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## “CRAWFORD’S DEFEAT”: A BALLAD

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SEVEN months after the British surrender at Yorktown, an army of volunteer militia marched west from the Ohio River to destroy the hostile Indian villages at Sandusky (now Upper Sandusky, Ohio). The Battle of Sandusky on June 4-5, 1782, resulted in the Americans’ defeat by a combined force of British Indians and Butler’s Rangers. During the subsequent retreat, Colonel William Crawford, the American commander and a lifelong friend of George Washington, was captured and burned at the stake. A guide, John Slover, and the army’s surgeon, Dr. John Knight, were likewise captured and condemned to die at the stake but escaped and returned home safely.

Today the published narratives of Knight and Slover are well known among the accounts of Indian captivity.<sup>1</sup> Equally familiar to

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1 Surgeon John Knight and John Slover, a guide, marched with Crawford’s army to attack Indian settlements at Sandusky in May-June 1782. After two days of battle, the increasingly outnumbered Americans were compelled to withdraw, and during the retreat Crawford, Knight, and Slover were captured. Crawford’s death by fire was witnessed by Knight who was also condemned to the same death but managed to overwhelm his Indian guard and escape. Elsewhere, Shawnee warriors tied Slover to a stake and lighted the fire. A sudden rain, however, put out the fire so that the torture was postponed, and during the night Slover escaped. Upon their return to Fort Pitt, these men related their experiences to Hugh Henry Brackenridge who sent their narratives to Philadelphia where they were first published in the *Freeman’s*

scholars of this period is the centennial history of the campaign written by Consul Willshire Butterfield in the 1870s.<sup>2</sup>

The ballad, "Crawford's Defeat," however, has remained largely unnoticed by historians and folklorists. Butterfield himself includes only two and a half stanzas in his history, observing that it "was long after a favorite song upon the frontier — sung to various tunes. Its echoes are remembered to have been heard even at a late date, and as far west as the valley of the Sandusky."<sup>3</sup>

The only broadside of "Crawford's Defeat" I have found is at the American Antiquarian Society in Worcester, Massachusetts. (A "broadside" is anything printed on one side of a sheet of paper as a public communication.) That society purchased the broadside from Earle R. Forrest of Washington, Pennsylvania.<sup>4</sup> Entitled "A Song, Called CRAWFORD'S DEFEAT BY THE INDIANS, On the Fourth Day of June, 1782," the broadside appears as follows except that its stanzas are numbered for purposes of discussion.

- 1 Come all ye good people wherever you be,  
Pray draw near awhile, and listen to me,  
A story I'll tell you that happen'd of late,  
Concerning brave CRAWFORD'S most cruel defeat.
- 2 A bold-hearted company, as we do hear,  
Equip'd themselves, being all volunteers;  
Their number was four hundred eighty and nine,  
To take the Sandusky towns was their design.
- 3 In seventeen hundred eighty and two,  
The twenty-sixth of May, as I tell unto you,  
They cross'd the Ohio, as we understand,  
Where brave Colonel Crawford he gave the command.

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*Journal* (Apr. 30-May 21, 1783). Thereafter numerous reprintings were produced which are listed in R. W. G. Vail's *Voice of the Old Frontier* (New York, 1970), 314-15, 443. The printing most commonly found in libraries is H. H. Brackenridge's *Indian Atrocities: Narratives of the Perils and Sufferings of Dr. Knight and John Slover, Among the Indians during the Revolutionary War with Short Memoirs of Col. Crawford & John Slover* (Cincinnati, 1867). A definitive work on this form of narrative-literature is James Levernier and Hennig Cohen, comps. and eds., *The Indians and Their Captives* (Westport, Conn., 1977).

2 C. W. Butterfield, *An Historical Account of the Expedition Against Sandusky Under Col. William Crawford in 1782* (Cincinnati, 1873).

3 *Ibid.*, 76.

4 A positive photostat of the same broadside may also be found in the John Hay Library at Brown University.

- 4 With courage undaunted away they did steer,  
Through the Indian's country without dread or fear ;  
Where Nicholson Slover and Jonathan Zeans  
Conducted them over the Sandusky plains.
- 5 There was brave Colonel Crawford, an officer bold,  
The fourth day of June did the Indians behold ;  
On the plains of Sandusky, at three the same day,  
Both armies did meet there in battle array.
- 6 The Indians on horseback, GIRTEE gave them command,  
On the side of the plains they boldly did stand ;  
Our men like brave heroes upon them did fire,  
Until backwards the Indians were forced to retire.
- 7 Our Rifles did rattle and bullets did fly,  
Until some of our men on the ground they did lie,  
Some being wounded, to the others they said  
Fight on brother-soldiers and be not dismay'd.
- 8 There was brave Colonel Williamson, as I understand,  
He wanted two hundred men at his command ;  
If the same had been granted, I make no great doubt,  
He soon would have put the proud Indians to rout.
- 9 This brave commander like a hero so bold,  
Behaved himself like David of old ;  
When with the Philistines as he did war,  
He returned home without ever a scar.
- 10 Like a hero of old there was brave Major Light,  
Who encourag'd his men for to stand and to fight,  
With courage and conduct his men did command,  
Like a Grecian that hero in battle did stand.
- 11 There was brave Major Brinton, the fourth in command ;  
In the front of the battle he boldly did stand,  
With courage and conduct his part did maintain,  
Though the bullets like hail in great showers they came.
- 12 Oh! as this brave hero was giving command,  
The Rifles did rattle on every hand ;  
He received a ball, but his life did not yield,  
He return'd with the wounded men out of the field.

- 13 There was brave Bigs and Ogle received each a ball,  
On the Plains of Sandusky was their lot to fall;  
Oh! not them alone, but several men  
Had the honour of dying on the Sandusky plain.
- 14 There was brave Captain Mun like a hero of old,  
Likewise Captain Rase, another as bold,  
Receiv'd each a ball, but did not expire,  
But into the camps they were forc'd to retire.
- 15 There was brave Captain Hogland I will not go past,  
He fought it out bravely while the battle did last;  
But on his return till [*sic*] a fire did go,  
What came of him after we never could know.
- 16 Our officers all so bravely did fight,  
And likewise our men two days until night;  
Until a reinforcement of Indians there came,  
Which made us to leave the Sandusky plain.
- 17 "Now, says our commander, since we have lost ground,  
With superior number they do us surround;  
We'll gather the wounded men, and let us save  
All that's able to go, the rest we must leave."
- 18 There was brave Ensign Majaster another as brave,  
He fought many battles his country to save;  
On the plains of Sandusky received a wound,  
Not being able to go he was left on the ground.
- 19 There was brave Colonel Crawford upon his retreat,  
Likewise Major Harrison, and brave Doctor Knight,  
With Slover their pilot and several men  
Was unfortunately taken on the Sandusky plain.
- 20 Now they have taken these men of renown,  
And has drag'd them away to the Sandusky town,  
Where in their council condemn'd for to be,  
Burn'd at a stake by most cruel Girtee.
- 21 Like young Diabolians they this act did pursue,  
And Girtee the head of this infernal crew,  
This insinuator was a stander by,  
While they in the fire their bodies did fry.

- 22 Their Scalps off their heads while alive they did tear,  
Their bodies with irons red hot they did sear;  
They bravely expir'd without ever a groan,  
That might melt a heart that was harder than stone.
- 23 After our brave heroes were burnt at the stake,  
Brave Knight and brave Slover they made their escape;  
With kind Heaven's assistance they brought us the news,  
So none need the truth of these tidings refuse.
- 24 So from East unto West let it be understood,  
Let every one rise to revenge Crawford's blood;  
And likewise the blood of those men of renown,  
That were taken and burnt at the Sandusky towns.

This broadside of "Crawford's Defeat" was probably published as a reprint in late 1791 or early 1792. This, at best, is an educated guess resting upon the fact that the ballad was printed on the same broadside with another ballad ("St. Clair's Defeat: a new Song") about a battle fought in November 1791. As a rule, though, most broadside ballads lack either date or printer's name, and therefore are impossible to date with certainty. One ballad authority, G. M. Laws, Jr., points out: "No satisfactory method exists for a precise dating of most traditional ballads of broadside origin. Even where broadside sheets exist, we can rarely tell whether we are dealing with an original printing, a copy of an older work, or a recomposed older work."<sup>5</sup>

That "Crawford's Defeat" as a piece of anti-British, anti-Indian propaganda stirred patriotic fervor in its readers should not obscure the main object of its publication: to make money. Generally speaking, ballads were dashed off quickly and soon sold to printers in order to capitalize upon the public's interest in the sensational. Printers in turn arranged to have broadside ballads vended throughout the surrounding region by peddlers who shared in the profits. Judging from the preceding broadside, "Crawford's Defeat" was written by a balladeer knowledgeable in the structure and characteristics of such eighteenth-century composition. The ballad has the clichés and tags common to popular literature of this type, among them "Come all ye

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<sup>5</sup> G. Malcolm Laws, Jr., *American Balladry From British Broad-sides: A Guide for Students and Collectors of Traditional Song* (Philadelphia, 1957), 55.

good people" and "I make no great doubt." In this respect there is nothing unique about the ballad.

One can only suspect where the ballad was originally written. Logic and certain evidence point to its being composed on the Pennsylvania frontier where, for an indeterminate period, it probably circulated in manuscript (and song) until it reached an interested printer. If the ballad was printed as a broadside before July 1786, the printing of it would have had to occur east of Pittsburgh, since that community lacked a press until then.<sup>6</sup> We do know that Dr. Knight's narrative was published in Philadelphia during the spring of 1783, but there is no reason to place the ballad's composition that late or that far east, even though Knight's recollections of Crawford's death are the basis of some of the ballad's content. News of the defeat raced across the frontier like fire through stubble following the army's return. No less than four detailed letters left Fort Pitt at the earliest moment.<sup>7</sup> The balladeer, therefore, need not have waited for published newspaper accounts for his information. Finally, the inclusion of lesser-known facts in the ballad would appear to indicate that the western frontier was the place of origin.

Of course, the length and content of the ballad changed with time as it found its way into the hands of those with differing interests and parochial loyalties. Pennsylvania folklorist Samuel Preston Bayard maintains: "When a piece of this kind is first issued, it may gain or lose verses, or undergo oral variation, depending on whom — with what special interests — it gets exposed to. Local loyalty . . . differing information, misunderstanding and textual corruption may all be potential factors in its alteration and splitting into variant forms; not to mention the feeling of what is fitting in such a piece, whether it be in accord with strict history or record, or not."<sup>8</sup>

Such alteration is at once obvious when copies of the ballad in two published collections are studied using the numbered stanzas of the broadside presented earlier. "A Song on the Death of Colonel Crawford" is one of a collection of ballads gathered by Mary Olive Eddy

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<sup>6</sup> Erasmus Wilson, *Standard History of Pittsburg* (Chicago, 1898), 836.

<sup>7</sup> C. W. Butterfield, *Washington-Irvine Correspondence* (Madison, Wisc., 1882), 247-50, 375-78; B. J. Lossing, *American Historical Record*, 1, Jan. 1872, 176-77; Samuel Hazard, ed., *Pennsylvania Archives*, 1st ser. (Philadelphia, 1854), 9: 575-76 (hereafter cited as *Penn. Arch.*). See also the Williamson and Rose letter-reports to Irvine from Mingo Bottom dated June 13, 1782, in Butterfield, *Washington-Irvine Correspondence*, 366-78.

<sup>8</sup> Letter to author, Apr. 2, 1980.

of Perrysville in Ashland County, Ohio.<sup>9</sup> This shortened version is from a school copybook, and may be dated approximately 1822. It is nineteen stanzas long — one through eight, followed by ten, eleven, thirteen, sixteen, seventeen, and finally nineteen through twenty-four of the numbered broadside stanzas.

Another version of the ballad entitled "Crawford's Defeat" is included by Frank Cowan in his *Southwestern Pennsylvania in Song and Story*.<sup>10</sup> This version, with its twenty-four stanzas, was supplied to Frank Cowan by C. W. Butterfield, the centennial historian, who, in turn, got it from Robert A. Sherrard, the son of a Crawford volunteer, John Sherrard.<sup>11</sup> In this copy, the sequence of stanzas runs one through nine, eleven through fifteen, followed by eighteen. A new stanza is then inserted with the obvious desire to immortalize local heroes:

They were Sherrard and Rogers and Paul of renown:  
They marched with Crawford to the Sandusky town,  
Where they bravely did fight till the battle was done,  
And without a scar they returned safe home.

This stanza demonstrates the ease with which additional stanzas could be added. Three names were fitted into the first line, the refrainlike phrase "to the Sandusky town" was attached to the second, and two borrowed lines were recast to complete the tribute.<sup>12</sup> After this home-made stanza, the ballad in Frank Cowan's collection continues with stanzas sixteen and seventeen, and nineteen through twenty-four.

In addition to the ballad copies published by Eddy and Cowan, portions of "Crawford's Defeat" are located in the Draper Manuscript Collection at the State Historical Society of Wisconsin. As early as the 1840s, Lyman Copeland Draper (1815-1891) was corresponding with and personally interviewing pioneers and their descendants. Among his letters and interview notes are five ballad fragments

<sup>9</sup> Mary O. Eddy, *Ballads and Songs from Ohio* (Hatboro, Pa., 1964), 260-62.

<sup>10</sup> Printed originally by its author in Greensburg, Pennsylvania, in 1878, pp. 353-56. Reprinted in the *History of the Pan-Handle, West Virginia* (Wheeling, 1879), and the *History of Belmont and Jefferson Counties, Ohio* (Wheeling, 1880) as "A Ballad of the Olden Time."

<sup>11</sup> Robert Andrew Sherrard (1789-1874). The ballad is in his papers preserved at the Ohio Historical Center, Columbus, Ohio (pp. 34-39 of ms, *The Family Recorder*, box 2, vol. 6).

<sup>12</sup> In the numbered verses of the broadside at the American Antiquarian Society in Worcester (presented earlier in this article), verse fifteen includes the line, "He fought it out bravely while the battle did last"; and verse nine the line, "He returned home without ever a scar."

varying in length from one to fourteen stanzas.<sup>13</sup> These fragments are important in what they reveal of the progressive alteration which occurred as some stanzas were forgotten or left out, others stitched together, and wholly new verses composed. Illustrative of such changes is the "old song" recalled by Stephen Burkarn, a Crawford volunteer, in 1845.

Gentlemen, gentlemen listen to me,  
Our late expedition you quickly shall see,  
We went to fight Mingoes but before we had done,  
The English, the Tories, the Shawnees came on.

We crossed the Ohio as you understand,  
With brave Col. Crawford who took the command,  
He marched away in May, eighty-two,  
Of brave volunteers, there [*sic*] number was few.

Our number four hundred 80 & nine,  
To take the Sandusky it was our design,  
When only three Indians to us did appear,  
They never murmured their journey was hard & severe,  
And they were a great way in their enemies land,

But still we marched on with our small chosen band,  
Till we came to the plains, that beautiful place,  
Where we met with the Indians, a vile Tory race,  
They thought to surround us & kill us all there,  
But they were mistaken, most of us got clear,  
Our battle began on the 4th day of June,  
About 2 o'clock in the afternoon,  
We fought them till dark till we could no more see,  
Our killed and wounded was twenty & three.

But they did not fight us so hard the next day,  
They were carrying their dead & wounded away,  
We killed three to one, it was always agreed,  
But now we must try for the road with all speed.<sup>14</sup>

The changes in content have now become so extensive as virtually to create a new ballad. The enemy is no longer simply "Indians," but the "English, the Tories, the Shawnees." The start of the battle is set

<sup>13</sup> Draper Collection, 10 E 2; 2 S 36, 241-43; 9 S 141-43; 19 S 117-18.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 2 S 241-43. Spelling and spacing as in ms.

an hour earlier, a specific number of "killed and wounded" is supplied, and the ballad closes with a boast, "We killed three to one."

This proclivity to recreate the ballad is found also in a crudely composed fragment recited to Draper in 1863 by Elizabeth Willis of Brown County, Ohio, who was the daughter of a Crawford volunteer, John Gunsaulus. She remembered several lines about her father:

As for John Kingsaula he fought like a man,  
In the midst of the battle he sat down to sing—

and

There was our brave little Jack,  
With a red coat and hairy cap.<sup>15</sup>

In view of such alterations, deletions, and additions in the ballad's text, it is not surprising that the ballad was remembered as longer than the twenty-four stanzas of the broadside with which we began. One of Draper's informants recalled the song as having thirty-two stanzas.<sup>16</sup> Another informant declared that it had sixty-two.<sup>17</sup>

Different persons are credited with being the original composer of the ballad. This, too, is not unusual, for as Tristram P. Coffin has stated:

There is, and always will be, tremendous fascination in the idea that the "great unwashed" create songs and other lore spontaneously from the events in which they participate and that they preserve these then historical accounts to teach their generations what the forefathers accomplished. The idea is charming. Unfortunately, it doesn't offer a particularly accurate way of approaching historical folksong. Whether we like it or not, most historical folksong develops at a pretty sophisticated level, is heard by the folk because it is widely distributed by whatever mass media methods are available, and is preserved because of the pretty tune or because it reveals something about humanity that seems important.<sup>18</sup>

Hence we find the daughter of David Williamson, second in command to Crawford, stating in 1845 that a Crawford volunteer, William McComb, wrote the ballad.<sup>19</sup> William Robinson, another volunteer,

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 19 S 117-18. Corroboration of the first couplet is found in a Mar. 1, 1864, letter from W. Boyd Wilson to Lyman C. Draper which, in part, reads: "John Gonsolla when a young man was in Crawford's defeat Sandusky Plains. It was told of him that his gun got so hot, he sat down on a log and sang a song till his gun cooled" (11 BB 20-21).

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 2 S 36.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 9 S 140.

<sup>18</sup> T. P. Coffin, *Uncertain Glory: Folklore and the American Revolution* (Detroit, 1971), 111.

<sup>19</sup> Draper Collection, 2 S 36.

believed that Major Thomas Gaddis (third in command) composed part of the ballad.<sup>20</sup> Most persistent of all is the crediting of Dr. John Knight, the surgeon, with writing the ballad.<sup>21</sup>

As for what tune or tunes "Crawford's Defeat" was sung to, that is impossible to determine unless a broadside surfaces with the tune indicated. Even then one can only be sure of *one* tune to which the broadside was sung.<sup>22</sup>

How much of "Crawford's Defeat," we ask, is historic fact, and how much romantic fancy? An adequate examination of the ballad requires that this question be faced, and therefore we return once more to the broadside version presented earlier with its twenty-four numbered stanzas.<sup>23</sup>

*Stanza 1:*

Crawford's name is at once set off in capital letters. Only one other name is treated in this fashion: "GIRTEE" in the sixth stanza. This casting of William Crawford as the noble protagonist and Simon Girty as the fiendish antagonist colors the remainder of the ballad, the writer using the contrast in character for dramatic effect. The narrative of Dr. Knight unquestionably did much to stamp Simon Girty indelibly upon the popular mind as a heartless rogue who laughed as Crawford broiled. But to what extent does the depiction of the British renegade as "most cruel" and "head of this infernal crew"

<sup>20</sup> William Robinson as witness in Thomas Gaddis's pension file, National Archives, Washington, D.C. ("Gaddis, Thomas, Penn. Va. S.4292").

<sup>21</sup> In his *Family Recorder* ms (Sherrard Papers, Coll. 359, box 2, vol. 6, p. 34), Robert A. Sherrard states that the "song" was composed by "Doctor Night (who went as Surgeon & Physician for the use and benefit of the troops)." Later, however, Sherrard refers only to "the song made by some one and called Crawfords defe[at]" in a November 3, 1873, letter to C. W. Butterfield copied in *What I Remember*, vol. 2 (Sherrard Papers, Coll. 359, box 2).

<sup>22</sup> "The meter is a common one; there are many tunes (and always have been) in oral circulation that would fit the words; and the extreme likelihood is that every singer who sang the piece might have fitted it to some well-known tune to which he preferred to sing it. I infer, from the rhythms of the lines, that the tune could well have been couched in 3/4 or 6/8 time; but there is no ruling out the possibility that it might have been in 4/4 or 2/4. And at all times, folksingers have been perfectly able to recast the rhythms of some widely current tune to fit words that they elected to join to the air. Hence, if Mrs. Eddy (or someone else) had known and put on record a tune to this piece, the fact would tell us nothing about what other tunes were sung to it, or what the original tune was" (Bayard letter of Apr. 2, 1980).

<sup>23</sup> The reader interested in the issue of historicity is referred to the chapter, "The American Ballad as a Record of Fact," in G. Malcolm Laws, Jr., *Native American Balladry: A Descriptive Study and a Bibliographical Syllabus* (Philadelphia, 1964).

fit the known facts? This matter will be tabled until the discussion of Stanzas 20 and 21.

*Stanza 2:*

Those in Crawford's army were volunteers as stated, the figure of four hundred eighty-nine closely agreeing with that recorded by Crawford's aide-de-camp, Major John Rose, in his journal kept on the campaign.<sup>24</sup>

*Stanza 3:*

The year given is right, the date wrong. The army crossed the Ohio River on Friday, May 24, 1782, and elected its officers, the volunteers distributing themselves in eighteen companies. The following morning the army started west.<sup>25</sup>

*Stanza 4:*

The names of the army's pilots, or guides, are a little confusing in the ballad: They were Thomas Nicholson, John Slover, and Jonathan Zane.<sup>26</sup>

*Stanza 5:*

The battle opens with the sighting of an opposing Indian force on June 4 at three in the afternoon. Judging from Major Rose's letter to General Irvine at Fort Pitt on June 13, the ballad is reasonably accurate. Rose wrote, "Our advanced light horse fell in with the [enemy] . . . , and at 4 P.M., the action was general, close and hot."<sup>27</sup>

*Stanza 6:*

Simon Girty is introduced as the leader of the opposing Indians. This was the conviction of a number of Crawford's soldiers including Francis Dunlavy who declared that he saw and heard Girty in the midst of the smoky battlefield. The evidence, though, is not incontrovertible.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> John Rose (Baron Gustavus H. de Rosenthal), *Journal of a Volunteer Expedition to Sandusky* (reprint ed., New York, 1969), 139.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 137, 139.

<sup>26</sup> The payment of nine pounds to each man as a Sandusky Expedition "Pilot" is recorded in the Pennsylvania State Archives, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania (RG-4, Roll 294-295, Frame 0062).

<sup>27</sup> This letter is included in Butterfield's *Washington-Irvine Correspondence*, 370.

<sup>28</sup> Pension application, National Archives: "Dunlavy, Francis. Pa., Va.,

The last two lines about the Indians being "forced to retire" are factual. At sunset of the first day of the battle, the American volunteers overran a "skirt" of woods on their right flank, forcing the Indians to abandon their position.<sup>29</sup>

*Stanzas 7, 8, and 9:*

Stanzas seven and nine are traditional in style; either could just as readily have been fitted into other war ballads of the day.

Stanza eight, however, is different. It rests on fact. Major Rose records in his journal under "June 5th Wednesday" that "A plan was proposed to send a party of 150 men mounted on the best Horses, upon the ennemy's [*sic*] left Flank and attack them at the same time with 50 Foot in front in that small stripe [*sic*] of Woods. Col. Williamson was to lead the foot and the Command of the horse was assigned to me. Col C—d talked of taking the sense of his Field Officers, and the proposal was laid a side."<sup>30</sup>

*Stanza 10:*

The "brave Major Light" is Brigade Major Daniel Leet of Washington County, Pennsylvania. He is credited by several sources with leading a bold charge which dislodged the Indians from the army's flank on the afternoon of the first day of battle (the same action referred to in stanza six). The language of the ballad appears flamboyant until one reads the pension narrative of Angus McCoy: "Finding that the Indians were concealed in the long grass, Daniel Leet mounted his horse, and as he passed me looked me in the face [and] said follow me. I took after Leet who rode between a canter and a gallop and I suppose between fifteen and twenty after me. We routed them in groups out of the grass. In this daring [*sic*] monuver [*sic*] in their constirnation [*sic*] not a gun was fired at us until Leet wheeled to the left, at which time two Indians discharged at Leet. I saw his horse bounce as if mortally wounded (but neither injured)."<sup>31</sup>

*Stanzas 11 and 12:*

The fifth in command under Crawford rather than fourth,

S.2526"; and C. W. Butterfield, *History of the Girtys* (Cincinnati, 1890), 167-68.

<sup>29</sup> This repulse of the Indians is described by Major Rose in his journal, 150.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 151.

<sup>31</sup> Pension application, National Archives: "McCoy, Angus. Pa., Va., S.22390."

"brave Major [James] Brinton" was wounded according to the ballad. It is the only reference to his being wounded, and is accepted as fact by Butterfield.<sup>32</sup>

*Stanza 13:*

Also said to be wounded in battle are "brave Bigs and Ogle." Evidence does not support this. Captain John Biggs and Private Thomas Ogle were overtaken by the Indians during the retreat and killed.<sup>33</sup>

*Stanza 14:*

Captains James Munn ("Mun") and Ezekiel Rose ("Rase") were wounded in battle.<sup>34</sup>

*Stanza 15:*

According to the testimony of Private John Clark of Ohio County, Virginia, the manner of Captain John Hoagland's death was as pictured in the ballad. Clark states that he and Hoagland with two other soldiers became separated from the retreating army, and at night saw a distant campfire. They debated as to whether to approach or avoid it. Finally Hoagland, despite warnings, went to the fire and was immediately shot.<sup>35</sup> The ballad's contention, "What came of him after we never could know," is not therefore strictly true.

*Stanza 16:*

That the arrival of Indian reinforcements caused the American army's night retreat is fact.<sup>36</sup>

*Stanza 17:*

The speech of Colonel Crawford appears to have been fabricated. His instructions ("Orders. Field of Action: June the 5th 1782")

<sup>32</sup> Rose, *Journal*, 137; and Butterfield, *An Historical Account of the Expedition*, 212.

<sup>33</sup> The manner of John Biggs's death, recorded in Knight's narrative (19), is supported by several Draper informants; and the death of Thomas Ogle, referred to by Rose in his journal (156-57), is corroborated by three Crawford volunteers: Angus McCoy, Stephen Burkarn (Draper Collection, 2 S 245-46), and Daniel Higgins (Draper Collection, 3 S 133).

<sup>34</sup> Pension applications, National Archives: "Munn, James. Md., Va., R.7492," and "Walters, John. Penn. S.17753."

<sup>35</sup> Pension application, National Archives: "Va. Clark, John or Clark Mary. R.2003."

<sup>36</sup> Rose, *Journal*, 151-52.

were explicit as to the wounded's being transported either on horseback, if able, or by litter. None were to be left behind on the retreat which began after dark on the night of June 5.<sup>37</sup>

*Stanza 18:*

The participation of an Ensign McMasters in the Battle of Sandusky is fact. The expedition's company rolls in the *Pennsylvania Archives* list an "Ensign —— McMasters" serving under Captain John Hoagland.<sup>38</sup> In addition, the Militia Loan (1784) records at Harrisburg, while registering no officer of that name in Hoagland's company, do show a conspicuous gap in that company's roll where an ensign's name should appear in sequence of rank.<sup>39</sup> And no other soldier is listed as that company's ensign.

Supportive of this officer's inclusion in Crawford's army, furthermore, is the numerical reconstruction of the company made possible by comparing its roll as given in the *Pennsylvania Archives* (6th series, vol. 2) and the records of the Militia Loan. Fifteen names are found in both. Three are not, so we add the names of Ensign McMasters and "[Robert] Houston" from the *Pennsylvania Archives* and "Peter Resner" from the Militia Loan ledger entries, and arrive at a company strength of eighteen soldiers. This total agrees exactly with that recorded for the company by Major John Rose, Crawford's aide-de-camp, in his journal the day before the army's departure from Mingo Bottom.<sup>40</sup>

Still another piece of evidence is the addendum attached to the listing of "Ensign —— McMasters" mentioned earlier (*Penn. Arch.*, 6th series, vol. 2, p. 392). It reads, "wounded and taken captive; never returned." Since Butterfield's history is acknowledged

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37 *Ibid.*, 315-16; Knight, *Narrative*, 14.

38 *Penn. Arch.*, 6th ser., 2: 392.

39 The Militia Loan records from the comptroller general's office of Pennsylvania are of certificates of pay issued to Revolutionary War soldiers for active service. These interest-bearing "Certificates of the Funded or Militia Debt" would today be considered bonds, and were ultimately cashed in at face value. The Militia Loan records are incomplete and therefore it is not unusual to find omissions. Ensign McMasters's service certificate may have been lost en route from the frontier to the comptroller general's office in Philadelphia, or a clerk in that office may have failed to record it. Readers will find a copy of the Militia Loan record for Hoagland's company in the *Penn. Arch.*, 3rd ser., 23: 219, under "Jno. Hogland, Capt."). What is not shown there however — and of significance — is the obvious absence of an ensign in the descending pay scale found in original ledger entries: "John Hoagland Capt. 17.15.0," "Isaac Newkirk, Lt. 12.15.0," and then the names of fourteen privates paid "5.5.0" each.

40 Rose, *Journal*, 138.

by the compiler in his preface to the expedition rolls, one might assume that the compiler merely drew upon the historian for the information in the addendums. But this cannot be the case. In several addendums, information not found in Butterfield's work is recorded. It is reasonable to believe, then, that the addendum following Ensign McMasters's name represents some early report(s) provided by expedition survivors.

This particular stanza states that not being able to travel on his own with his retreating comrades, the seriously wounded McMasters "was left on the ground." Here is the only identification of a soldier abandoned under fire at the start of the confused night retreat. Major John Rose corroborates the act of abandonment in his journal: ". . . 3 to my knowledge were left on the ground in the hurry of the retreat, lying in the Biers ready to be moved off. their wounds were all mortal." <sup>41</sup>

As of this writing the first name of this officer eludes discovery. The spelling of the last name (Majaster) in the earlier presented broadside is clearly a printer's error. As for the documentation of this soldier's fighting "many battles his country to save," no narrative or military service record has thus far been uncovered by me.

*Stanza 19:*

The impression is given that Colonel Crawford, his son-in-law William Harrison, Dr. Knight, and Pilot John Slover were captured as a group. This did not happen. Crawford and Knight were captured together, and Slover soon after. As for William Harrison, his fire-tortured corpse was recognized by Slover when he arrived at a Shawnee village as a captive six days after the battle.<sup>42</sup>

*Stanza 20:*

The statement that the captives were burned at the stake "by most cruel Girtie" is misleading. Delaware Indians led by their war chief, Captain Pipe, carried out the torture and execution of Colonel Crawford, not Simon Girty. But Girty was present, appeared to encourage the Indians, and seemed to enjoy the spectacle.<sup>43</sup> Despite this, Simon Girty has attracted apologists like Lyman C. Draper who concluded that "Our border histories have given only the worst side of Girty's character. He had redeeming traits. . . . He cer-

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 156.

<sup>42</sup> Slover, *Narrative*, 46.

<sup>43</sup> Butterfield, *History of the Girtys*, 188-89.

tainly befriended Simon Kenton, and tried to save Crawford, but could not."<sup>44</sup> The precise testimony of Dr. Knight concerning Girty's mockery of Crawford and himself, however, leaves little room for misunderstanding.

*Stanzas 21 and 22:*

The ballad now builds with gruesome imagery to its climax. The captives are said to be tortured "with irons red hot." Actually, the torture was carried out with small lighted hickory poles.<sup>45</sup>

*Stanza 23:*

The escapes of Knight and Slover are, of course, fact.

*Stanza 24:*

This final stanza may exhibit no more than a balladeer's flair for the dramatic. Still, it is possible that some basis in fact is present. If historic fact is here mixed with poetic expression (and one can but suggest implications), then the factual may be represented in the stanza's enraged tone, and the two words "East" and "revenge."

"So from East unto West let it be understood": the resentment of western settlers toward eastern politicians was considerable and with cause. Amid the carnage and smoke of Indian raids, appeals to Philadelphia for regular troops failed to bring significant reinforcements, the feeble response from the seaboard continuing until the slaughter of St. Clair's army in 1791 jolted President Washington into action. If the intent of this stanza was to confront a complacent East with the plight of the West, a parallel in motivation possibly exists between the ballad on the one hand, and the Knight-Slover captivity narratives on the other. In his foreword to the narratives, Brackenridge offers an explanation "To the Public" which, from this perspective, warrants full quotation.

The two following Narratives were transmitted for publication in September last [1782], but shortly afterwards the letters from Sir Guy Carlton, to his Excellency, General Washington, informing that the Savages had received orders to desist from their incursions, gave reason to hope that there would be an end to their barbarities. For this reason it was not thought necessary to hold up to view what they had hithertofore done. But as they still continue their murders on our frontier, these Narratives may be serviceable to induce our government to take some effectual steps to chastise and suppress them; as hence they will see that the nature of an Indian is fierce and cruel,

<sup>44</sup> As quoted by Charles McKnight in *Our Western Border* (Philadelphia, 1876), 424, 425.

<sup>45</sup> Knight, *Narrative*, 23.

and that an extirpation of them would be useful to the world, and honorable to those who can effect it. (dated Aug. 3, 1783)<sup>46</sup>

"Let every one rise to revenge Crawford's blood," cries the second line of the stanza. In the wake of the defeat, the frontier population soon clamored for a return to Sandusky with a larger force. "That disaster," wrote General Irvine at Fort Pitt on July first, "has not abated the ardor or desire for revenge (as they term it) of these people. . . . They cannot, nor will not, rest under any plan on the defensive . . . and think their only safety depends on the total destruction of all the Indian settlements within two hundred miles. . . ." <sup>47</sup>

The cry for revenge may thus echo the frontier reaction of 1782. Some might question whether the demand for vengeance is not customary and to be expected in any such "defeat" ballad, but the last stanza of "St. Clair's Defeat" — another ballad comparable in period and content — indicates otherwise. There, an atmosphere of mourning dominates all.

The day before the battle fifteen hundred men we had,  
We lost nine hundred of them, which made us very sad;  
General St. Clair did command us, as may remember'd be,  
Oh! it was a sad defeat for the Western Country.

In his history of the campaign, Butterfield asserts that the ballad's "story" . . . contains much more history than poetry."<sup>48</sup> By and large he was right. Were it not for the aforementioned John Clark, for instance, how, but for the ballad, would we know about John Hoagland's death at a hostile campfire?

The motive behind the ballad's appearance in broadside form, as we have said, was to make money rather than preserve history. In this regard the ballad was a forerunner of the Ned Buntline stage plays written in the 1870s for Buffalo Bill Cody and Wild Bill Hickok. Or the "Ballad of the Green Berets" in more recent times.<sup>49</sup>

Yet to veterans of the expedition and their descendants, the ballad meant much. They saved what they could remember of it until, like some much-loved jigsaw puzzle with many pieces lost, all that remained were fragments.

<sup>46</sup> Brackenridge, *Indian Atrocities*, 1.

<sup>47</sup> For context, see Butterfield's *Washington-Irvine Correspondence*, Appendix B, 157-99.

<sup>48</sup> Butterfield, *An Historical Account of the Expedition*, 76.

<sup>49</sup> The words and music composed by S/Sgt. Barry Sadler in 1966, this "ballad" became a best-selling recording during the Vietnam conflict.