SCRATCHING THE SURFACE:
A LOOK AT WYOMING VALLEY HISTORY

CHAPTER TWO
1725–1800
EARLY TRADERS, TRAVELERS, AND SETTLERS IN WYOMING VALLEY

NATIVE RESIDENTS: Historical Period

According to Dr. Paul Zbiek, the Iroquois gained control of the Wyoming Valley region about 1675 when they finished the conflict known as the Beaver Wars (1638–1674). This clash involved various Native tribes fighting over control of the fur trade (Luzerne County 21). The Iroquois were actually a confederacy made of six united nations: the Mohawk, Onondaga, Cayuga, Seneca, Oneida, and (after 1722) the Tuscarora. Some believe the name "Iroquois" was given to this tribe by their enemies and used by the French. The name is derived from a term meaning "rattlesnake." Others believe the name means "people of tobacco." The tribe called themselves Haudenosaunee, or "People of the Longhouse."

Although European-American residents would not begin to establish permanent homes in Wyoming Valley until 1769, Natives under the control of the Iroquois had been in the valley for nearly one hundred years. They had lived there for many years before the Iroquois tightened their grip over this area.

Getting Ready to Fight 1

After the war, the Iroquois controlled a vast area that included parts of Delaware, New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. The problem for the Iroquois was that

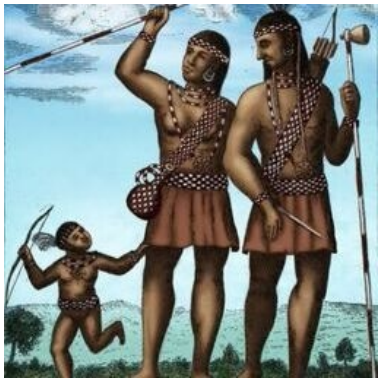
they simply didn't have enough warriors to defend the vast territory. They had little choice but to invite other Native tribes who had been displaced by European settlers into their territory. Sally Lottick makes that point in her book *Bridging Change* (25–30), quoting a 1758 passage by the Moravian missionary to the Native people, Christian Frederick Post:

They settle these New Allies on the Frontiers of the White People and give them this as their Instruction: "Be Watchful that no body of White People may come to settle near you. You must appear to them as Frightful Men, and if not withstanding they come too near give them a Push we will secure and defend you against them…" (Lottick 26).

UNDER THE HAUDENOSAUNEE (IROQUOIS) THUMB

The Wyoming Valley was very important to the Iroquois as it lay on the "southern flank of their territory and controlled the trails important in both war and diplomacy from the junction of the North and West Branches of the Susquehanna at Shamokin (now Sunbury) to Onondaga (now Syracuse)" (Lottick 25). The Shawnee were the first Native people to come into the valley under this agreement with the Iroquois. The Shawnee had lived along the southeastern coast of the present-day United States until they were pushed out by White settlers (Lottick 26). In 1701, at the

invitation of the Iroquois, the Shawnee settled in the lower valley near Plymouth. Over the next sixty or more years, the Mahicans, Mohegans, Lenni-Lenape or Delaware, Tuscarora, and Nanticoke resided in the valley. The Tuscarora eventually moved farther north and joined the Iroquois Confederacy about 1722. The Nanticokes, too, left the area to move north.



Lenape Family 3

One of the larger groups that settled in the upper valley was the Lenni-Lenape who came about the same time as the Shawnee who lived in the lower valley. They had been pushed out from their land east along the Minisink area of the Delaware River by the Walking Purchase (Lottick 27, 34). They are often known as the Delaware people.

EUROPEAN AMERICAN SETTLERS MOVE IN

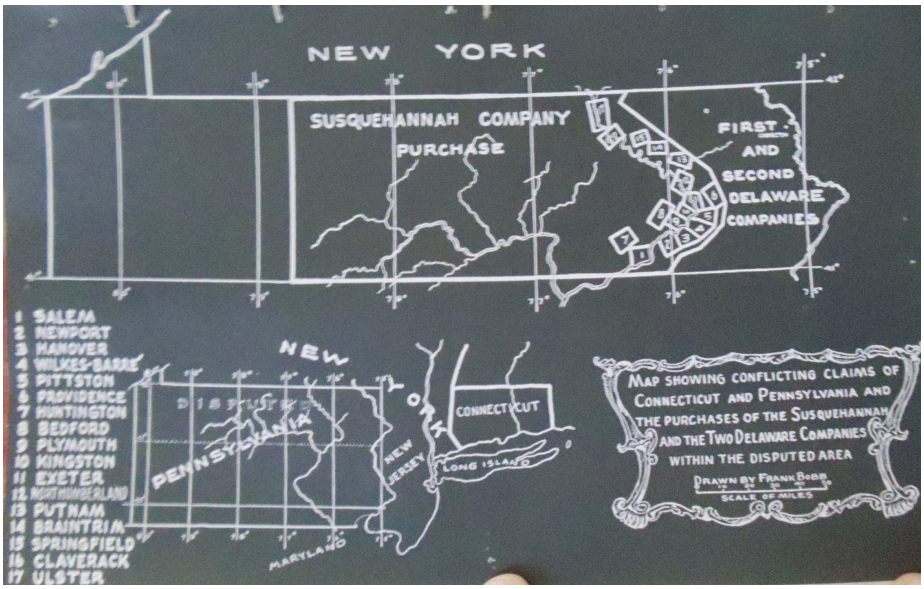
Though the Iroquois tried to protect this area from invaders, they weren't the only ones with plans for Wyoming Valley. In 1752, about 250 people in Connecticut formed the Susquehanna Company for the purpose of settling here (Williamson and Fossler 2). Evidently, the population in Connecticut had increased to the point where those who were pioneers at heart felt the need to move west. They would come over the Native American Cushetank path originally designed for foot traffic. The travel here would take several weeks. It was made more

Conflicting claims 5

difficult because the path had to be widened for the wagons from Connecticut.

In 1662, King Charles II had given Connecticut the right to claim the land in what is now the northern half of Pennsylvania. Unfortunately, he granted the same land to William Penn just nineteen years later. This meant that settlers from Connecticut and settlers from Pennsylvania both claimed the valley, which was already claimed by Native Americans. Who would end up with control of the land? Reaching an answer involved two civil wars, intrigue, false arrests, massacres, murder, and court battles.

Pennsylvania leaders did not recognize the prior claim of Connecticut's 1662 charter from King Charles II. Nor would the



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government of Pennsylvania recognize any validity in any transaction between the Natives and the Connecticut settlers (known as "Yankees") that involved Pennsylvania soil.

More confusion arose from different perspectives on land ownership. According to the charter of Connecticut, the Yankees could own the land outright. This differed among Pennsylvanians (known as "Pennamites"), who had to pay money to the Penns to lease or rent the land from Pennsylvania. The fact that the Yankees could own the land outright gave them great incentive to fight for this area. The Penns tried

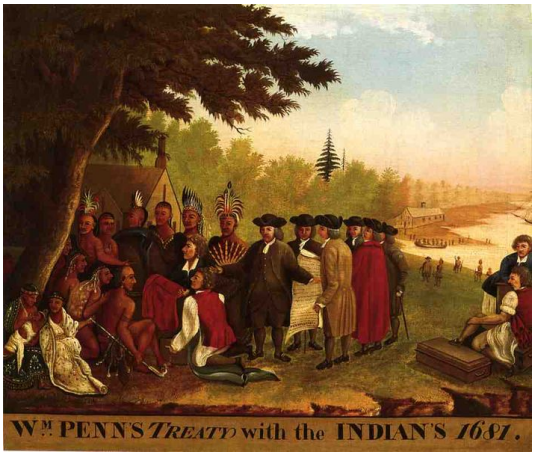
desperately to hold onto the area by encouraging first Indians and then loyal White settlers to move in.

The British and the French colonial powers both opposed any colonial settlement beyond the Appalachian Mountains. The French knew that farming would disrupt their fur trade, and the British did not want the responsibility of protecting settlers in the mountains. The Iroquois also opposed these moves. This is why they had the Shawnee, Nanticoke, Mahicans, Lenni-Lenape, and other groups occupy the land. Regardless of this widespread opposition, the Connecticut Yankees moved into the Wyoming Valley anyway. That act was the catalyst for war.

While plans were being made by the Connecticut Yankees to settle the valley, the Moravian missionary John Martin Mack confirmed the tensions in his journal:
Wyoming is in critical condition. The New Englanders in possession of a Royal Charter, lay claim to Wyoming. The Pennsylvanians hold it is within the Proprietary grant, and wish the Indians to sell it to them. Thus the Indians are in a dilemma (Lottick 37).

BEHIND THE SCENES

The story behind this grave situation involves several players. The first group was the Lenni-Lenape or Delaware. The common name of "Delaware" is not an English translation of "Lenni-Lenape." Rather, it came from their earlier residence in the Delaware River Valley. By 1682, the Lenni-Lenape had been defeated in war by the Iroquois. As a defeated people, they had to obey their conquerors in all issues (Lottick 3). Later, the Lenni-Lenape suffered the injustice of the



Penn Negotiates 6

1737 Walking Purchase. That swindle left them without much of their hunting grounds located near the Delaware River. The Lenni-Lenape had supposedly agreed to give land to the Penns—as much land as a man could walk in a day and a half north of Neshaminy Creek in Bucks County. From that point, a line would be drawn eastward to the Delaware River. The Indians thought this meant that a man would walk at a normal pace. Instead, the Penns had a path secretly cleared by woodsmen, and three men, including Edward Marshall, started to walk briskly (some accounts say run) for nearly sixty miles over eighteen hours. (The men did pause at night, and only one completed the full distance.) When the line was drawn eastward from Edward Marshall's stopping point, it was drawn at a wide angle. The lost territory for the Natives included most of Northampton, Monroe, and Pike counties—and that included most of their hunting grounds (Lottick 34).

In 1742, Iroquois leaders told the Lenni-Lenape to go to Wyoming Valley. Most of the group obeyed, though some moved instead to the Ohio River in western Pennsylvania (Lottick 28). Their early settlement near what is now the Firwood section of Wilkes-Barre was hit hard by an epidemic, and the group moved northward to Plains late in 1743.

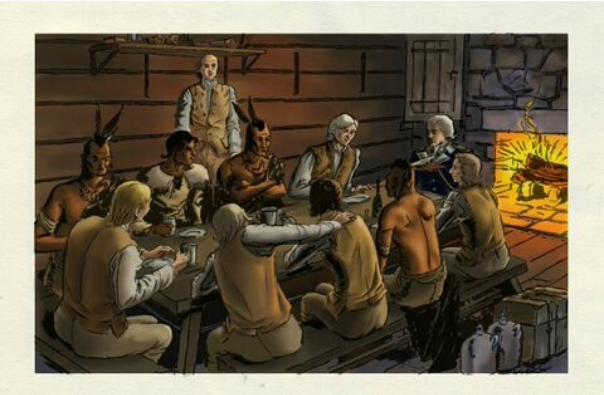
CONFLICT BETWEEN THE ENGLISH AND FRENCH

To further complicate matters, the French and Indian War (1756–1763) broke out on the North American continent. It was part of the larger global conflict known as the Seven Years' War. At Easton in 1758, a conference was held to work out a plan for peace, which would not be easy. One of the Native representatives was the chief of the Lenni-Lenape, Teedyuscung. He had come to Wyoming Valley from Gnaddenhutten (meaning "Cabins of Grace") on the Lehigh River. The Nanticokes wanted him to assume leadership of them while they were under the control of the Iroquois (Lottick 35).

Chief Teedyuscung 7

He arrived on April 24, 1754, with sixty-five followers. His arrival was right in the midst of the conflicting land claims and during the growing frontier tensions between the French, British, and Indians. Clearly, Teedyuscung would have his hands full. He was pressured to give up land by Connecticut Yankees who wanted to move into the Wyoming Valley and by Pennamites who wanted the land as well. Some Natives also wanted him to take up arms against the British.

The situation became more complicated when one of the Connecticut Susquehanna Company agents, John Lydius, had some Mohawk chiefs sign off on the lands of Wyoming Valley in 1754 at Albany—after reportedly getting them drunk. That incident was hotly disputed by all involved. However, the Iroquois Confederacy had an agreement among its nations that all major decisions about land sales were to be made as a group at their council. One member of the Confederacy could not sell lands without the consent of all the members. Although some Susquehanna Company members agreed that the sale should be voided, others said it was legal.



Negotiating For Land 8

The Delaware were dismayed when a number of Connecticut settlers came to the Wyoming Valley (Lottick 37). Under their chief (now calling himself "King Teedyuscung"), they protested to the Iroquois, Thomas Penn, and Sir William Johnson (the head of Indian Affairs for the British). They threatened to leave the valley and go to Ohio to live with the French. That would mean the Iroquois would be without their "gatekeepers." The Iroquois were frustrated with the situation and angry with the Mohawks who allegedly "sold" the land, although they denied having done so.

The British, French, and their respective Indian allies continued to wage war against each other. Late in the conflict, the Western Delaware were waging war against the British, and the Eastern Delaware in the

Wyoming Valley were facing invasion from Connecticut. Teedyuscung would get no help from either the British or the French who were in great need themselves (Lottick 38).

After four peace conferences, Teedyuscung managed to help coordinate negotiations between the Lenni-Lenape, the Iroquois, and the Pennamites. These three groups sided against the Yankees who continued to move into the area by 1762 near Mill Creek. To compound the issue, the Susquehanna Company settlers at that time did not have the support of the Connecticut government or British government for their move to the valley. Once New York boundaries were established, any claims to the west of Connecticut should have resulted in new opportunities for the British crown. Meanwhile, Thomas Penn (representing Pennsylvania) was lobbying the British government and the Council of Privy. While he appears to have won his legal point in London, the practical part was possession of the land in America, where the Yankees were more successful (Jones "Settlement").

Despite the opposition from all of those groups, the Connecticut Yankees continued their plan to occupy Wyoming Valley. John Shickellamy, Iroquois chief at Shamokin, warned the Susquehannah Company that:

You have been warned 9

"whosoever of the white should venture to settle any land of Wyoming or thereabouts, belonging hitherto to the Indians, will have his Creatures killed first, and If they did not desist they themselves would be killed without distinction. Let the consequence be what it would."

UPRISING ON THE FRONTIER

More trouble was about to boil over in the valley just as the French and Indian War was winding down. The Ottawa Indian chief, Pontiac, tried desperately to push the British settlers back across the Appalachian Mountains. Natives including the Delaware, Seneca, and Ojibwa joined the Ottawa and captured eight forts in Maryland, Ohio, Michigan, and Pennsylvania. Volunteers immediately responded to protect their homes against the threat, which would soon find its way to Wyoming Valley.

When it became obvious that the Connecticut Yankees intended to not just trade but also build homes and cultivate the land, the Indians complained again to the governor of Pennsylvania. That seemed to do little good for the Indians. The settlers built a fort on Mill Creek near modern-day General Hospital in 1762. They cleared land and planted crops amid dire warnings by Teedyuscung, who the Iroquois had charged with keeping White settlers out of the area in order to protect the southern gateway of the Iroquois longhouse in New York. By the following year, however, Teedyuscung was dead. He was killed (some say murdered) in a fire in the spring of 1763 at his cabin near Ross Street in Wilkes-Barre. After that, most of the Delaware moved out (Lottick 43). When Yankee settlers returned to the valley in 1763, they met little resistance. That would soon change, however. In October of that year, the settlers were attacked by Lenni-Lenape war bands and nearly wiped out. The alleged leader of the

Attack in the Fields 10

Western Delaware warrior party was Captain Bull, the son of Teedyuscung. In this way, the warnings the Yankee settlers had long ignored had come to pass.

Though the conflict begun by Pontiac would continue for months, once the Indians suffered several defeats and no longer had French help, the alliance between the tribes ended. Pontiac was forced to sue for peace by 1766. White settlers stayed out of the valley until 1769, however.

Now that the French and Indian War was over, along with the threat from Pontiac, the British wanted to expand territory for their settlers yet also keep the Indians from attacking. At Fort Stanwix in 1768, the Iroquois were persuaded to give up claims to Wyoming Valley in order to have peace (Dziak 53).

SETTLEMENTS AND THE YANKEE-PENNAMITE WAR

By February 1769, Connecticut Yankees were moving into the valley. Their colony claimed the land by charter from King Charles II in 1662. The rich, fertile soil coupled with the river that would provide fish for food and water for power was a powerful incentive to pull them away from a crowded colony. When they arrived, they chose the west side of the river as the best site for them.

Traveling from Connecticut 11

As they were preparing to set up on their location within the Wyoming Valley, Captain Ogden met them. He was the sheriff from Northampton County, which had jurisdiction for Pennsylvania over

Wyoming Valley (Lottick 45). He arrested three Yankees and told the others to go back to Connecticut.

While the Yankees left, they made plans to come back in March. Three hundred more came in May. From earlier visits to northeastern Pennsylvania, the colonists laid out their townships in what is now Luzerne, Lackawanna, Wyoming, Bradford, and Susquehanna counties. Each one was five miles square and contained fifty shares, each of which was about 300 acres (Harvey *A History* 374). The valley itself was divided into five sections or townships: Wilkes-Barre, Kingston, Plymouth, Pittston, and Hanover (which was originally Nanticoke). Outside of the valley, twelve more townships formed, making seventeen total. Each section was to start with forty settlers and a mandate to build a church and a school. The area was later attached to the town of Westmoreland in Litchfield County, to be ruled as part of the Connecticut government.

The Yankee townships were named for people or places in England. Most settlers left from the port of Plymouth in England, Kingston is named in honor of the monarch, and Pittston was named for Prime Minister William Pitt. Wilkes-Barre was named for two Parliament members sympathetic to the colonial cause, while Hanover reflects the name of the British royal house under George I in 1714 (Lottick 46).

The Pennsylvania settlers were not about to let the Connecticut Yankees settle the area without a fight. In fact, Pennsylvania surveyors were setting up two manors: Stoke and Sunbury. ("Manor" is the Quaker term for a land distribution.)

At first, only members of the Susquehanna Company were eligible for land plots. However, members quickly realized that the size of the plots were too large for one family to work, and so opted to open up the claims to a lottery system where anyone could settle the land as a freeholder. (That is, the settler could own the land forever.) This idea had two effects: it ensured that the area would be settled quickly and therefore it would be easier for the Yankees to hold. Large estates would

be minimized. In fact, most families (92.5 percent) had between ten and fifty acres (Lottick 7).

The area would be open to Pennsylvanians (Pennamites), too, but they couldn't own the land. Pennsylvanians had to lease the land from the Penn family, which was much less desirable to any settler. It would seem that no settler would want to pay rent to the Penns on land he worked when he had the chance to own the land outright. Loyalty to the Penns and Pennsylvania, however, outweighed ownership of the land—at least in the beginning.

YANKEE-PENNAMITE WARS

The tense balance between Pennsylvania and Connecticut would lead to the Yankee-Pennamite Wars. This would turn out to be a long-running civil war interrupted by the American Revolution.

Ready to defend their homes 12

Forty of the Yankees chose to make a fort on what is now River Street in the town of Forty Fort. A larger group, led by John Durkee, joined them in May. They built their own fort, Fort Durkee, across the river on what is now Ross Street. In June, armed Pennamites ordered the Yankees to get out of the Wyoming Valley. By September, the Yankees were forced to leave again by Captain Ogden and the Pennsylvanians. They came back in 1770, the same year as the Boston Massacre, and retook their Fort Durkee. Yankee John Durkee then proceeded to lay out plans for the new city of Wilkes-Barre.

In January 1771, the Pennamites, led by Captain Ogden, created a new fort closer to the Yankees near Northampton Street and South River Street. They named it Fort Wyoming. Eight months later, the Yankees, led by Zebulon Butler, laid siege to it and forced the Pennamites to

leave. Over the next four years, the Yankees established gristmills, built other forts, and surveyed more land. They made roads, planted crops, and planned schools and churches. By 1775, nearly two thousand people lived in what the Yankees called the township of Westmoreland (Dziak 56, 57).

By 1775, national events in Boston and elsewhere were overshadowing the civil war in the valley. The Continental Congress recommended that the Pennamites resolve the issue of valley ownership. Instead, the Pennamites attacked the Yankees—and lost.

THE FIGHT FOR FREEDOM

Under Zebulon Butler's leadership, the Yankees won the Battle of Rampart Rocks (near Nanticoke) and pushed out the intruders. The Yankees barely had time to enjoy their victory over the Pennamites, though. When the American Revolution broke out in 1775, many men from the area hurried to join the Continental Army. In the coming months, Captains Robert Durkee and Samuel Ransom recruited more than 170 additional men for the 24th Connecticut to help General George Washington.

Colonials march to fight the British 13

These valley men joined Washington's army at Morristown on January 1, 1777. Valley men from the companies fought in the Battles of Mill Stone River, Bound Brook, Germantown, Brandywine, and Fort Mifflin. After spending the winter at Valley Forge, they fought in the Battle of Monmouth.

So many fathers, sons, and brothers left to fight the British, the valley was left with inadequate defense. One historian, Sheldon

Reynolds, estimated that Wyoming Valley gave eight times its "fair share" of men to the patriot cause (Dziak 85). Although Zebulon Butler was concerned about this depletion of able-bodied men, he could do little about it. Washington and the army were desperate.

When Washington was pushed out of Philadelphia, he headed for Valley Forge. Unfortunately, that area could not supply his beleaguered army with much-needed supplies. Instead, he and the Congress looked to Wyoming Valley to provide what was needed. The British were keeping an eye on the valley residents too, and knowing that they could not allow Washington to get the supplies he needed to continue the fight.

THE BATTLE OF WYOMING

During the French and Indian War, the British lost many battles during the early years as they tried to bring traditional European styles of fighting to America. By 1777, they had learned new lessons. They knew that using smaller, faster groups trained in Indian-style warfare was the better choice. Under Major John Butler (no relation to Zebulon Butler), they organized such a unit to attack Wyoming Valley.

John Butler British leader 14

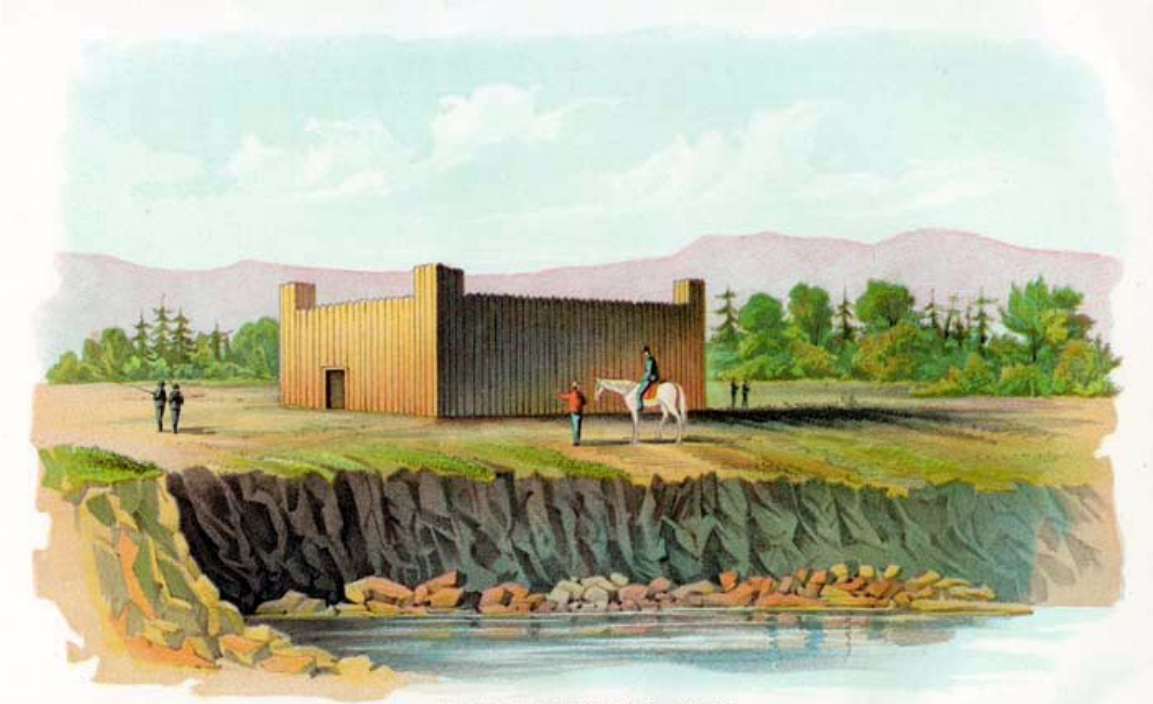
At first, John Butler had trouble persuading the Iroquois to join the fight. None of the Six Nations wanted to get involved. Nonetheless, Butler gave them trinkets and gifts. He appealed to them as warriors, and reminded them of the lies, insults, and atrocities committed by the patriots against the Indians. Finally, with the help of a Mohawk chief named Joseph Brant, some warriors agreed to join him. Other volunteers were eager to become part of the band, too. They were loyalists who had been pushed out of Wyoming Valley by the Connecticut Yankees, and they were eager to have a chance to return.

From the valley, Colonel Denison pleaded with the Continental Congress for help. Wyoming was woefully depleted of men. Hundreds had left to join Washington and fight the British. This included most of the 24th Connecticut unit. Now the valley was unable to effectively defend itself. Zebulon Butler was away, too, leaving Nathan Denison in charge. Rumors were circulating about impending attacks. The reports were not unfounded; valley residents saw small bands of Indians and loyalists roaming about in the area directly north of Wyoming.

Zebulon Butler 15

The newly organized force of loyalist soldiers (known as Butler's Rangers) and their Seneca Iroquois allies, perhaps as many as 600, arrived in the valley by late June 1778. The valley was protected by about 350 older men and younger boys led by Colonel Nathan Denison of Forty Fort and Colonel Zebulon Butler of Fort Wilkes-Barre. This force was made of males too old or too young to fight in the 24th Connecticut. The Continental Congress later released some men to go home to the valley, but it was too late to prevent what became known as the Wyoming Massacre. The valley residents were instrumental in supplying Washington's army with grains, needed supplies, and men. It wasn't surprising, then, that the British and their Indian allies would target the frontier settlement. Another part of their reasoning was to attack the homes and families left behind so that colonial soldiers would

Platoon of Recruits 16



FORTY FORT, WYOMING, IN 1778.

Drawing by Edmund L. Dana 17

desert Washington's army, weakening the defense of the reb13ellious colonies. They also wanted to destroy any supplies that might aid the Continentals.

Not all those in the valley were in the patriot camp. Many loyalist families lost their homes and possessions when the patriots pushed them out. Now, they wanted revenge. Other settlers from New York and New Jersey, with no ties to Connecticut, were arriving in the valley, too. Most leaned toward Britain. The valley's Yankee patriots formed a so-called "Committee of Safety" to watch them.

In late June and early July of 1778, a significant force of loyalist rangers and Seneca Indians established itself in Wyoming Valley. The patriots in the valley had some protection, however. Fort Pittston was located in the present-day town of that name. Fort Jenkins was a stockaded house across the river, in West Pittston. The patriots also sought refuge in Forty Fort and Fort Wilkes-Barre. A small fortification in Exeter was named Fort Wintermoot. Its founders, the Wintermoot family, rejected patriot assistance in building the fort, making many local patriots suspect them of being loyalists.

The loyalists and Seneca under Major John Butler invaded from the north as they followed the Susquehanna River into the valley. They met and ambushed the patriot Harding brothers on their farm a few miles north of the valley. An alarm went out to the rest of the patriots, and many rushed to Forty Fort.

The patriots at Forty Fort had to decide whether to attack the enemy or remain in the relative safety of the fort. Zebulon Butler, a colonel in the Continental Army, was home on leave. Nathan Denison asked him to assume command of the local patriot forces.

The debate grew heated at times. The patriots did not know the size or strength of their enemy. Leaving the fort would be dangerous, yet staying in the fort while their homes and crops were destroyed did not seem like a very good alternative. Lazarus Stewart, a fugitive from Pennsylvania known for his violent hatred of Indians, had fled to Connecticut and wound up in Wyoming Valley. He now led the faction of patriots that insisted they should leave the fort and defend their land and homes.

Most of the patriots came to agree with that plan. They drew straws to determine who would remain in the fort to protect the women and children. Luke Swetland was one of those who stayed behind.

Men left the fort marching to the tune "St. Patrick's Day in the Morning." Their leaders were very concerned. While the men felt they were ready, Zebulon Butler and Nathan Denison did not share their optimism. About a mile and a half from Forty Fort, the makeshift army stopped at Abraham's Creek and the debate about what to do next renewed. Butler and Denison thought the group should stay where it was and use the creek for defense and drinking water. Plus, Forty Fort was close by, if they had to retreat. The ground was on a slight rise, and the plain and woods were in clear sight (Dziak 138). The men were busy as they set their defenses. Once finished, however, the men grew weary of waiting and calls again

Nathan Denison 18

arose to strike at the enemy instead. As the hours passed, so did the patriots' patience. In the midst of this, Captain Durkee of the Westmoreland Independent Company and two others rode up to the group. They informed Butler and Denison that the rest of their company, about sixty men, were within two days' march of the valley. If the enemy could be held in check, more help would arrive.

That wouldn't happen, however, as the men were tired of waiting and wanted to take the offensive. Denison and Butler were against the idea, but nearly everyone else wanted to get at the enemy and threatened to go without their leaders if need be (Dziak 141). The Wyoming Valley army would be split, which would virtually assure the enemy of victory, so Butler decided to go with the men (Dziak 142).

The enemy would soon learn of the patriot decision to cross Abraham's Creek and advance. Loyalists and warriors, stationed near Fort Wintermoot, began to prepare their defense near present-day Schooley Avenue and Valley Streets in Exeter Borough.

Old Smoke, the Indian chief in charge of that part of the unit, had some of his warriors conceal themselves along the swampy edge of the field. Meanwhile, John Butler's line knelt behind a wooden fence and also lay in the grass. Officers ordered that Fort Wintermoot be set ablaze as a ruse to make the patriots believe the invaders were leaving.

When the patriots were about a mile away, the officers had the men spread out and stand shoulder-to-shoulder. The line was longer than one thousand feet. Forty-seven-year-old Colonel Butler commanded the portion of line closest to the river while Colonel Denison had command of the men farthest away.

By 5:00 p.m., the men had covered the distance and found themselves in an open field near the now-burning Fort Wintermoot. Across the field was the fence that Butler knew would be a perfect place for an ambush. He didn't have to wait very long to find out that he was right.

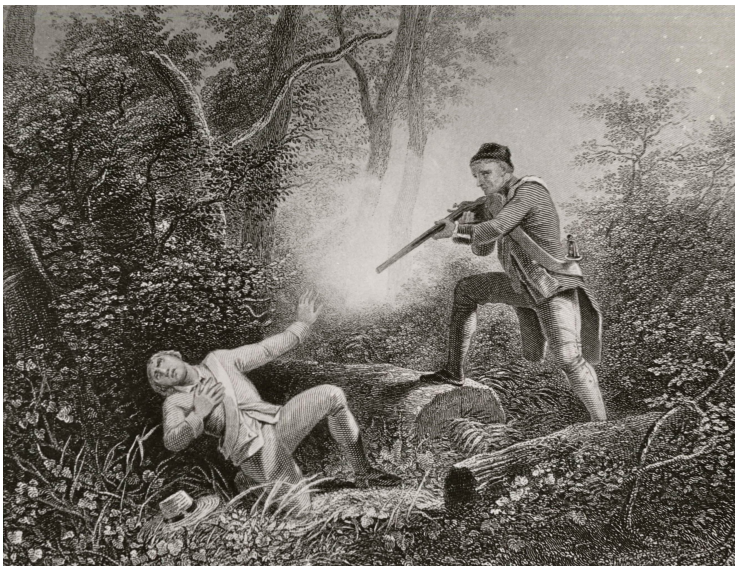
The combatants began firing and the patriots continued their advance, marching a short distance, firing, and reloading. That would happen two more times and then the loyalists fired and began to fall

back. The patriots thought they were retreating and began to push forward. In the patriots' exuberance, their battle line became irregular.

Once the disorganized patriots were close enough, it was the Indian warriors' turn to attack. They came against the flank, or side, of the patriot line, completely surprising the men. Only one patriot had been lost so far on the northern part of the line, but now they were falling fast. The number of Indians launching the surprise attack was greater than that of the whole patriot army (Dziak 159).

"The Massacre at Wyoming"
Alonzo Chappel, artist 19

Denison gave orders to "fall back and form an oblique"—a right angle meant to blunt the Indian attack. By the time the word was passed along the ranks, it became "fall back and retreat." That word, *retreat*, was the beginning of the end for the patriots as their line began to crumble.



"Fratricide at Wyoming" 20

With some men still fighting on the battlefield, others began to fall back and then flee toward the river with the Indians and Rangers in hot pursuit. Most of the Patriots who

tried to cross the river were killed by Indians waiting by the riverbank. The rout would not last long, but the resulting massacre would last all night.

One man, Henry Pencel, escaped and hid in the thickets of nearby Monocanock Island. When he was found hiding behind a log, he promptly got to his knees and begged for his life. But his captor reportedly said he would not spare his life of the "damned rebel." According to Harvey, the captor "then shot him, struck him four or five times with a tomahawk, and then scalped him" (Harvey 1022). The captor was Henry's younger brother, John. The scene was witnessed by Giles Slocum, who later escaped and reported the incident to others. It became known as the "Fratricide at Wyoming."

The massacre revealed cruelties rarely seen on the American battlefield. Some of the captured victims had their heads cut off. Captain Bidlack was thrown onto the burning embers of Fort Wintermoot and held there by pitchfork. Some captives were tied to trees with flaming branches and pine knots stabbed into their bowels (Dziak p. 184). According to John Butler, the victors took 227 scalps that day.

Survivors came back to Forty Fort bringing new stories of what they saw. One of the stories was about a group of eighteen Yankee patriots who were taken to a flat rock. About two hundred Indian warriors and one woman, known as Queen Esther, surrounded them. Reportedly, Queen Esther would dance and sing and then bring out a maul and bash the brains out of one captive at a time.

British flag after the Battle of Wyoming 21

On the dawn of the following morning, July 4, the patriot survivors had nothing to celebrate. Fort Jenkins and Fort Pittston surrendered to the enemy. Forty Fort would be offered terms of surrender about 8 o'clock in the morning.

Nathan Denison opened the gates and rode out to meet John Butler. The terms were clear: all forts were to be handed over, all Continental soldiers were to be made prisoners of war, and all militiamen were to be disarmed (Dziak 195). By July 8, their work accomplished, the enemy would be gone from Wyoming Valley.

THE GREAT RUNAWAY

The victorious invaders left Wyoming Valley in shambles. Many of the settlers who had marched out of Forty Fort on July 3 had been killed. The men, women, and children who lived saw their homes and crops burned and their animals taken. Hundreds of refugees would now take part in what has been called the "Great Runaway." Some went along the river to Sunbury. Others went to Fort Penn (modern-day Stroudsburg) on the Delaware River or back to Connecticut (Dziak 208).

Fleeing the valley 22

Some of those who tried to make it through the Pocono Mountains were lost in what was called the Shades of Death or the Great Swamp. The area was filled with dense forest and thick undergrowth. Wild animals and insects plagued the weary, heartsick travelers. Few horses or oxen were around to help carry or pull loads. Food was in short supply. Many refugees died and were buried where they fell.

Before long, Wyoming Valley was virtually emptied of humans. Estimates of those killed in battle range from around 120 to 376 (Dziak 214). No one knows for certain how many died in the wilderness, but estimates are usually around 200 people. The devastation was complete.

Edmund L. Dana served as a captain of the Wyoming Artillerists in the Mexican War, and later as a Colonel of the 143rd Pennsylvanian Regiment in the Civil War. He was elected as a judge in Luzerne County following that conflict. He wrote his thoughts of the Massacre of Wyoming:

The battle was not one of the great battles in history, either in skill displayed, the numbers engaged, or in the casualties suffered. It was fought against superior numbers, arms, and discipline, and in defense of life and home. ...[It] was not a great battle directly in its results, as affecting the struggle for Independence by the Colonies. It was not great in point of the number of men engaged in the conflict. But it was great in this: The exaggerated story of the atrocities committed by the British troops and their allies [after the battle], fired the heart and nerved the arm of every American patriot in this broad land, wherever the story became known. (Harvey 1077).

Flight of inhabitants 23

The battle turned out to be more than just another frontier battle in the war. Newspapers often exaggerated tales of the atrocities of the battle. Europeans who learned of the battle's victims demonized Britain. Britain's citizens, upon hearing these reports, put pressure on Parliament to stop the war. This sentiment only grew as the cost of the war created crushing taxes in Britain, and British citizens feared for the lives of relatives in America.

Meanwhile, in the colonies, the battle news stirred patriotic feelings among those American citizens who felt that the British and their Native allies were now capable of indescribable acts toward Americans. The deaths, deprivations, and misery experienced during the Great Runaway added to patriots' new determination to fight.

On both sides of the Atlantic, a fever pitch increased for opposite views: many Europeans wanted to stop the war, and many Americans wanted to fight harder.

A FRESH LOOK AT WYOMING

The horrors of the battle and the massacre that followed were tragic and cruel. Congress, however, knew that Wyoming could not simply be abandoned. It was too important as a defense against invasion, so they began to plan how to take back the area. Zebulon Butler, who had eluded capture after the battle, was chosen to lead the troops and militia in an effort to regain the valley.

Butler worked with Colonel Thomas Hartley, who burned with desire to clear the area of Indian threat. John Franklin, who had been assigned to Butler, was transferred to Hartley's command. Just two weeks after the Wyoming Massacre, Hartley's group attacked Native villages along the Susquehanna as far north as Tioga, including the area where Queen Esther supposedly lived. They returned in October 1778.

In the meantime, Butler and his men were reorganizing the area. From their new base in Wilkes-Barre, dubbed Camp Westmoreland, they began to bury the dead who still lay where they had fallen in July. Butler also set up defenses against roving bands of outlaws, Indians and Whites alike. Still, the patriots perceived the Iroquois in the north to be a major threat. That would be taken care of by an army led by General John Sullivan. He would lead three thousand men with all of their pack animals and wagons through the wilderness. Five hundred woodsmen cleared a path for the army. In July 1779,

General John Sullivan 24

they left Wyoming and began their trek into Iroquois territory with the cry of "Remember Wyoming!" From July through October, they destroyed scores of Indian villages, stores, and crops in the valley and north to the Finger Lakes.

Dziak writes that "the patriots torched about forty Iroquois towns, made up of perhaps 1,200 cabins, and destroyed about 160,000 bushels of corn along with 'a vast quantity of other valuable Indian crops'" (Dziak 225). By early October, the Iroquois had been defeated for all practical purposes. Sullivan and his army returned to the valley to be greeted by thankful citizens and a celebratory feast.

NOT ALL THE DANGER PASSED

In November 1778, a young girl named Frances Slocum was taken by the Indians from her family's home in Wilkes-Barre. She eventually grew up to marry a Miami Indian chief and live in Peru, Indiana. Maconaquah, The Little Bear, kept her past a secret until she was an elderly woman. She then told a visiting reporter who wrote about her interesting life story. Several years later, her brother found out about her and came to her home. He wanted her to return with him, but she had spent all but five years of her life with the Native people and preferred staying with them.

Frances Slocum 25

Luke Swetland was also captured by Indians and kept for nearly a year before he escaped. His wife Hannah left the Wyoming Valley and moved back to Connecticut. She was there when her husband returned to his home in Wyoming. He then went to Connecticut, rejoined his family, and returned to Wyoming.

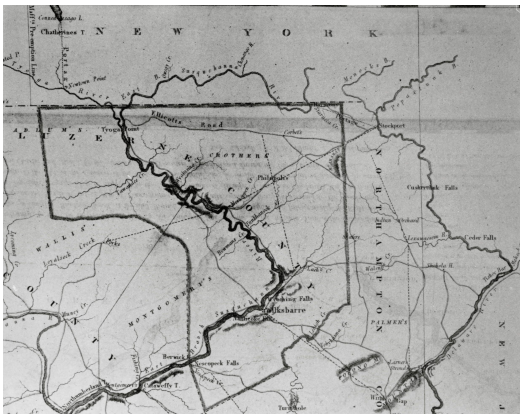
A year later, in 1780, Indians abducted Benjamin Harvey. He was taken to Fort Niagara and later released. Upon walking back to his home

in Plymouth, he followed the outlet of the lake now known as Harvey's Lake.

In 1783, just as the Treaty of Paris was being signed to end the American Revolution, the Pennamites took Fort Wyoming from the Yankees and renamed it Fort Dickinson. They also tried to change the name of Wilkes-Barre to Londonderry. Arrests of Yankees continued, and the debate over who owned the land continued for a number of years.

Meanwhile, Ethan Allen was invited to come and aid the Yankees as an entirely new state was proposed: Westmoreland. Colonel John Franklin thought this was an excellent idea as a new state would not be under the jurisdiction of either Connecticut or Pennsylvania (Lottick 69). He was arrested and imprisoned by Pennsylvania authorities, an act which touched off a firestorm of protest. Franklin was kept in prison for almost a year, but was finally released by Pennsylvania authorities. He eventually settled in Athens and was later appointed as High Sheriff of the new county (Lottick 51).

By 1786, settlers petitioned the state of Pennsylvania to make a new county that included Wyoming. They were successful, and the new county was named "Luzerne" in honor of the French ambassador Anne-César de la Luzerne. Benjamin Franklin was one of the leaders involved in the change. The new county was carved out of what was then Northumberland County. It included part of what is now Bradford County and all of the present-day counties of Lackawanna, Susquehanna, and Wyoming.



1791 map of Luzerne County 26

Creating a new county lessened the political turmoil in Wyoming. Now the area was no longer under the control of Northumberland County and its sheriff. New county officials elected by the people could serve their constituents and help resolve the land claims debates. This was a difficult issue because, under

the Articles of Confederation, no courts had been set up to handle disputes between states. (The United States was not yet under the authority of the Constitution.) A passionate debate arose over whether Wyoming Valley and its surroundings fell under the jurisdiction of Pennsylvania or Connecticut. In 1782, Pennsylvania received a favorable decision from the commission appointed in Trenton to settle the dispute. Pennsylvania subsequently owned the land. The Connecticut Yankees were told to move out into western regions. That would not happen without a fight, though, and enraged Yankees formed an army.

Though the issue was deeply contentious and saw physical conflict for many years, the sides grew weary of fighting. Connecticut dropped its claim to the territory in 1786. Yet it would take several more years of arrests, threats, and people dying on both sides before the Yankee-Pennamite Wars finally came to an end in 1799 with the Compromise Act of 1799. Though Pennsylvania owned the land, the Yankees could keep the titles to their farms as the new county of Luzerne (not Westmoreland) was incorporated into the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.