

UP FRONT



FORT PITT

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Logan's War

In the spring of 1774, several friends and family members of a Cayuga Indian leader known as John Logan were massacred along the Ohio River near the mouth of Yellow Creek, 40 miles northwest of Pittsburgh. The murders were committed by a group of approximately 30 frontier malcontents led by Daniel Greathouse and John Baker.¹ Logan was absent when the crime was committed, and by the time the news reached him, the perpetrators had fled inland to the safety of the eastern settlements.² Overwhelmed by grief and rage, he sought to avenge his murdered family by attacking vulnerable settlements at the far western edge of the frontier. The first of these strikes were in the Ohio Country, but by early fall, Logan and a cadre of warriors under his command had ranged as far south as present-day Tennessee.³ Logan's name struck both fear and hatred in the hearts of frontier residents, especially those at Pittsburgh.

Logan was an American Indian leader formally known as Soyeghtowa but known as "Logan the Mingo" to associates throughout Ohio, West Virginia, New York, and Pennsylvania.⁴ Born to the Oneida leader Shickellamy and his Cayuga wife in New York or Eastern Pennsylvania, he spent his youth and young adulthood along the Susquehanna River. He lived primarily in the multi-ethnic



Frontispiece to *The American Pioneer*, 1844

By the mid-19th century, many historians came to see Logan as a pivotal, if tragic, figure of the frontier, bound by honor to avenge the murders of his family. Ohio antiquarian John S. Williams and others dedicated their newly minted Logan Historical Society to the memory of the great Indian leader. The frontispiece to their first volume of frontier sketches, *The American Pioneer*, featured an engraving of Logan delivering his *Lament* to John Gibson near Chillicothe in 1774.

Private Collection.

Indian village of Shamokin, now Sunbury, Pennsylvania, a town which missionary Martin Mack referred to as "the very seat of the Prince of darkness."⁵ His father, Shickellamy, was a strong supporter of the English in their ongoing conflict against the French, a position that Logan and his brothers adopted as well. So strong were the family's ties to the English that Logan even adopted the surname of the Pennsylvania statesman James Logan as his own. After Shickellamy's death in 1748, Logan and his brothers remained at least nominally in support of British Indian policy on the frontier.⁶

Following the French and Indian War, he may have migrated to the Ohio Country with the Shawnee or Mingo sometime in the late 1760s. In the early 1770s several different travelers found him living along the Ohio River not far from Fort Pitt. The Rev. David McClure, who had seen Logan at Pittsburgh, referred to him as "the most martial figure of an Indian that I had ever seen." He also noted

the controversy that even then followed Logan, citing rumors in Pittsburgh "that he had been a bloody enemy of the poor defenseless settlers on the Susquehanna, & the frontiers, in the last french war in 1758, & [5]9."⁷ The following year, Quaker missionary John Parrish noted that he "Rode 9 or 10 miles down the Ohio to Beaver Creek's Mouth where John Logan had his Cabbin."⁸ By this time, Logan was related by marriage to former captive and Pittsburgh area trader John Gibson, who also kept a residence in the area.

By the spring of 1774, Logan and his extended family (including Gibson's Indian wife) had relocated to a camp at the mouth of Yellow Creek. It was there on April 30, in Logan's absence, that the infamous Yellow Creek Massacre occurred.

While it is difficult to track his movements precisely afterward, his distinctive appearance helped identify him; several contemporary observers noted his remarkably

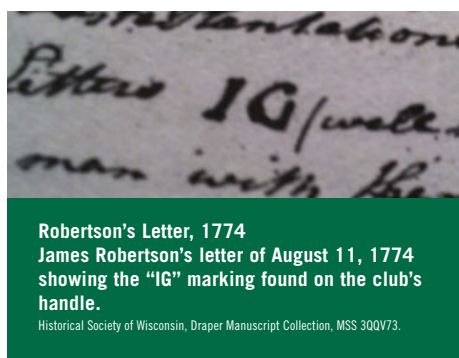
light complexion and mixed ancestry.⁹ Having grown up in the multi-ethnic community of Shamokin on the Susquehanna River, he spoke fluent English in addition to several Native dialects.¹⁰ A female slave captured by Logan in the fall of 1774 noted that one of her captors was “a Large man much whiter than the rest and talked good English.”¹¹

Four months after the massacre at Yellow Creek, in August 1774, the family of Balser Lybrook was attacked by a small war party in a frantic, brutal raid. In the course of a few minutes, five people including Lybrook’s three young sons were killed and scalped, and three boys—Theophilus Snidow, Jacob Snidow, and Thomas McGriff—were taken prisoner. To mark the scene of the attack, the party left behind a wooden war club, “well made and mark’d with two Letters IG (well made)” carved into the handle. James Robertson, whose men discovered the club, was certain there was a white man with the war party.¹²

Five days later, Robertson’s scouts encountered a “Couple of Poor Little Boys,” nearly starved, who they soon identified as Jacob Snidow and Thomas McGriff. Having waited for their captors to fall asleep, and trying in vain to wake the youngest boy, Theophilus, the two had made their escape three days earlier. When asked about the identity of their captors, the boys reported that there were “two Indians and a white

man Only that did the mischief,” “three poor Sons of Bitches Intirely naked without Either Blankets or match Coats.”¹³

A little over a month later the ragged war party struck again. On September 23 they attacked Fort Blackmore in Scott County, Virginia, where they managed to capture two black slaves.¹⁴ They then continued through Big Moccasin Gap to the neighborhood of King’s Mill on Reedy Creek, attacking the family of John Roberts the following day.¹⁵ Roberts, his wife, and children were all



Robertson's Letter, 1774
James Robertson's letter of August 11, 1774 showing the "IG" marking found on the club's handle.
Historical Society of Wisconsin, Draper Manuscript Collection, MSS 30QV73.

killed and scalped, with the exception of his 10-year-old son, James, who was captured. Here, Logan tied a note to another war club, leaving it for the whites to find.¹⁶ It had been written for him by a white captive two months earlier and revealed his confusion about those responsible for killing his family.

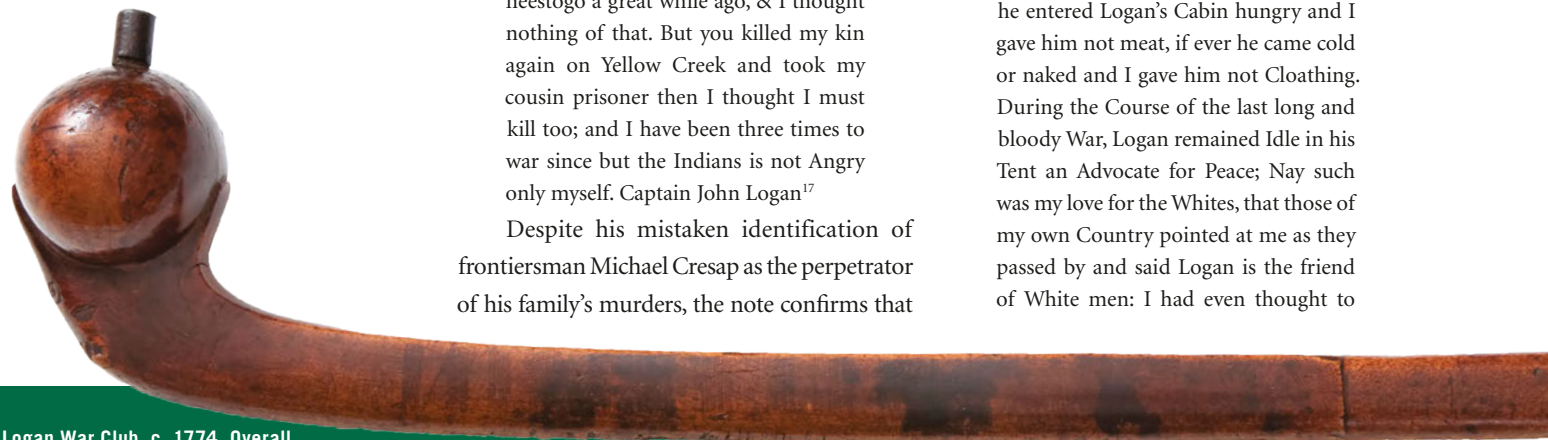
To Captain Cressap — What did you kill my people on Yellow Creek for. The white People killed my kin at Conneestogo a great while ago, & I thought nothing of that. But you killed my kin again on Yellow Creek and took my cousin prisoner then I thought I must kill too; and I have been three times to war since but the Indians is not Angry only myself. Captain John Logan¹⁷

Despite his mistaken identification of frontiersman Michael Cresap as the perpetrator of his family’s murders, the note confirms that

Logan’s campaigns in the spring and summer of 1774 were carried out in direct retaliation for the Yellow Creek Massacre.¹⁸ As the Delaware, Shawnee, and Mingo were at peace with the British at the time, he was also careful to note that he acted only on his own behalf.¹⁹

While Logan actively sought his personal revenge, the turmoil and fear generated by the bloodshed on both sides reached all the way to Williamsburg. Seizing on the opportunity for an offensive strike, royal governor Lord Dunmore quickly raised an army of Virginia militia to suppress the Ohio tribes. In October 1774, his army defeated the Shawnee at the Battle of Point Pleasant, bringing an abrupt end to the conflict. Shortly afterward, his vengeance “fully glutted,” Logan returned from his final raid, having missed the only true battle of the war sparked by the murder of his family. Noting Logan’s absence from the peace negotiations, Lord Dunmore sent his interpreter, John Gibson, to find the Mingo leader.²⁰ A former captive himself and husband to Logan’s murdered sister, Gibson found Logan at the Shawnee towns on the Scioto River. Asked to accompany the embattled war chief into the woods, Gibson later admitted that he feared Logan intended to kill him. Instead the war-weary leader broke down in tears and asked Gibson to send a message to Lord Dunmore on his behalf:

I appeal to any White man to say if ever he entered Logan’s Cabin hungry and I gave him not meat, if ever he came cold or naked and I gave him not Cloathing. During the Course of the last long and bloody War, Logan remained Idle in his Tent an Advocate for Peace; Nay such was my love for the Whites, that those of my own Country pointed at me as they passed by and said Logan is the friend of White men: I had even thought to



The Logan War Club, c. 1774, Overall
An overall view of the war club left after the attack on the home of Balser Lybrook in 1774. Typical of Native war clubs, it was made from the lower portion of a small sapling, with the ball being carved from the dense, swirling grain of the root mass. An iron spike projects from the center of the ball and, through the handle, marks representing various campaigns are also visible.

Fuller Collection.



Logan War Club, Inscription
The initials "IG" carved into the handle of the club match the description left by James Robertson.

Fuller Collection.


live with you but for the Injuries of one man: Col. Cresop, the last Spring in cold blood and unprovoked cut off all the Relations of Logan not sparing even my Women and Children. There runs not a drop of my blood in the Veins of any human Creature. This called on me for Revenge: I have sought it. I have killed many. I have fully glutted my Vengeance. For my Country I rejoice at the Beams of Peace: But do not harbour a thought that mine is the Joy of fear: Logan never felt fear: He will not turn his Heal to save his life. Who is there to mourn for Logan? Not one.^{21 22}

In the years following his encounter with Gibson, as war broke out between the United States and Great Britain, Logan struggled to find a place in his own country. At a meeting with former Indian trader turned American army officer George Morgan in 1776, he recounted that he and an associate had been warned by a Pennsylvania trader to stay away from Pittsburgh, then a hotbed of anti-Indian sentiment. "[A] great Reward is offered to any Persons who will take or entice either of us to Pittsburgh where we are to be hung up like Dogs by the Big Knife."²³ Logan heeded the warning, as Pittsburgh became an increasingly dangerous place for Indians through the remainder of the American Revolution. With no immediate family and few remaining friends, he relocated to British-held Detroit.²⁴

Though he held great sway with the younger warriors, his erratic behavior and a

lifelong battle with alcohol earned him the widespread condemnation of his own people. By 1780, the Ohio Mingo took action to eliminate him once and for all. Enlisting the services of his nephew with promises that he would "fill [Logan's] place and inherit all his greatness," they arranged for his assassination. Accordingly, the legendary war captain was killed near present-day Monroe, Michigan, in 1780. When asked years later why he agreed to kill his uncle, the younger Indian, who had since taken the name "Logan" as his own, responded, "Because he was too great a man to live."²⁵

Nearly two centuries after Logan's death, a war club bearing the initials "IG" was purchased in an antique shop in Kingsport, Tennessee. The dealer, who believed it to be a table leg, reported that he had purchased it with some antique furniture from a family in southwest Virginia. An examination of the original Robertson document, now part of the Draper Manuscript Collection at the Wisconsin Historical Society, showed that the author interrupted his longhand script to print the two initials that had been cut into the club.²⁶ Closely matching those on the grip of the extant club, it seems likely that the weapon was locally preserved as a treasured memento of the frontier.

In addition to the English initials, several other marks appear on the handle of the club, signifying the number of campaigns associated with the war party, and the number of captives taken.²⁷ True to form, the number of captives corresponds precisely with the three boys taken on the raid in which the club was left. While many 18th-century war clubs exist, this rare example may be the only such object for which the names of the captives—Theophilus and Jacob Snidow and Thomas McGriff—are known. Nearly 250 years after its creation, this rare and powerful object will be among the key artifacts displayed in *Captured by Indians: Warfare & Assimilation on the 18th Century Frontier*, which runs through May 2016 at the Fort Pitt Museum. 

¹ Randolph C. Downes, *Council Fires on the Upper Ohio: A Narrative of Indian Affairs in the Upper Ohio Valley until 1795* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1940), 162-164. See also Reuben Gold Thwaites and Louise Phelps Kellogg, eds., *Documentary History of Dunmore's War, 1774* (Madison: Wisconsin Historical Society, 1905). See pages 9-19 for several period accounts of the massacre.

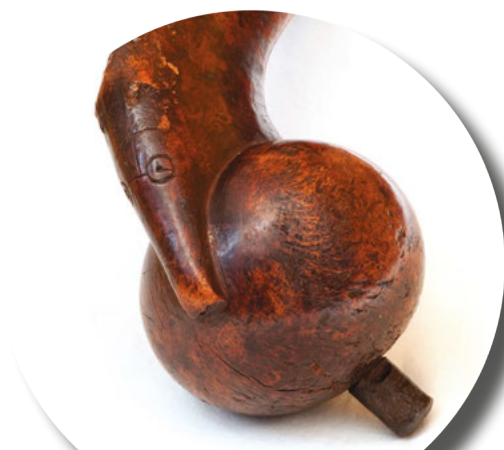
² John Bartram, Lewis Evans, and Conrad Weiser, *A Journey from Pennsylvania to Onondaga in 1743* (Barre: The Imprint Society, 1973), 37. Bartram notes that Logan's father, the Oneida chief, Shikellamy was "a Frenchman, born at Montreal and adopted by the Oneidoes [Oneidas] after being taken prisoner."

³ Thwaites and Kellogg, eds., *Dunmore's War*, 238-239.

⁴ In colonial America, the term *Mingo* referred to various bands of Iroquois who had migrated to the Ohio Country in the early to mid-18th century. As a political unit, they frequently joined with their regional neighbors, the Delaware, and Shawnee, and functioned more or less independently of the rest of the Six Nations.

⁵ Martin Mack, *Shamokin Diary, September 25, 1745*, Moravian Records 28/17/2B/1. Quoted in James H. Merrell, "'Shamokin' 'the very seat of the Prince of darkness': Unsettling the American Frontier" in Andrew R.L. Cayton and Frederic J. Teute, eds. *Contact Points: American Frontiers from the Mohawk Valley to the Mississippi, 1750-1830* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 18.

⁶ For a brief biography of Logan the Mingo, see Francis Jennings' entry on him in John A. Garraty and Mark C. Carnes eds., *American National Biography*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 13: 836-837. Although Jennings lists his name as James Logan, the biography is that of the man who referred to himself as "Captain John Logan" in 1774.

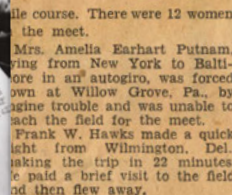


Logan War Club, Detail
A close-up of the head of the club shows the carved effigy of an unknown animal holding the ball in its jaws. The blunt iron spike made the lightweight weapon even more effective.

Stephen Fuller.



Three Pittsburgh district women



Numerous women from Western Pennsylvania distinguished themselves in service to the U.S. Army Air Corps Women's Air Force Service Pilots (WASP) program during World War II. A pilot log on loan from the Smithsonian Institution's National Air and Space Museum testifies to the work of one of the most prominent of these women.

Helen Richey graduated from McKeesport High School in 1927 and became a famous aviator years before her service with the WASPs. She was already flying solo by the 1930s, set world records for altitude and endurance, and was the first woman to pilot a commercial plane.

McKeesport Regional History & Heritage Center

commercial airliner in 1935, Helen became the first American woman to serve overseas with the British Air Transport Auxiliary, in 1942. The next year, she returned to the United States to join the WASPs. The Smithsonian's log starts around this point, documenting every flight Helen made between July 7, 1943, and December 18, 1944. The log's entries illustrate the impressive versatility of the WASP pilots.

Helen's record includes at least 14 different kinds of aircraft. For the first nine months, she mainly flew small single-engine planes such as Vultee BT-15 and Cessna Bobcat, trainer planes for both the WASPs and future combat pilots. But by the spring and summer of 1944, Helen was shuttling more advanced trainers and even some fighter planes, such as the Lockheed P-38 Lightning and the Douglas A-24 Banshee, the U.S. Army's version of the Navy's legendary Douglas Dauntless. She shuttled multiple Republic P-47 Thunderbolts from their home factory in Evansville, Indiana, to the New Jersey airfields that trained thousands of fighter pilots before sending them to England. In July 1944, Helen even flew a B-25 bomber from North American Aviation's Kansas City, Kansas, plant to Atlanta, Georgia.

The final entry in the Smithsonian's log speaks to the end of the WASP program. Helen shuttled a Fairchild PT-19 trainer from Newark, New Jersey, to nearby Readington on December 18, 1944, two days before the WASP program officially disbanded, on December 20, 1944. The log was donated to the Smithsonian in 1999. It will be on view as part of the exhibit *We Can Do It! WWII* through early January 2016.

This pilot log documenting Helen Richey's service with the Women's Airforce Service Pilots (WASPs) from July 1943 to December 1944 appears in the exhibit *We Can Do It! WWII*.

Smithsonian Institution, National Air and Space Museum

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