

## SECURING THE BORDER: TEEDYUSCUNG

### WHEN?

1750s

### EVENT

Teedyuscung called himself “King of the Delaware”. He came to organize a buffer between settlers and Haudenosaunee in New York



Teedyuscung

### WHERE?

Wyoming Valley

### VOCABULARY

Tenant  
portly  
Haudenosaunee  
Lenni Lenapé  
Connecticut Yankees

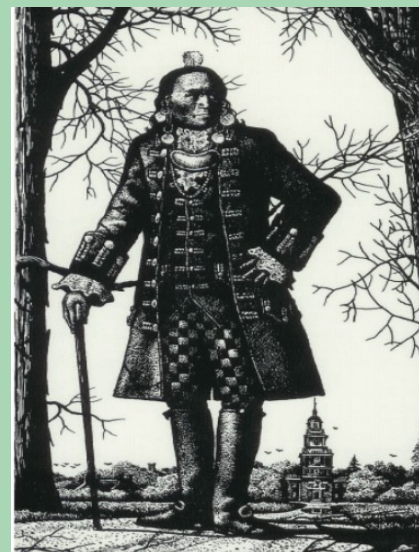
The Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) were strengthening their grip on Wyoming Valley. They felt that the tenant tribes there needed to be more strictly organized and disciplined in order to better protect the southern area of their domain from white. Accomplishing this would be easier if the Wyoming tribes could be united under one strong leader.

In 1754, the Iroquois invited a Lenni Lenapé (the tribe also known as Delaware) chief named Teedyuscung to move to Wyoming Valley. Local missionaries described the chief as a “portly, well-looking man endowed with good natural sense, quick of comprehension.”<sup>1</sup> As the Iroquois had hoped, Teedyuscung proved to be a capable leader. The various bands and tribes along the Susquehanna valleys soon invested in him their last hopes for peaceful lives.

Teedyuscung was one of the most compelling figures of his time. After the ancestral lands of his tribe were purchased by Europeans, he and his small group of followers began a long and difficult search for a new home in the madly changing world. (Included in his followers were small bands from other tribes: Mahicans, Unami, Munsee, Lenapé.) Wherever his travels took him, Teedyuscung tried to fit in, only to find himself more and more removed from his Delaware roots.

When he arrived in Wyoming Valley in April of 1754, Teedyuscung faced a difficult task. He had to win the trust of small tribes already located in the valley. Connecticut claimed Wyoming valley and so did the colony of Pennsylvania and each planned to send settlers to the area. The Haudenosaunee not want to give it up as they felt it was an important area to keep guard on their “southern gate.” Matters were further complicated when war broke out in 1754 between the English the French. Known here as the French and Indian War, the natives were caught up in this struggle too. The French were a threat on the western side while the English were coming from east. He continually tried to establish peace between the various groups.

But Teedyuscung's most important job was to watch trail leading into Wyoming Valley from Connecticut. There could be no doubt that soon—probably very soon—that quiet trail would suddenly be overrun by land-hungry colonizers called Yankees demanding entry into the valley. He was right. Just as the French and



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Indian War was winding down, they came in 1762 settling by Mill Creek near present-day Wilkes-Barre General Hospital. Though soon pushed away, it was only temporary.

Teedyuscung knew the Connecticut Yankees would return, and probably in even greater numbers. The situation was becoming desperate. He again turned to the governor of Pennsylvania and this time threatened that he and his people would abandon Wyoming Valley to Connecticut if they did not get some help immediately.

On April 19, 1763, Teedyuscung died under mysterious circumstances. His cabin caught fire and he became trapped inside. Other cabins burned down as well, but Teedyuscung was the only person known to have died that mournful night.<sup>2</sup>

Witnesses reported that the fire that burned Teedyuscung's house had been started from the outside. Some historians believe that the fire was started accidentally, maybe during a celebration that went out of control. Others suggest it was murder. Was Teedyuscung killed by the Haudenosaunee for threatening to abandon Wyoming Valley? Or was he murdered by Connecticut settlers who wanted an end to his protests? Many of his followers walked out of Wyoming Valley some going north and others west to Ohio.

In May 1763, about 200 Connecticut settlers appeared in Wyoming Valley. This time they meant to stay. They again claimed the Mill Creek land, which they began to clear for planting. Then they built log cabins and a blockhouse, a kind of crude backwoods fortress. Soon, they were settled in and unwilling to turn back.

Glickman, p. 17

<sup>2</sup>Williamson and Fossler, p. 9

'I sit there as a Bird on a Bough; I look about, and do not know where to go; let me therefore come down upon the Ground, and make that my own by a good Deed, and I shall then have a Home forever.'" - Chief Teedyuscung

#### CHECK IT OUT ONLINE:

[Teedyuscung, A Man, A Statue](#)

[Wyoming Delawares](#)

#### PRINT SOURCES

Glickman, Jay L. *Painted in Blood: Remember Wyoming*. Affiliated Writers of America, Incorporated, 1997.

Wallace, Anthony, F.C. *King of the Delawares: Teedyuscung 1700-1763*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1949.

Williamson, James R. and Fossler, Linda A. *The Susquehanna Frontier: Northeastern Pennsylvania during the Revolutionary Years*. Wilkes-Barre: Wilkes University Press, 1997.

#### SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

1. Research Teedyuscung's statue near Philadelphia and consider making a model of it. Why do you think the sculptor chose that pose?
2. There are 2 portraits and a statue (online) that show Teedyuscung in different ways. Show the various clothing and explain your thoughts about why you think there are differences.