was civil & respectful, and upon being told that every possible exertion was making to prevent their further suffering they retired in good order to their quarters." Disaffection among the inhabitants was widespread. On September 23, Brodhead reported certain of his officers as saying, "should the Enemy approach this frontier & offer protection, half the Inhabitants would join them." A few weeks later Brodhead was even more convinced that the people only awaited an opportunity to declare for the British cause. He informed Peters on December 7, "I learn more and more of the disaffection of many the inhabitants on this side the mountain. The King of Britain's health is often drunk in companies; & I believe those wish to see the Regular Troops removed from this department, & a favorable opportunity to submit to British Government." Desertions were frequent and it was utterly impossible to find new recruits for the declining garrison.18

In the year 1780 a new misfortune for the Americans was preparing that finally broke in the early months of 1781. This was the loss of the

17 Kellogg, Frontier Retreat, 308–311.
friendship of the Delaware Indians, the last tribe on which the United States could really count. For years these Indians had been patiently waiting for the United States to fulfill the promises made as early as the first treaty of Pittsburgh in 1775 to put trade on a satisfactory basis and to provide adequate protection against their enemies. Early in 1779 when they had been all but driven into hostility by General McIntosh and the deceptive fourth treaty of Pittsburgh, they had been held back only by the timely “conquest” of George Rogers Clark. Gradually however the effect of Clark’s activities wore off. The nature of the occupation of Fort Laurens had not increased the Delaware respect for the United States and, when the post was evacuated in the summer of 1779 as part of the Allegheny campaign against the Seneca, Brodhead agreed to re-establish it.19

But as had been the case with his military plans, Brodhead was overzealous. The disappointment of the Delawares in their expectations of the reoccupation of Fort Laurens was the first episode in a chain of events that led directly to their abandonment of the Americans early in 1781. The next episode was the invasion in 1779 of the Delaware hunting grounds west of the Ohio by squatters. Brodhead could meet the situation only by making extravagant promises, which would pacify the Indians for the time being. Thus in telling them of his measures to expel the squatters he said, “You may depend I will punish them so severely that they will never venture to behave so again.” When in the fall of 1779 the Delaware nation, confronted with a winter of starvation and exposure, made representations at Pittsburgh and asked to be allowed to go to Philadelphia to represent their situation more directly, Brodhead dissuaded them by the statement that he would soon “strike the War-post.”20

This was a dangerous promise and Brodhead knew it. He did not fail to inform the board of war that, unless something were done for the Delawares, “they will be compelled to submit to such terms as our enemies may impose on them.” Thus in the spring of 1780 Brodhead bland-

19 Pennsylvania Archives, first series, 12:158.
ly assured the Delawares that the time had almost come for him to strike. "I am only waiting," he told them, "to receive a letter from our great Warrior, but I am weary of sitting here & am now standing with my Tomhawk in my hand." Each time during 1780 that Brodhead planned the advance, as already narrated, the Delawares were informed, and each time they were disappointed. And with each disappointment the British pressure increased. On April 23, 1780, the Delawares wrote, "I am so much mocked at by the Enemy Inds for speaking so long to them for You. Now they laugh at me, and ask me where that great Army of my Brothers, that was to come out against them so long ago, and so often, stays so long. . . . They further desire me to tell You now to make haste and come soon, the sooner, and the greater Your Number the better." In June the Delawares spoke thus to the free-lance colonel, Augustin Mottin de la Balme, "If our father [the French] 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 offers which the English make to us . . . our urgent needs will finally force us to lend an attentive ear to their proposition . . . Last year they [the Americans] made us a thousand promises at Philadelphia, now these are not even thought of."

With the failure of Brodhead's third attempt to advance in the fall of 1780 the Delawares finally saw that the United States was powerless to act offensively. Brodhead gave up all hope of retaining their friendship. He wrote to Washington on September 16, "As no supply of Goods has yet been sent for the Delaware Indians . . . I conceive they will be compelled to make terms with the British or perish." On January 22, 1781, he informed President Reed of Pennsylvania, "Unless a change of System is introduced, I must expect to see all Indians in favor of Britain, in spite of every address in my power." Thus when Congress in March, 1781, finally refused to reestablish Fort Laurens, Brodhead informed the president of Congress, "We may now expect a general Indian war." Such indeed was the case; for Brodhead had already been informed by

the Moravian, John Heckewelder, that the Delaware council had made the fatal decision and that parties were being organized to attack the American frontier.22

Brodhead decided to strike first. With a band of 150 Continentals and about the same number of militia he set out from Pittsburgh on April 7, 1781, for Coshocton, the central town of the Delawares, located on the Tuscarawas River in what is now Ohio. Although the inhabitants were not surprised, the town itself was destroyed, as was the neighboring village of Lichtenau, and fifteen warriors were killed after they had been captured. Twenty other prisoners were captured, and plunder in the form of poultry and live stock that sold at Wheeling for eighty thousand pounds was taken. Brodhead wished to make a more complete job of it and proposed the destruction of more Delaware towns and warriors, but his troops, feeling that they had accomplished enough, were unwilling to accompany him. They therefore returned to Pittsburgh. The expedition was characterized by excessive cruelty in the killing of captured Indians and in the infamous murder by Lewis Wetzel of a Delaware peace emissary. It was claimed that these cruelties were justified as retaliation for previous killings by the Delawares of innocent whites.23 In a narrow sense the expedition was probably successful. It caused the Indians more direct loss than that suffered by the whites. But as for the whole of which it was a part, it can not be said that the expedition did anything to lessen the danger from the new Delaware enemies. It rather increased their rage and their determination to make reprisals.

There was another bi-product of Brodhead’s Coshocton expedition that detracted somewhat from its net utility. This was its effect upon the attempt of George Rogers Clark to get the upper Ohio frontier to cooperate with him in the conquest of Detroit. This endeavor was a complete failure and was accompanied by that humiliating disaster known as Lochry’s defeat. One of the factors that made the attempt a failure was, of course, the unwillingness of practically all the men of western Pennsylvania and northwestern Virginia to leave their homes exposed to the menace of the Six Nations and the newly belligerent Delawares. An-

other factor was that Brodhead insisted on his Coshocton venture, which, instead of being a help to Clark, robbed him of three hundred men and of supplies that he greatly needed.

A more basic cause for the defeat than either of these factors was the ever present inability to get help from the East. The initiative in the expedition was taken by the government of Virginia with the acquiescence of Congress. It was Governor Thomas Jefferson's plan that the entire two thousand men who were to constitute Clark's force were to be recruited from the frontier country. But the plans, which were first publicly broached in December, 1780, were scarcely two months old, when the negative action of the four Virginia counties of Greenbrier, Frederick, Berkeley, and Hampshire, which were to furnish over nine hundred men, put a decided damper on Clark's hopes. The protests of these counties against contributing to Clark's army were based on the fear caused by the invasion that was already taking place in eastern Virginia and on the dread of the Tories nearer home and of the Indians to the northwest. Jefferson, anxious "to prevent anything like commotion or opposition to Government," quietly acceded and was able to make arrangements with Congress by which Clark was to get the assistance of two hundred regulars at Pittsburgh. This absorbed some of Clark's losses but still left him to recruit six or seven hundred men from some other source. He complained bitterly but got some comfort from the expectation of finding the extra men in the Pittsburgh area.24

But success was not to be. The arrangements to give Clark two hundred Continental troops did not fit with Brodhead's plans against the Delawares. Brodhead therefore declined to permit these troops to join Clark and was later entirely supported by Washington.25 Clark then turned to the inhabitants of the upper Ohio in an effort to raise five hundred men. Here he was again destined to be disappointed. As in other regions and in other years the people of the frontier were not disposed to bear what they thought was more than their just burden.

Clark's efforts to raise men were completely wrecked in a sea of factionalism. A controversy was raging in southwestern Pennsylvania that had its roots in the boundary dispute between Virginia and Pennsylvania. The boundary line had been settled in 1779 by agreement between the two commonwealths, but in 1781 it had not yet been run. The Virginia faction, led by Colonel Dorsey Pentecost, was organized under the old county of Yohogania. The Pennsylvania faction was led by James Marshel, lieutenant of militia of the newly created county of Washington. When Clark appeared on the lower Monongahela the two factions at once took sides, Pentecost and the Virginia group supporting Clark, Marshel and his Pennsylvanians opposing him. Marshel took the position that had been taken by the opponents of Brodhead. "There is a greater necessity," he said, "for the service of the Militia of this frontier County against the Immediate Enemies of the Country, and it would have a greater tendency to promote our own safety, than their best services with General Clark at Kaintucky possibly Could do."

Pentecost, however, proceeded to recruit the militia of Yohogania County. Meetings of "the Principal People" were held and these resulted in the decision to aid Clark by drafting one-fifth of the men of the county for the expedition. By July 27 these men, the number of whom is not recorded, were assembled and ready to accompany Clark. Marshel, relying upon his Pennsylvania commission, branded their movement as seditious. He sought to break the Yohogania militia movement by proceeding to organize the militia of Washington County for home defense. He divided the county into battalion districts and ordered elections of officers in each. By August he was able to report that he hoped "Shortly to have the Militia in full form" and that Clark's expedition "is on the Eve of falling totally through, and I am to bear the blame." The fact that President Reed later rebuked him for his action made little difference; he had succeeded in keeping most of the militia for "home defense."

A similar contest took place in Westmoreland County, although the affair was not complicated by the boundary dispute. Here, Colonel Archibald Lochry, the commander of the militia, took the side of Clark and,

supported by President Reed, proceeded to do his best to find recruits. He
told Clark on May 11, 1781, "Nothing Could Give Me Greater Pleas-
hure than assisting you in the Intended Expadition—Contious there is
no other way of retaliating On the savages But By Entring their Cun-
tery." But as with Marshel in Washington County, Lochry was opposed
by the "home defense" faction, led by Christopher Hays, who claimed
that Lochry's endeavors were "Contrary to the will and Pleasure of the
Major Part of the Inhabitance" and that they were "to the Great Dis-
advantage of the Distressed Frontiers." This group, according to Loch-
ry, was responsible, by its insinuations, for the fact that he was able to en-
list less than one hundred men to take part in Clark's expedition.*

Filled with anger and at the head of but four hundred troops, Clark
set out down the Ohio early in August, 1781. He could only heap coals
of wrath upon the people of western Pennsylvania, whom he deemed
responsible for his failure to raise enough troops. "The anxiety I have,"
he wrote to Governor Jefferson on August 4, "and the probabililty of
loosing the fair prospect I had of puting an End to the Indian war Oc-
casion me to View such Charrecters in a most Dispickable light and to
make this Representation. I do not suppose I shall have anything more
to do with them, but should it be the case and had [I] power [I] should
take the necessary steps to teach them their duties before I went any
farther."

Students of the life of George Rogers Clark have never sufficiently
emphasized how close he and his expedition came to utter destruction as
they descended the Ohio River in 1781. Almost as soon as he left Wheel-
ing his force began to be depleted by deserters. He was, therefore, ob-
liged to hasten his descent to get the men so far from home that they
could not desert. As he wrote to the unfortunate Lochry, "The militia
with us continue to desert, and consiquently I cannot remain long in one
place." In the meantime the British and Indians were gathering to de-
stroy his force. Indian scouts were watching his every move. At the
mouth of the Great Miami, the Mohawk Brant with a band of about
thirty warriors was waiting, but was not strong enough to attempt to

* Pennsylvania Archives, first series, 9:52, 247, 307, 333, 369, 405; James, Clark
Papers, 1771-1781, 549, 566, 569.

9 James, Clark Papers, 1771-1781, 580.
stop Clark. Brant had expected a large band of Shawnee and Wyandot led by Alexander McKee and Captain Isidore Chene and a few British rangers under Captain Andrew Thompson. Mismanagement and bad weather delayed this force and it joined Brant at the Great Miami a few days too late. The British-Indian force numbered probably a little less than Clark's but it was unencumbered with boats and supplies. What might have happened if the British and Indians had been a few days earlier can only be imagined. William Croghan at Pittsburgh wrote shortly after Clark had left that place: "From Every Account we have the Indians Are preparing to receive him And if they should attack him in his present Situation, either by land or Water, I dread the Consequences."

Lochry, however, was not so lucky as Clark. The latter had set out from Wheeling only one day ahead of Lochry, who was descending the river from Pittsburgh. It was but common sense that with so much danger the two forces should combine. Arrangements were made for their union but so great was Clark's haste that Lochry could never catch up. Obstructed by sand bars and by the lack of skilled pilots, harassed by the shortage of horse-feed and of ammunition to kill game, Lochry hastened from one rendezvous to another only to find, pinned to a tree, a note from Clark telling of the necessity of his departure and assigning a new time and place for their junction. Frantically Lochry sent messengers express to Clark begging him to wait. One of these messengers was captured by the ever watchful Brant. Using him as a decoy Brant on August 24 lured Lochry's men to land in an ambush near the Great Miami. Not a man escaped. Every soldier in Lochry's band of almost one hundred, including Lochry himself, died a wretched death at the hands of Brant and his ninety warriors. The rest of the story of the final failure of Clark in this grand campaign of 1781 is a part of Kentucky history.

In the meantime, back at Pittsburgh, Brodhead was making another of his futile efforts to accomplish something against the Indians. This time it was the Wyandot who were to be punished in an expedition

30 James, Clark Papers, 1771-1781, 583, 588, Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, 10: 547; 19: 617, 647, 658.
31 Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, 19: 655; Draper MSS, 6NN164-170 (State Historical Society of Wisconsin).
against the Sandusky to be led by Colonel John Gibson. Everything was
in readiness for the advance early in September, 1781, when an event
occurred that showed the people that Brodhead's Coshocton expedition
for the destruction of the Delaware towns earlier in the year had not
silenced that nation sufficiently. This event was the severe attack of a
small army of Indians led by the Delaware, Bochongahelas, and the Wy-
andot, Half-King, against Wheeling. Only the duplicity of David Zies-
berger in warning Brodhead of the impending attack saved the upper
Ohio from a more sanguinary visit. So great was the shock to the fron-
tier that once again Brodhead found himself unable to get the militia to
leave their homes for a remote objective.32

Instead the frontiersmen turned their wrath upon the Delawares,
whom they held responsible for the Wheeling scare. Thus Colonel Da-
id Williamson of Washington County organized a militia expedition to
accomplish the object that Brodhead was supposed to have accomplished
in his Coshocton expedition of the spring of 1781. When Williamson
arrived at the Delaware towns in October, he found them completely
and seemingly permanently deserted. The Delaware nation in the course
of the year 1781 had migrated to the Sandusky River and, in September,
as a punishment to Ziesberger for his duplicity in regard to the attack on
Wheeling, had forcibly compelled the Moravian Delawares to do like-
wise. Thus did the Delaware Indians do voluntarily what the Americans
had attempted to force them to do. That their retreat to the Sandusky
was to make them no less a menace to the American frontiers was left to
the events of the year 1782 to demonstrate.33

There was no truce in the Northwest following the battle of York-
town. Encouraged by Clark's and Brodhead's failures and by their own
successes, the Indians continued to ravage the frontier and, under British
leadership, they set about to organize the greatest force ever assembled

32 Kellogg, Frontier Retreat, 557, 573; Consul W. Butterfield, ed., Washington-Irving
Correspondence, 74 (Madison, Wis., 1882); Draper MSS, 145116–120.
33 Consul W. Butterfield, An Historical Account of the Expedition against Sandusky
under Col. William Crawford in 1782, 33 (Cincinnati, 1873); Draper MSS, 31J56–58;
Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, 10:518. A good summary of the events
of 1782 is in Milo M. Quaife, "The Ohio Campaigns of 1782," in the Mississippi Valley
Historical Review, 17:515–529 (March, 1931).
in the Northwest up to that time to strike the white settlements. The Americans, still unsupported from the East, frantically sought to anticipate the Indians by striking first. They did, and in Crawford's defeat and torture suffered the worst defeat of the Revolutionary War in the Northwest.

Frenzy—that is the word that defines the state of mind on the upper Ohio and that characterizes American actions in 1782. The Moravian massacre that preceded Crawford's defeat is ample testimony to it. This example of American valor was the frontier reaction to the unexpectedly early appearance of Indian hostility in February, 1782, when the hastened Delawares sought revenge for the years of American duplicity. Their attacks included such well-known episodes of border warfare as the murder of John Fink on February 8 and the capture of Mrs. Robert Wallace and her three children on Raccoon Creek. Frontiersmen were convinced that Indians were using the Delaware towns on the Tuscarawas in their operations against western Pennsylvania and Virginia. Consequently Colonel David Williamson again organized his Washington County militia and repeated his foray of the preceding fall. This time he found at the town of Gnadenhutten near Coshocton ninety unfortunate Moravian Delawares who, to avoid starvation in their camps on the Sandusky, had returned for some of the stores abandoned in their sudden migration the year before. Williamson also found four hostile Indians with the Moravians and unmistakable evidence that belligerents who had committed some of the recent outrages had been at Gnadenhutten. These discoveries apparently produced a surge of frenzied wrath in the frontiersmen and on the morning of March 8, 1782, the ninety were slaughtered in cold blood.34

It is obvious that such futile strokes had a wrong objective. The Delawares no longer lived on the Tuscarawas but had removed to the Sandusky, from where, with the neighboring Wyandot, they continued to raid the western Pennsylvania frontier. Clearly it was time for an expedition to attain an objective not yet reached during the Revolution if a stop was to be put to Indian hostilities.

Hence it fell to Brodhead's successor, General William Irvine, to en-

34 Butterfield, Expedition against Sandusky, 33–36; Butterfield, Washington-Irvine Correspondence, 99; Draper MSS, 3E61.
courage an effort against the Delaware and Wyandot Indians on the Sandusky. It would be a mistake to say that Irvine undertook the expedition himself. There was no possibility of any help from the East and Irvine was under express orders from Washington not to attempt any offensive operations "except upon a small scale." Crawford's Sandusky expedition was thus entirely a militia affair. As preparations got under way in the spring of 1782 Irvine was simply the nominal director of arrangements; the militia officers of Westmoreland and Washington counties made the real decisions. The expedition was neither recruited, commanded, supplied, nor in any way paid for by Congress. The militia, who were all mounted, were to be volunteers who "would equip themselves and victual at their own expense." Their "pay" as soldiers was to be in the form of exemption from two months militia duty. They chose their own commanding officer, Colonel William Crawford, and made Williamson second in command. As Irvine said, "Nor are we in such a situation that I could take a single continental soldier along." Compensation for losses was to come from plunder taken from the Indians.

Thus an untrained band of militia, numbering about four hundred and inspired by revenge for the continuing Indian attacks and by fear of more to come, rendezvoused on May 21 at Mingo Bottom on the Ohio near Steubenville. Setting out on May 25, the mounted army proceeded rapidly westward in the hope of completely surprising the Sandusky Indians. All precautions for secrecy were rendered ludicrous because the Indians had no trouble in reconnoitering Crawford's movements from the very day he left Mingo Bottom. Consequently on June 4 Crawford was confronted on the upper Sandusky by an Indian force more numerous than his own with British reinforcements rapidly approaching from Detroit. On that day the Americans in pitched battle held their own. But on the fifth the arrival of the British reinforcements and of Shawnee warriors from the south made it necessary for Crawford to order a retreat.

The retreat was a rout. In confusion the army broke into fleeing parties. Harassed by the Indians as far as the Olentangy, a branch of the Scioto, the Americans suffered repeated losses. The main party, led by

36 Butterfield, _Expedition against Sandusky_, 55, 61-77, 139, 153, 159, 202-217.
Williamson, arrived back at Mingo Bottom late in June. In the meantime a small party under Crawford lost its way on the upper Sandusky and fell into the hands of Delaware Indians. The ensuing torture of Crawford was the supreme act of contempt for the American cause shown by the Indians during the war. It was considered by the Delawares as just retribution for the recent murder of their kinsmen at Gnadenhutten.37

To this depth had the power of American arms on the frontier sunk in 1782. The frontier was wide open. Irvine at Pittsburgh could do nothing. Hence on July 13, 1782, there appeared before Hannastown, county seat of Westmoreland, Guyasuta and his band of Seneca. The town was burned to the ground and much of the surrounding country was devastated. Relatively few whites were killed. Wheeling was again attacked but without the success experienced at Hannastown. The greatest British-Indian army raised in the course of the Revolution in the Northwest turned aside from its objective and centered its attentions on Kentucky. The bloody defeat of the Americans at the Blue Licks was the result of this effort.38

From July until mid-October, 1782, the upper Ohio frontier went through another series of abortive attempts to produce an expedition. Crawford’s disaster was so humiliating that something had to be done. Congress finally agreed to produce soldiers and supplies, and Irvine went through the motions of organizing for another assault upon the Sandusky. But August 1, the first date of rendezvous, came and went and the eastern troops had not come. On August 25 Irvine wrote to his wife, “There has been a great talk of the militia going on another expedition but it will all end in talk. They will not accomplish it. They are now afraid to go without regular troops.” On September 10 he confided, “There never was so much talk of one [an expedition] as at this moment, and I am sure it will end like the rest—all talk . . . I will not go into the Indian country without a sufficiency of regular troops which I really have not got. But I must talk of it, prepare for it, etc., etc., or it

would not do here." With the commanding officer writing like this it could hardly be expected that an efficient expedition should take place. Indeed, when troops from the East were at last on the way Irvine actually hoped that they would not arrive. He informed the secretary of war on September 12 that things were so quiet and the season for expeditions so far advanced that "I now almost wish they may not come." September 15, another day of rendezvous, went by, and still the help from the East had not arrived. A resurgence of Indian attacks came in the latter part of the month and Irvine began to feel an interest in a campaign. He named October 20 as the next day for a rendezvous. But on October 19 the news of the preliminary peace treaty with England arrived. At once the feeling of panic disappeared. As Irvine reported to George Rogers Clark on November 7, "This news gained universal belief with the country and I fear would have mutilated my plan [even] if the report had proved premature." A rush of squatters to the north of the Ohio had begun before the news was a week old. There was nothing to fear from Indians unsupported by the British. The Americans, though beaten, could now breathe easily, while the Indians must turn to the British for an explanation.39

The long sordid struggle was at an end. Almost at the lowest level of effectiveness of its Indian policy the United States was presented with victory in the shape of new boundaries that included the very lands that the Indians had just successfully defended. The vanquished had become the victors. Perplexed, the Indians turned to the British for an explanation. The tribesmen had no intention of giving up their hunting grounds. A new phase of the struggle between the red men and the white in the Old Northwest had opened.

39 Draper MSS, 2AA70, 74; Butterfield, Washington-Irvine Correspondence, 134, 182, 184, 185, 255, 256, 259, 316, 317, 319, 335-339, 392, 396, 398, 400; James, Clark Papers, 1771-1781, 221.