



## FORT PITT

By Alan D. Gutchess

### From Fort Pitt to the Ohio Country: The 1764 Bouquet Expedition

The Fort Pitt Museum recently closed its exhibit *Unconquered: History Meets Hollywood at Fort Pitt*, which examined both Hollywood's version of the siege of Fort Pitt in 1763 during the war commonly known as "Pontiac's Rebellion," and the actual historical events of that year. Forces under the command of Henry Bouquet effectively broke the siege with their victory over the American Indian combatants at the Battle of Bushy Run in early August, yet the war with the Indians was far from over. Sporadic attacks not only continued on soldiers stationed at Fort Pitt in the fall of 1763, but also on settlers over large areas of Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Maryland.

The continued frontier unrest did not go unnoticed by British military officials, and plans for a two-pronged offensive were put into play. An army under General Bradstreet would press the Natives of the Great Lakes region, while a second under the command of Henry Bouquet would launch against those of the Ohio Country. Their goal was the complete capitulation of the rebelling Indians at whatever terms the British offered. Bradstreet would act first in August of 1764, though he exceeded his orders and began negotiating unauthorized peace treaties, even agreeing to cancel Bouquet's expedition in return

for promises made by the tribes to return their captives and leave British frontier forts in peace. His commanding officer, General Gage, rejected his treaties, feeling Bradstreet had been fooled into delaying military action against the Indians.

That deployment was merely delayed. In October, Bouquet left Fort Pitt with an army of well over 1,000 men and headed down the Ohio River for the Muskingum River, an artery that would lead them to several prominent Delaware villages. This action forced the Delaware, Shawnee, and Mingo in the region to meet with Bouquet. Among the terms they reluctantly agreed to was the return of white captives they on hand, and to gather and return those who were not present as quickly as possible. As a guarantee of their compliance, they were also required to send Native hostages back with the army to be held at Fort Pitt.

Bouquet's force stayed in the Ohio Country, poised to strike the Indians if they

failed to comply with the arrangement. By the 9th of November, over 200 white men, women, and children had been brought to the English camp, with promises for dozens more to be delivered that spring to Fort Pitt. From the European perspective, this was the return of prisoners of war to their countrymen, but to the Natives, there was a completely different mindset in play. They had taken these captives not as mere prisoners, but with the intention of assimilating them into Native societies. The deep affection they held toward their adoptees no doubt surprised many of the soldiers. The first full account of the expedition published just a year later recounted:

The Indians too, as if wholly forgetting their usual savageness, bore a capital part in heightening this most affecting scene. They delivered up their beloved captives with the utmost reluctance; shed torrents of tears over them, recommending them to the care and protection of the commanding officer. Their regard to them continued all

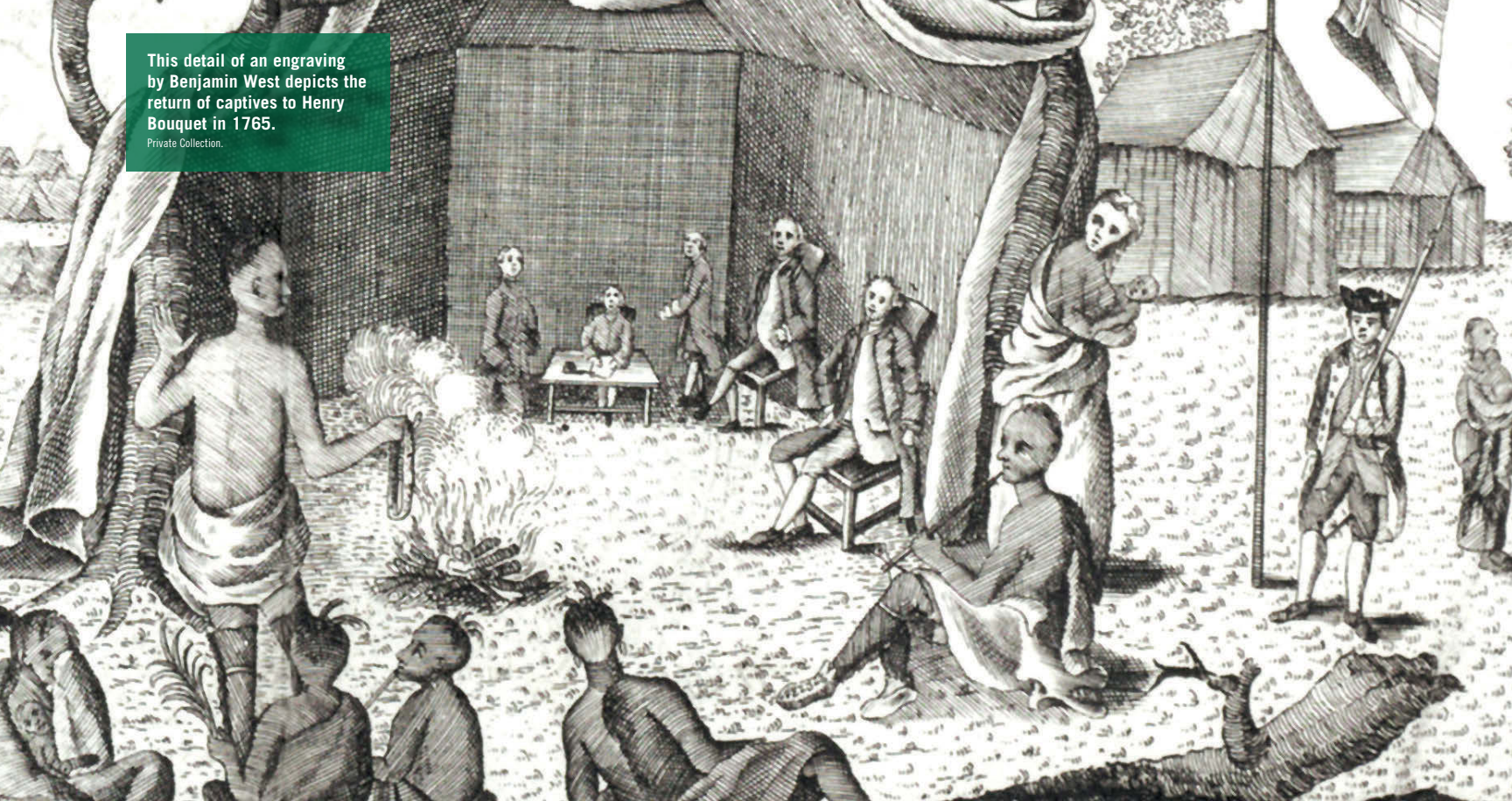


Henry Bouquet negotiates with the Ohio Indians, as seen in a 1765 engraving.  
Private Collection.



This detail of an engraving by Benjamin West depicts the return of captives to Henry Bouquet in 1765.

Private Collection.



the time they remained in camp. They visited them from day to day; and brought them what corn, skins, horses and other matters, they had bestowed on them while in their families; accompanied with other presents, and all the marks of the most sincere and tender affection. Nay, they did not stop here, but when the army marched, some of the Indians solicited and obtained leave to accompany their former captives all



Ottawa Indians, much like this warrior portrayed in an 18th-century engraving, participated in Pontiac's Rebellion.

Private Collection.

the way to Fort Pitt, and employed themselves in hunting and bringing provisions for them on the road.

Pontiac's Rebellion continued to linger, especially in areas where British forces had little presence. It would take another two years of negotiations with tribes living as far away as modern-day Illinois before the conflict was officially settled. The primary problem facing life on the frontier would remain however, as white settlers, in defiance of prior treaties, continued to spill into Indian lands, making a lasting peace impossible.



**Alan D. Gutchess** is Director of the Fort Pitt Museum.

#### Recommended Reading:

White, Richard. *The Middle Ground* (New York, Cambridge University Press 1991).

McConnell, Michael. *A Country Between* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992).

Smith, William. *Historical Account of Bouquet's Expedition Against The Ohio Indians In 1764* (Cincinnati: Robert Clarke & Co., 1868).

## Thomas Smallman

One captive returned to Fort Pitt in 1764 was Thomas Smallman, who had served both as a trader among the Indians and as a military officer during the French and Indian War. Shawnee Indians took him captive the previous year, deep in the Ohio Country. Thomas remained active in Pittsburgh's civilian and military affairs, attaining the rank of Major during the American Revolution. Smallman Street in Pittsburgh's Strip District, where the Heinz History Center is located, is named for him.

**A list of returned prisoners compiled in 1764 includes Thomas Smallman.**

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