

## THE FATE OF CRAWFORD VOLUNTEERS CAPTURED BY INDIANS FOLLOWING THE BATTLE OF SANDUSKY IN 1782

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**B**ATTLEFIELDS in the United States are invariably well designated by monuments memorializing heroic persons and events. The battleground at Upper Sandusky, Ohio, is no exception. The brick monument identifying "Battle Island" where Colonel William Crawford's volunteers fought Indians and British rangers two hundred years ago is now a familiar landmark in that area. So also is the cenotaph erected in 1877 near the spot where Crawford died, the highest ranking American officer to burn at an Indian stake during the Revolution.<sup>1</sup>

On the morning following the American withdrawal from the field, the grove of trees that had sheltered Crawford's force during two days of combat was an exhausted, blistered shell of its former self. Mounds of ash smoldered here and there, some the remains of actual cooking fires, and some from fires burned only to conceal graves whose contents the Indians otherwise might dig up and scalp. In and about the shattered timber, slain horses lay, their bellies swollen by the heat to the point that some burst and spewed their putrefaction upon grass already streaked with blood.

Other American mounts wandered loose and were soon rounded up by jubilant Indian villagers. Added to the gabble of Indian scavengers was the sound of tomahawks striking tree trunks as warriors retrieved bullets for use again.<sup>2</sup> Indians also rummaged through the army's litter of blankets, wallets, knapsacks, bundles of rope, horse halters, cooking utensils, saddles, and a shovel.<sup>3</sup>

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Previous articles by Parker Brown on Crawford's Defeat have been published in the October 1981 and January and April 1982 issues of the *Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine*.—Editor

1 Crawford was burned at a stake seven miles northwest of present-day Upper Sandusky. The monument reads, "In memory of Col. Crawford who was burned by the Indians in this valley June 11, 1782/Erected by the Pioneer Association of Wyandot Co., O. Aug. 30, 1877."

2 Henry Howe, *Historical Collections of Ohio* (Cincinnati, 1888), 2: 885.

3 C. W. Butterfield, *An Historical Account of the Expedition Against Sandusky Under Col. William Crawford in 1782* (Cincinnati, 1873), 328. J. G. E. Heckewelder, *A Narrative of the Mission of the United Brethren Among the Delaware and Mohegan Indians From Its Commencement, In the Year 1740, To the Close of the Year 1808* (Philadelphia, 1820), 338.

Meanwhile, crows joined buzzards in feasting in the tall grass. The prairie stretched outward from the grove to a line of ash-mounds that marked the arc of fires lighted by braves to forestall American night attacks. Within that arc could now be seen in daylight the bodies of abandoned American sentinels. Worn out and asleep during the sudden retreat, the soldiers never awoke before death found them.<sup>4</sup> For days pieces of their dismembered bodies were dragged with those of other soldiers to villages for public display before being burned sacrificially to appease the spirits of the Indian dead.<sup>5</sup>

With a tenacity spawned by brooding hatred, the Wyandot, Delaware, and Shawnee braves pursued volunteers to the Ohio River. The largest contingent of Americans under Major David Williamson reached Mingo Bottom intact, carrying its wounded.<sup>6</sup> Those who dropped behind were quickly killed or captured. Few lasted long. Colonel Crawford and Surgeon John Knight were snared the second morning of flight. Returned to Sandusky with guards, they trudged past the red-capped bodies of four companions lying in the trail. Other captives were soon beaten and stabbed to death by crowds of shouting squaws and children when villages were reached, the severed head of John McKinley kicked about in the dust.<sup>7</sup> Colonel Crawford, his face blackened, was mutilated, roasted, and scalped at Pipe's Town while elsewhere others of his command died as painfully at Shawnee hands, among them Richard Hoagland, a private. The Indians began "burning him at nine o'clock at night, and continued roasting him until ten o'clock next morning before he expired. . . . When dead they stripped off his scalp, cut him to pieces, burnt him to ashes, which they scattered through the town, to expel the evil spirits from it."<sup>8</sup>

Back in Pennsylvania, volunteers missing in action were recorded as "never returned" in minutes of Western Pennsylvania courts of appeal.<sup>9</sup> Weeks later Indians were still finding bodies of unidentified

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4 Heckewelder, *A Narrative of the Mission*, 338.

5 Draper MSS 11 YY 12i.

6 John Rose, *Journal of a Volunteer Expedition to Sandusky* (New York, 1969), 156.

7 H. H. Brackenridge, *Indian Atrocities: Narratives of the Perils and Sufferings of Dr. Knight and John Slover, Among the Indians During the Revolutionary War . . .* (Cincinnati, 1867), 21.

8 Sandford C. Cox, *Recollections of the Early Settlement of the Wabash Valley* (reprint ed., Freeport, N.Y., 1970), 131-32. The white captive, who watched ashes being scattered, ignorantly assumed it was to "expel evil spirits" when actually the ritual was one of mourning designed to appease the restless spirits of Indian dead revenged.

9 The fate of those individuals missing in action was not known for years, and in the case of some, never. In 1850 William Darby could only tell the historian, Wills DeHass: "In the very neighborhood where I was then living,

soldiers miles from the battleground. Two soldiers lay like weary children beside a log, their rifles beside them. They had died of starvation.<sup>10</sup>

Other volunteers outlived dangerous moments of ambush and the months of captivity which followed. Some journeyed from Shawnee town to Shawnee town in southwestern Ohio, or northward through Delaware and Wyandot villages to Fort Detroit. Or even farther north to the land of the Chippewa and Potawatomi. A number of captives voyaged the length of the eastern Great Lakes by British ship and descended the Saint Lawrence River to Montreal. For those who had never crossed any body of water wider than the Ohio River and who were treated well, it must have been a grand adventure.

That is what this article is about: what happened to American captives after the Battle of Sandusky on June 4-5, 1782. Such a discussion of Indian and British treatment of captives is proper, needed, and overdue where this expedition is concerned. In regard to Crawford's burning, Consul Willshire Butterfield's campaign history must be given firm burial. Butterfield was led astray and prejudiced by a political tract called *Knight's Narrative* written by the acknowledged Indian-hater, Hugh Henry Brackenridge, and loosely based upon the surgeon's recollections.<sup>11</sup>

Only recognized authorities in Indian history and anthropology can help us view objectively what happened in the aftermath of the fighting. Without their insights as a compass, one soon becomes lost in a ghastly welter of smoke and pain. The following is but a summary of basic facts provided by Harold E. Driver, Nathaniel Knowles, Wilcomb W. Washburn, and others.<sup>12</sup>

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about two miles from Catfish (Washington), John Campbell, William Nimmons, William Huston, and William Johnson never returned [and] . . . their individual fate . . . never revealed." — Wills DeHass, *History of the Early Settlement and Indian Wars of Western Virginia* (Wheeling, 1850), 328.

10 Draper MSS 2 S 106. The informant here is George Edgington of West Liberty, Virginia (now West Virginia), whose father, Thomas, was a prisoner at Fort Detroit and after the Battle of Sandusky learned details from his captors.

11 While a publisher of a political journal in Philadelphia before going west, Brackenridge argued that Indians were so fierce and cruel as to be useless for the white man to deal with. The savages had no right to land, he said, and the soil belonged to those who cultivated it as God dictated in scripture. In his "observations" attached to the Knight and Slover narratives, he speaks of "the animals vulgarly called Indians."

12 Principal sources used in this study were Harold E. Driver, *Indians of North America* (Chicago, 1961); Nathaniel Knowles, "The Torture of Captives by the Indians of Eastern North America" in *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 82 (1940): 151-225; and an introduction still in manuscript by Wilcomb E. Washburn to the 111-volume series, *Narratives of North*

Contrary to the prevalent belief of white Americans, scholars now generally concur that the tortures pictured in captivity narratives were not meaningless expressions of Indian frenzy and cruelty. Custom dictated and closely regulated the conduct of war and torture, and was in fact related to religion and the supernatural. When leaving and returning from war expeditions, braves underwent purification rites. Female captives were not raped lest warriors defile themselves. Indians painted their bodies and faces not as camouflage or to look fierce, but in order to be handsome should they be killed and appear before the Great Spirit. Scalps and captives, as trophies of battle, had significance either in relation to mourning and the appeasement of ghosts, or as offerings to the supernatural.

The torturing that followed the American defeat was thus according to Indian custom and conducted deliberately using methods designed to keep the prisoner alive as long as possible and in as much pain as possible. "It was little comfort to the unfortunate victim to know that he was serving as an offering to the imperatives of Indian culture," observes Wilcomb W. Washburn, "but it is important to recognize the ritualized context within which such acts . . . took place. The case of Colonel William Crawford . . . provides perhaps the best example of this cultural imperative." The ceremonies, feasts, and dances of the Delaware Indians, for example, were not childish antics or pagan rites. They were, as Charles A. Weslager states in his history of the tribe, "a sincere expression of a religious fervor based on deep-seated spiritual convictions."<sup>13</sup>

Obviously it was hard, if not impossible, for readers of popular eighteenth-century captivity narratives to understand the cruelty shown Indian captives, to recognize in the protracted torture an outpouring of grief by wives and children whose warrior husbands and fathers had died in combat with whites. The torture of captives also served to release pent-up fear and anger in warriors who survived battle.<sup>14</sup>

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*American Indian Captivities* (Garland Publishing and Newberry Library). The author is indebted to Dr. Washburn, an eminent Indian historian, for advice and for permission to take notes on his manuscript. Equally generous members of the Smithsonian Institution staff in Washington, D.C., were Janette Saquet and Leslie Overstreet of the John Powell Library of Anthropology, and Dr. Herman J. Viola, director of the National Anthropological Archives.

13 Washburn, "Introduction to Narratives" (MS), 40; C. A. Weslager, *The Delaware Indians: A History* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1972), 65.

14 Richard Slotkin in his *Regeneration Through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600-1680* (Middletown, Conn., 1973) refers to the psychological phenomenon in Indians' "apparent delight in prolonged torture. The warrior, newly escaped from death in battle or on the

It should be equally recognized that the other side of the Indian's nature was his or her remembrance of good treatment. Some captivity narratives contain instances of Indian gestures of good will and affection toward white prisoners. Here the motives ranged from sympathy to calculated gain (ransom), but the expressions of kindness primarily arose from a recognition of earlier good treatment of Indians by the captive or his associates. As Paul A. W. Wallace has declared, "Contrary to the white man's all-but-ineradicable belief, the Indians were not, as a rule, trigger-quick in the matter of revenge. It was a constitutional maxim . . . of the Six Nations that bloody provocation was not to be responded to in kind unless it were three times repeated. A close student of Indian revenges will be surprised to find how long, how patiently, and often with what genuine (and generous) tact, Indians of whatever nation sought to keep the peace."<sup>15</sup> The impulse in Indians to retaliate for injustices was thus balanced with a comparable impulse to reward laudable actions. In both instances, the Indian value system demanded that justice be done at all cost. Whoever acted badly must be punished; whoever acted justly must be rewarded with kindness and respect.

Those who customarily accept as accurate the stereotype of Indians as bloodthirsty savages may be repelled by what has been said. Stereotypes die hard, and stereotypes that support the white fantasy world found in frontier romances — including rerun John Wayne movies — die harder. In most captivity stories, Indians are portrayed as void of redeeming qualities or any good purpose. Those editing the narratives of returnees accentuated the brutal aspects of the experience "among the heathen." It made good copy. Besides, how much easier it was to be enraged over tales of Indian barbarism than to try to defend broken treaties and government policies that systematically separated the tribes from their land.<sup>16</sup>

The disproportionate attention given captivity narratives, especially that of John Knight which Brackenridge edited, was due in large part to their serving a definite psychological need in white readers.

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trail, had to assert the masculine powers that recent experiences had tested and threatened. He did so by inflicting on his defeated enemy the very torments he had feared for himself, thus exorcising his fears for the moment" (143-44).

<sup>15</sup> Paul A. W. Wallace, "John Heckewelder's Indians and the Fenimore Cooper Tradition," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 96 (Aug. 1952): 502.

<sup>16</sup> Louise K. Barnett, *The Ignoble Savage: American Racism, 1790-1890* (Westport, Conn., 1975), 4. Regarding white stereotyping, see Oliver La Farge, "Myths That Hide the American Indian," *American Heritage* 7 (Oct. 1956): 5-9, 103-7.

They classified as undesirable a whole segment of American society — the Indian — and provided that society with a rationale and rationalization for exterminating native Americans. In the process, of course, facts were distorted, ignored, or lost, but a martyrology was created that helped sustain the ire of those exposed to threat of attack on the frontier as well as those who were not. All the while, the image of the noble savage fostered by James Fenimore Cooper and European intellectuals was largely erased, while that of the noble frontiersman was enhanced.<sup>17</sup>

With this as background, we turn to the torture of Colonel Crawford. Limitations in space imposed by an article prohibit a full discussion here of the circumstances that led to and shaped that event. Such a report based upon largely suppressed Indian and Moravian missionary evidence must be left to another time. I shall instead place in the record of this, the bicentennial of Crawford's death, the statement of a "Captain Pipe," who in the winter of 1823 was interviewed by Charles C. Trowbridge. The aged Indian's deposition reads:

The only instance of burning a prisoner within the recollection of Capt. Pipe is, the case of Colo. Crawford, at which he was present. Pipe agrees with Mr. Heckewelder [Moravian missionary], that the death of Crawford was attributed solely to the previous massacre of the Moravian Indians [Gnadenhütten]. This tragical affair took place a mile and a half from Sandusky. Crawford was tied to a sapling, by a rope fastened around his neck. A fire was built near him and after suffering great pain for some time, he was tomahawked and thrown upon the pile. — The practice of burning prisoners is said to have been very ancient. It extended particularly to great warriors, whose capture and death was accompanied with loud shouts of exultation by the victors.<sup>18</sup>

The Indian's contention that Colonel Crawford was the only prisoner to die at the stake may leave readers skeptical, but apparently the informant had in mind only Delaware torture. Burning prisoners at the stake was more rare than is commonly supposed when compared with other modes of Indian reprisal. The last recorded burning of a white captive by Wyandots was in 1779.<sup>19</sup>

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17 Wilcomb E. Washburn, ed., *The Indian and the White Man* (New York, 1964), 276.

18 Weslager, *The Delaware Indians*, 484. The "Captain Pipe" quoted is not the Delaware chief instrumental in the tribal condemnation and execution of Crawford as described by Dr. Knight in Brackenridge's *Indian Atrocities*, 20, 22. The Delaware interviewed by Trowbridge was the only son and namesake of that war chief of Revolutionary War fame. The son — a subchief of little note — is referred to as "Capt. Pipe jr." by the Wyandot leader, William Walker, in a letter of 1873 (Draper MSS 15 E 64).

19 A. B. Hulbert and W. N. Schwartz, eds., "David Zeisberger's History of the Northern American Indian," *Ohio Archaeological and Historical Publications* 19 (1910): 107.

In contrast to the Wyandots and Delawares, the Shawnees burned a number of captives following the Battle of Sandusky with little or no regard for military rank. Not all the captives, of course, were from Crawford's army; twelve Americans caught in Kentucky about the same time were reported to have arrived at Wapatomica where they were parceled out to other towns for burning.<sup>20</sup>

In this bicentennial report I will also include part of a letter received from Helen York Rose of Seminole, Oklahoma, a registered Delaware and the only Indian member of the "First Families of Ohio" genealogical organization. In response to my request for information concerning Indian archives under tribal control, she replied that Indian history

has to be "dug out" little by little. . . . it is very difficult to get an Indian to tell our legends to white people. It so happens I was the one in our family to listen to the Older Delawares. . . . My own great grandmother, Sally Olivia Journey Cake Smith, always spent the time mourning for our people on the dates of slaughter [Gnadenhütten massacre]. . . . The way to the battle of Sandusky is spattered with blood. What makes it so personal to me, Capt. Pipe's band was my own ancestors band. . . . I am not only an Indian but collateral kin to the Crawford family, a brother of my captive grandmother, Mary Castleman, was married to Ann Crawford, related to Col. Crawford. I try to keep an open mind about the old, harsh times when my white ancestors were killing my Indians and my Indians burning white kin — with mixed blood that isn't very easy sometimes. The battle at Sandusky had its start with the slaughter of the Christian Delawares by Williamson and his Pa. troops. Although Col. Crawford didn't take part in the murder of the Christian Delawares, Williamson and his troops were under him. . . . Keeping in mind it was the belief of the Indians if one was murdered the family had the right to murder the offender if not, a member of the family paid the price and was put to death. . . . I think one has to be of Indian descent to fully realize the close kinship of Indians. . . .<sup>21</sup>

From all accounts, white and Indian, Colonel Crawford died bravely. He was sixty years old. Heavy-set, he stood about five feet, ten inches tall. His eyes were blue, his skin fair, and his hair iron-gray.<sup>22</sup>

The following morning, John Knight, the surgeon who had witnessed the torture of Crawford, left Pipe's Town for the Shawnee towns forty miles to the southwest. His face had been blackened; he was condemned to burn at a stake also. Nevertheless, only one brave accompanied him; no more were thought required. On the second day of travel, the guard was having trouble starting a cooking fire. The

20 Brackenridge, *Indian Atrocities*, 51.

21 Letter to author (dated Sept. 12, 1980) quoted with permission.

22 Composite description from Draper MSS 11 E 74, 3 S 150, and 5 S 3. "C. is a man of Sixty and upwards. Blessed with a constitution that may be called robust for his age. Inured to fatigue from his childhood. . . ." Rose, *Journal* endnotes, 293.

doctor persuaded him to untie his hands so he might assist, promising not to attempt to escape. No sooner were his hands free and the Indian's back turned, than Knight seized a piece of kindling and struck the brave on the head so hard that he ran howling into the woods. Taking the Indian's rifle and other equipment, the surgeon fled east. His narrative, through Brackenridge's editing, reads like a land office circular. One might think that Knight jotted down the location of good land, springs, and timber as he ran. Once Brackenridge's interpolations are excluded, however, an epic of wilderness suffering emerges: sleeping in the wet, no fire, "gnats and musketoes," and nothing to eat but "gooseberries, young nettles . . . some May apples . . . two young blackbirds and a terrapin, which I devoured raw."<sup>23</sup> Nothing in his tending of sick regimentals at Fort Pitt had prepared Dr. Knight for that. He stumbled to safety much emaciated after three weeks of privation.

As for the Shawnees at Wapatomica, they were philosophical and amused when they learned that Knight had escaped. They enjoyed a good story, and the guard gave them one when he strode into the town alone with a head wound. He related how he had freed Knight's hands and why, but then said he had been hit with his rifle. He in return had stabbed the prisoner in the back and stomach, but the man was so "great, big, tall, strong" that he got away. Slover, the army guide and now a captive himself, overheard the tall tale and objected, saying that the doctor was a "weak, little man," whereupon the audience roared with laughter. Years later, the guard (now calling himself "Colonel George Washington") still bore the deep scar. Teased by whites, he would answer that Dr. Knight was "a good man — cured sick folks, & he did not want to hurt him." Then, at Zanesville, Ohio, in 1802, he became drunk and threatened a settler. When he left the place of drinking, he was followed by friends of the settler and never heard of again.<sup>24</sup>

As for John Slover, the guide, he and five companions got eighty miles east of the battleground before being ambushed. William Nemons was shot outright, and James Paull escaped. Slover and the remaining two soldiers surrendered and were marched back to Wapatomica. There one of his comrades was sent to another town and

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<sup>23</sup> Brackenridge, *Indian Atrocities*, 29-30.

<sup>24</sup> Draper MSS 9 S 103; Joseph Pritts, *Incidents of Border Life* (New York, reprint ed., 1977), 130; Brackenridge, *Indian Atrocities*, 25-26, 51-52. The Shawnee town of Wapatomica, called "Wachatomakak" by Slover in his captivity narrative, lay on the Mad River near present-day Zanesfield in Logan County, Ohio.



burned. The second companion then died before Slover's eyes running a gauntlet. Slover also recognized the remains of Major McClelland, and Privates Crawford and Harrison ("black, bloody, burnt with powder").<sup>25</sup> The bodies, dragged outside the town, were fed to dogs except for the heads which were impaled on poles.

Slover fortunately had Shawnee allies. A friendly squaw hid him some days under a pile of hides in her lodge. In time, however, Slover was condemned at council, and George Girty with forty braves came to get him. Stripping Slover naked, they blackened his face and paraded him through a neighboring town where he was beaten. Finally, farther on, yet another town was reached with its inevitable stake. The fagots lighted and torture about to begin, a sudden rain-storm intervened to put out the growing flames. Superstitious, the Indians decided to wait until morning to complete the ritual of death. During the night, Slover got loose from his bonds, stole a horse, rode it into the ground, and outdistanced his pursuers on foot. At Fort Henry (present-day Wheeling, West Virginia), he found sanctuary and lived to tell his story in the form of a famous captivity narrative. Later Hugh Brackenridge and others at Pittsburgh skeptically concluded that a humane squaw had cut or loosened the army guide's bonds while he dozed, but Slover remained convinced to the end of his days that his deliverance from torture was "providential."<sup>26</sup>

Contributing to Slover's escape, no doubt, was the fact that previously he had been an Indian captive. At the age of eight he was captured by Miami Indians and held six years, and then lived as a trader's assistant among the Shawnees six more. In 1773, Slover was taken by his captors to Pittsburgh at treaty time. Some of his white relatives recognized him and persuaded him to return home with them. He went reluctantly, being strongly attached to the Indians and their way of life. That he went voluntarily was unusual: children

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<sup>25</sup> Major John McClelland was fourth in command of the army. Privates William Crawford and William Harrison were Colonel Crawford's nephew and son-in-law respectively. Concerning Harrison's death, Slover is quoted by a Westmoreland correspondent in the *Pennsylvania Journal and Weekly Advertiser* on July 27, 1782: "He says they tied Col. Harrison . . . to a stake where they fired powder at him till he died; when they quartered him and left the quarters hanging on four poles." The statement as it stands is ambiguous. Did Slover see this, or was he told it by Indians? As time went on, the account of Harrison's death became altered. In a March 4, 1884, letter to Draper, James Harrison of Louisville, Kentucky, wrote that Harrison was made to run the gauntlet. A young squaw came up to him and threw hot embers on him. He killed her with a kick in the stomach, and her husband then shot Harrison through the head (Draper MSS 2 U 126). No documentation is offered regarding the original source.

<sup>26</sup> Draper MSS 5 S 72; Pritts, *Incidents of Border Life*, n.130.

captured under the age of twelve became greatly Indianized as a rule, but Slover was the exception.<sup>27</sup> Now recaptured following the battle, his being a former Shawnee captive worked for and against him. Clearly some squaws remembered and liked him. He recognized many chiefs and at council spoke their tongue fluently and defended himself ably. That was a plus. Yet he had left the tribe and returned guiding a hostile army. That was a minus. But, again, Slover was wilderness-wise. If he could just escape, his chance of survival would be greater than that of most Americans. That was the plus that carried him to freedom.

From those who burned and those who escaped, we will move on to consider those who neither burned nor escaped. They were enslaved or ransomed. Joseph Pipes, taken to "the Shawny towns," was "kept four years a prisoner and treated with great severity by the Indians. . . ." <sup>28</sup> What Pipes means by severity another American captured in Kentucky about the same time describes: "5 years, 5 months a prisoner 'suffering from stripes, hunger & cold, the privations incidental to a prisoner's life among savages, are indescribable.'" <sup>29</sup> Pipes was so closely watched that he had no chance to escape. Finally in 1786 General Richard Butler, a United States Indian commissioner, conducted treaty talks with the southern Shawnees. Pipes's captors took him with them as a prisoner when they attended, and he was interviewed by General Butler. When the treaty was completed, he remained with the American military. He was at once given clothes, and "acted as an interpreter for about two years" before starting home.

The remaining four prisoners — Josiah Collins, Thomas McQueen, Christopher Coffman, and Michael Walters — share one thing in common. All traveled the east-west Canadian trade route. Of these captives Butterfield was not aware when he wrote his expedition history.<sup>30</sup>

In the chaotic retreat on the night of June 5, Josiah Collins was

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<sup>27</sup> J. Norman Heard, *White Into Red: A Study of the Assimilation of White Persons Captured by Indians* (Metuchen, N.J., 1973), 131, 134.

<sup>28</sup> Pension application, "Penn. Pipes, Joseph. S.11245," National Archives.

<sup>29</sup> Pension application, "Calloway, Michjah, Va, Franky, W.6646," National Archives.

<sup>30</sup> At some point subsequently Butterfield found a return of prisoners dated November 2, 1782, noted in his *History of the Girtys* (Cincinnati, 1890), 186: "Josa. Collins St. Duskey 5th June '82." Late in his life, Butterfield worked on a revision of his Sandusky expedition history, and included Walters's captivity as a new chapter (Butterfield, MS 55, "Revision of Original MS," Container 2, Folder 6, Western Reserve Historical Society, Cleveland, Ohio).

caught by four Indians, probably Wyandots. Holding him three days, they then gave him over (no doubt for ransom) to "the English traders and rangers at Lower Sandusky" (Fremont, Ohio) forty miles north. By these in turn he was forwarded "as a prisoner, through Canada, to New York, where he did not arrive til the fourth day of December." Exchanged at Dobbs Ferry on the Hudson River, he got home on January 23, 1783.<sup>31</sup> What he experienced while making the journey east, Collins does not say in his pension declaration. From his silence it is reasonable to think that Collins was not abused or placed in irons, although American prisoners were treated harshly by some British stockade guards, and particularly by vengeful American loyalists driven into Canada by New York patriots.<sup>32</sup>

The course traveled by Josiah Collins and other captives traversed by land and lake the fur trade route gained by the English from the French in 1763 as a spoil of war. Detroit with its fort and citadel was an essential settlement in the fur network, commanding as it did the commerce of the Upper Lakes. Between 1774 and 1782, nine British sloops or brigs of war were constructed in the shipyards at Detroit, and on such vessels American prisoners sailed east with the fur shipments that enriched Montreal merchants already wealthy.<sup>33</sup>

Thomas McQueen was ultimately one of the prisoners to make that voyage after staying a year at Detroit. On the night of the Sandusky breakout, he with a "frenchman" and "lieutenant" were separated from the rest of the army. Two hungry days later, the party of three were nearing the Ohio River when the officer insisted on

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31 Pension application, "Collins, Josiah, Md. S.16730," National Archives.

32 Without doubt, the authorities at Detroit by and large treated Moravian and rebel prisoners humanely. De Peyster's reputation for benevolence and humanity was recognized, some captives comparing him to "a kind and indulgent parent in his treatment of his children" [Logan Esarey, "Indian Captives in Early Indiana," *Indiana Magazine of History* 9 (1913): 104]. This may partly account for the voluntary declaration by prisoners (civilians) that they had not been "cruelly treated or in any way illused" (courtesy of Dr. William P. Phenix, Historical Fort Wayne, Detroit). During the winter following Crawford's defeat, however, counterfeit hangings were administered by British guards to punish insulting American prisoners quartered on an island in the Detroit River. Thirteen prisoners at one time were so punished, being hanged until unconscious before cut down and revived. One American was hanged three times (Draper MSS 2 S 67-68). In the *Pennsylvania Packet*, Aug. 12, 1783, was this item: "Captain Dalton says, that on their way home through Canada, they . . . were more than once abused by different parties of those wretches who had fled to Canada from the back parts of the United States, to avoid the vengeance of their countrymen for the many horrid murders and burnings committed by them in conjunction with the English and Indians. . . ." (Draper MSS 32 J 118-24).

33 Almon E. Parkins, *The Historical Geography of Detroit* (Port Washington, N.Y., 1918), 213.

shooting a raccoon in a tree. At once Indians were upon them. The Frenchman was heard of no more. The lieutenant was burned at the stake. McQueen, running one gauntlet after another, was left alive but injured: there "was not a sound place in his head." In future years he would become prematurely deaf and blind as a result of those beatings.

A squaw finally purchased McQueen with deerskins. For a year he fetched and carried for her. Then a group of Indians went to Detroit to trade and took McQueen with them. Watching for his opportunity, he escaped from them into the fort where he persuaded a trader to employ him quietly in his trading post on the lakeshore. All went well until two men beat a "Girty" nearly to death, and McQueen got blamed for it. In irons for three months, he was paroled and again given freedom within the town's limits.<sup>34</sup>

An escape was next attempted with three blacks and a white. Their leader said he "could land them on the main [southern] shore" of Lake Erie. With westerly winds to fill a batteau's sail, the men could reach the shore in one night, leave the boat and plunge into the forest west of the enemy blockhouse on Sandusky Bay. It was risky, but the most direct route home. After dark one night, the group stole a "boat" and made their break. McQueen remembered going down a "steep bank" at Detroit, and then landing on what they thought was the lakeshore, but was not. It was an island offshore, but by the time they realized it, they had lost their boat. Stranded, they were soon recaptured by Indians.

Back at Detroit, McQueen was resold to the British, who placed him once more in irons. Later he was offered his freedom if he would enlist in the service of the Crown, but McQueen refused. Arriving home after the declaration of peace, he learned that the youngest of two brothers who campaigned with him to Sandusky had been killed

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34 It is unclear where precisely McQueen was confined. As many as five hundred captives from border raids at one time were held at Detroit. An island in the Detroit River was used, and possibly some warehouses on the waterfront. Fort Lernoult on the hill behind the town (completed by June 1779) was built and kept repaired by Americans who, if willing to work, received the same pay and ration of food as French laborers. If they refused to work, they were sent to Quebec in irons. When Zeisberger and his fellow Moravian missionaries arrived as prisoners on May 19, 1782, they were quartered first "in the old fort [near the waterfront] in the barracks. . . ." Shortly after, they were transferred to "lodgings [outside the town] near Yankee Hall . . . which has its name from the fact that only prisoners who were brought in by the Indians live there." See E. F. Bliss, ed., *Diary of David Zeisberger, a Moravian Missionary among the Indians of Ohio* . . . (Cincinnati, 1886), 88, 94.

during the retreat. In 1801, Thomas McQueen married. He died in Indiana. Three of his sons became Methodist preachers.<sup>35</sup>

Michael Walters and a fellow soldier traveled the length of the fur trade route. The mileage marked down and totaled in a pocket memorandum book Walters kept is twenty-five hundred miles. His "journal" covers half the journey and closes with his arrival at Montreal.<sup>36</sup>

With two comrades from Beeson's company, Walters was ambushed twenty-five miles east of the battleground by Chippewas, part of a contingent of "Lake Indians" sent by the British to help turn back Crawford's force. In the ambush Walters and Christopher Coffman were captured while James Collins escaped.<sup>37</sup> That day the

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35 The reconstruction of Thomas McQueen's attempted escape is based upon his pension application ("McQueen, Thomas, Va. S.33080"), and the Draper MSS 13 CC 118-19, 123-24. In his pension application, McQueen states that he was retaken "about a hundred miles" on his way home. He was nearer fifty, judging from British maps of the period, including Ford and McNiff's "Survey of the South Shore of Lake Erie. . . taken in 1789" (Library of Congress). The "steep bank" was either the riverbank, or a dry moat dug east of the Detroit fortifications. The "boat" was surely a *batteau*, a plank barge with sail and four oars which required five men to navigate. Hence McQueen's reference to five prisoners' being recruited is significant. In all likelihood the fugitives tried to reach the shore west of Sandusky Bay and mistook an island in their path for their objective. The island has since vanished: it appears on a British map of 1765 as five miles long and two and a half wide (Library of Congress). The other candidates are those islands in a cluster which lie directly north of present-day Sandusky, Ohio. Escapees would hardly have steered toward these, however, for to do so would have been to take the course commonly followed by Indians and British rangers to and from Detroit.

36 J. P. MacLean, ed., *The Journal of Michael Walters A Member of the Expedition Against Sandusky in the Year 1782*, is in the Western Reserve Historical Society Tract 89 (1899). Before copied and published, the original document had received hard treatment. I["The leaves had been detached . . . and afterwards sewed together regardless of consecutive order or uniformity of position" (180).] The portion of the journal covering Walters's captivity in eastern Canada after October 28, 1782, was missing (181).

37 In his journal, Walters gives his companions' names as Christopher Coleman and James Collins. In recording the one man as "Coleman," Walters was in error. "Christian Coffmas (Prisoner)" is listed in Beeson's company on the expedition in William H. Egle, ed., *Pennsylvania Archives* (Harrisburg, 1897), 3rd ser., 23: 323, which is copied from the Comptroller General's Distribution Ledger B, 474 (Harrisburg), Militia Loan Pay Certificate 2933. A sum of eighty pounds, ten shillings (a bounty of 42.34.0 and pay of 38.6.8) was paid him. Under "Duty" is written "Prisoner, paid for period 7 May 1782-17 Aug. 1783." James Collins in his pension declaration ("Collins, James Pa. S.17895," National Archives) says nothing of his escape from an ambush. While on the retreat, he was wounded, the ball passing through his hip and coming out near his backbone. He continues: "we made our way back as well as we could to the Monturn bottom subsisting on anything we could find where he remained about a week until horses were impressed to carry him and other wounded home." From this, it would seem that he was wounded during or after the ambush, and then fell in with other Americans who helped him home.

Indians also "caught a wounded man who was left behind [the main retreating army] by Accident they took him along till night and next morning [they] kill'd him and took out his heart which looked very shocking," Walters wrote in his journal. No doubt he and Coffman were shocked: the Chippewas undoubtedly ate the raw heart and, if so, it is the only known instance of cannibalism being practiced upon a Crawford volunteer.<sup>38</sup>

The third morning after the battle, the Indians with their prisoners entered the camp of the Delaware war chief, Wingenund. Colonel Crawford and six other Americans were there, but the Chippewas, after a hurried discussion with the Delawares, pressed on immediately to the Wyandot Half King's Town on the Sandusky. Neither Walters nor his companion had a chance to talk to Crawford or any other prisoner, because the Chippewas were already cautious lest they lose their captives to the Delawares and be prevented from collecting a British ransom.

At the Half King's Town, Walters and Coffman were seen by British rangers who told them they "ought to be hanged for fighting against King George." That night the two stayed in a small hut outside the town.

Before light they were again on their way north, this time to the center of Wyandot military operations, Lower Sandusky, accompanied by their eight Chippewa guards. Approaching "Big Sandusky," Walters and Coffman would have seen the large houses of the English traders, Arundel and Robbins, built on rises of ground about a mile apart with the Indian village between them. The gauntlet field with its painted post would also have been visible.<sup>39</sup> The Chippewa guards were apparently impressed by the latter, for at once the party veered from the town four or five miles and waited while a batteau was obtained to carry them by water northward across Lake Erie.

Determined to keep Walters and Coffman, the Chippewas chose not to stop at Detroit, but to continue directly upriver and through Lake Saint Clair. From there they coasted along Lake Huron until on June 18 they reached the British post at Michilimackinac, where the Americans were turned over to Lieutenant Governor Patrick Sinclair for ransom.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Concerning cannibalism, see Knowles, "The Torture of Captives," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 82 (1940): 188-89.

<sup>39</sup> Homer Everett, *History of Sandusky County, Ohio* (Cleveland, 1882), 39-40.

<sup>40</sup> "During the Revolution and, indeed, before and for some time thereafter, the name of the fort, island and straits were generally written Michilimackinac. . .": Butterfield, MS 55, Western Reserve Historical Society.

Although Walters is silent about what happened next, Sinclair in a letter to his superior, General Frederick Haldimand, makes clear that "two Rebel Prisoners" told him where the expedition started from, how it was provisioned, its size and officers, and when and where it was attacked. "One of them had been at Fort Pitt in April — He says that a General Irvine commanded there some Militia & the 13th Virginia Regiment."<sup>41</sup> The purpose behind ransoming of American captives was thus partly to secure up-to-date military intelligence.

Unbelievable as it may seem, Walters came home carrying his rifle. In 1899 J. P. MacLean of the Western Reserve Historical Society learned that Peter Beabout of Frankford, Indiana, owned the flintlock, and in 1980 it was still remembered.<sup>42</sup>

But, someone may object, would Indians leave prisoners armed? In Walters's case, yes; he was not condemned. He was on his way to be ransomed. Armed, he could help hunt game on the trail. The Chippewas had only to load the rifle when it was needed while retaining the extra shot and powder. How far in the wilds could a captive get with one shot and Indian trackers on his heels? An added reason was probably that by leaving the prisoners armed, they were less obvious. The rifles became part of their disguise, protecting them from being killed by other Indians.<sup>43</sup>

Kept at Michilimackinac three months, Walters and Coffman were then sent south to Detroit where they remained a week before boarding a sloop, the *Hope*, on September 30. The ship made excellent time, and reached Fort Erie at the foot of Lake Erie by October 2. From there they went down the Niagara River two miles past the great falls to Fort Schlosser. The seventh of the month found them at

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41 *Michigan Pioneer Collections* 10 (1886), 595. Strictly speaking, the "13th Virginia" no longer existed. In 1778, the Virginia Line was reduced, and the 13th took the number "9th." Then on February 12, 1781, the frontier troops at Fort Pitt, through a paper reorganization of Virginia Continentals, became designated the 7th.

42 "Phoned long distance an eighty-five year old gentleman in Lebanon, Indiana named Estel Beabout. . . . Mr. Beabout recalls as a lad of 15 to 17 years seeing on Peter Beabout's farm (c. 1910-12) an old 'muzzle loader' with 'cap' mechanism. . . . The gun has now disappeared. Possibly sold or given away" — June 29, 1980, entry in author's process notes. (Over 70 percent of firelocks were converted to "percussion" with a cap after that device was invented in 1837.)

43 "For several days he travelled quietly with them, and as he had a good rifle, and was an excellent marksman, they required him to shoot deer, buffaloes, etc. for them" ["Alexander McConnell's escape from the Indians" in *The Western Review and Miscellaneous Magazine* (Lexington, 1820) 1: 23]. See also James Axtell, *The European and the Indian* (New York, 1981), 191. Regarding the disguising of Abel Janney by Shawnee captors while passing through the Half King's Town at Sandusky in August 1782, see the *Ohio Archaeological and Historical Publications* 8 (1900): 474.

Fort Niagara, where they were held until the twelfth when they boarded a brig, the *Seneca*, to take them to Carleton Island. They arrived on October 18. A "Guard ship" was their prison until the twenty-fourth when, with other Americans, they were carried in batteaus down the Saint Lawrence River to Montreal. Walters remembered this passage as dangerous, and his guards added to his anxiety by pointing out an island inhabited, they said, by a snake "30 feet long and thick." Walters's final journal entry reads: "the next Day we Came to Courte Delak right opposite of which is an Isleand Called rebel Isleand where we got to the 27 and arived at Montreal the 28 of October and were put in a jail or provo."

If back pay is an indication of length of captivity, Christopher Coffman reached home before Walters. The route Coffman journeyed to freedom is not evident. Other returning prisoners at that time report a sea passage. Captain Robert Orr, a member of the ill-fated Lochry expedition, was held four months in the same Montreal jail that Walters mentions. Orr then was taken "to Quebec thence to an island called 'Beak,' below Quebec, & thence . . . by the 'Cork Fleet' to New York thence up the North [Hudson] River to Dobb's Ferry, and there exchanged." <sup>44</sup> In March 1782 James Huston, captured by Indians on the Ohio River, was taken north to Detroit and then east to Montreal. After being "confined on an island (an Isleand Called rebel Isleand)," Huston was taken to Quebec late in 1782 and from there went home by way of "New York." <sup>45</sup>

Walters clearly states, however, that he went directly south overland to Crown Point on Lake Champlain where he probably passed into American hands. From there his itinerary is as might be expected: Ticonderoga, Saratoga, Albany, Allentown, "harrisb ferry," and "home from East town." In 1899 a family tradition survived that Michael was held for two years before being exchanged for an Indian prisoner. He was not the last to come home from the Sandusky expedition (Joseph Pipes in 1788 may have been) but he received the largest amount of back pay recorded: 102 pounds. <sup>46</sup>

Estimates of casualties conform to the usual pattern of military accounting. While the Americans minimized their losses, the British grossly exaggerated them. A July 6 letter from Fort Pitt to a Phila-

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<sup>44</sup> Pension application, "Orr, Robert, Pa., b. Ireland, S.4631," National Archives.

<sup>45</sup> Pension application, "Huston, James, Va. Anne. W.2803," National Archives.

<sup>46</sup> MacLean, *Journal of Michael Walters*, 181. Comptroller General's Distribution Ledger A, 59 (Harrisburg).



delphia newspaper placed the American losses between fifty and seventy.<sup>47</sup> My files contain the following names:

### KILLED

#### *Officers*

Col. William Crawford  
Maj. John McClelland  
Capt. John Biggs  
Capt. John Hoagland  
"Lieutenant Ashley"  
Lieut. Joseph Eckley

Lieut. Edward Stewart  
Ens. William Crawford  
"Ensign McMasters"  
Ens. Lewis Reno  
Serg. Jacob Bonham

#### *Privates*

David Andrews  
Thomas Armstrong  
William Bays  
Robert Bell  
John Campbell  
Thomas Ellis  
John Frazer  
James Guffee  
Conrad Harbaugh  
William Harrison  
John Hays  
Thomas Heady  
Philip Hill  
Henry Hoagland  
Richard Hoagland

John Hughs  
Robert Huston  
William Huston  
William Johnston  
James Little  
John McDonald  
John McKinley  
Benjamin McQueen  
Thomas Mills  
William Nemons  
Thomas Ogle  
Cornelius Peterson  
Lewis Phillips  
Walter Stevenson  
"Sam"

### WOUNDED

#### *Officers*

Maj. James Brenton  
Capt. Joseph Bean  
Capt. George Brown

Capt. James Munn  
Capt. Ezekiel Rose  
Ens. James Collins

<sup>47</sup> C. W. Butterfield, ed., *Washington-Irvine Correspondence* (Madison, Wisc., 1882), 375.

*Privates*

Joseph Edginton  
William Golding  
David Hutchinson  
Caleb Lindley  
Michael Myers  
John Orr

Joshua Reed  
George Shannon  
Philip Smith  
James Tannehill  
John Walker

## CAPTURED

Christopher Coffman  
Josiah Collins  
John Knight  
Thomas McQueen

Joseph Pipes  
John Slover  
Michael Walters

The names total sixty-five. The files remain open.