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## The Revolutionary War and the Indians of the Upper Susquehanna Valley

PETER C. MANCALL

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The Revolutionary War and its aftermath brought ruin to the Indians of the upper Susquehanna Valley. The majority allied themselves with the British, infuriating local colonists who mostly sided with the Continental Army. General John Sullivan's campaign of 1779 devastated the Susquehanna Indians' towns, as well as the communities of Indians living farther north and west throughout Iroquoia. At the end of the war these Valley Indians were displaced, impoverished, and ignored; they lived at the edges of the new republic but could not enjoy the benefits of citizenship.

While recent studies of the Revolutionary period have described crucial decades in the nation's past, historians still have not examined the influence of the Anglo-American crisis on Indians in sufficient depth. Barbara Graymont's *The Iroquois in The American Revolution* traces the experiences of the Six Nations but treats primarily the political and military aspects of these Indians' lives. Anthony F. C. Wallace's *The Death and Rebirth of the Seneca*, while putting the Revolutionary period into a broader historical and cultural context, focuses almost exclusively on the Senecas. But this westernmost tribe in Iroquoia managed to retain at least a portion of its land in the post-Revolutionary period, thereby distinguishing the tribe's history from that of

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many Indians who were completely displaced from their territory. The Indians who inhabited the upper Susquehanna Valley, many of whom were not members of the Six Nations tribes, have received insufficient attention from scholars. Even Barry Kent's recent analysis, *Susquehanna's Indians*, contains little on the Revolutionary period, primarily analyzing the earlier Indian occupation of the region.

Scholars have tended to study the histories of particular tribal groups. Such an approach makes sense for much of eastern North America, where tribes generally inhabited specific regions. But the upper Susquehanna Valley does not lend itself to such tribally-specific analysis. When colonists expanded their settlements in Pennsylvania and Maryland, displaced Indians migrated to the region, creating a multi-tribal society along the river's banks. Most of these refugee Indians built towns with members of other tribes, or lived adjacent to groups with different tribal affiliations. While the Indians may have maintained their tribal identity, they often acted together to protect their territory or enhance trade opportunities. Before the Revolution the Indians of the upper Susquehanna Valley were able to create stable communities in spite of the repeated social and demographic crises that already had reoriented their traditional ways of life.

While the Indians of the upper Susquehanna Valley were thus no strangers to conquest and hostile invaders, the Revolution altered their lives more profoundly than had earlier misfortunes. The war completely destroyed their economy; the tribally-mixed settlements never recovered. The extent of the Indians' economic decline, and the resulting threat to their communities, emerges in richly descriptive documentary evidence. Because many of the Susquehanna Indians allied themselves with the British, the correspondence of Crown military officials precisely describes the changing fortunes of these Indians. These sources, especially the many volumes of correspondence in the Haldimand Papers in the British Library, reveal the concern of the British for the Indians' well-being and the impact of the Indians' declining prospects on the Crown's efforts to prosecute the war. These letters, written in the field, behind the lines, and even, at times, across the Atlantic, describe how the Valley Indians' economy degenerated during the late 1770s. Used in conjunction with other existing documentary sources, the evidence in the Haldimand papers on

social and economic change can move the analysis of the Indians' wartime experiences beyond the largely political and military narratives that currently dominate the field. Such analysis can broaden our understanding of the Revolution in general and the specific impact of the Anglo-American crisis on Indians.<sup>1</sup>

These documents reveal that Valley Indians lost the Revolutionary War not only because they were allied with the British. Indeed, even some who sided with the Continental Army lost their lands in the upper Valley after the war. The war and a post-war wave of settlement on former Indian lands destabilized the Indians' communities and prevented them from enjoying the emerging economic opportunities available to others in the early republic. After the Revolution, and perhaps as early as the mid-1780s, few if any Indians inhabited the Susquehanna Valley. Their dislocation was complete.

### **The Susquehanna Indians before the Revolution**

Before the war a number of different Indian groups lived in the upper Valley, generally clustered along the banks of the Susquehanna or one of its major tributaries. Most of these refugee Indians had fled their homelands around Chesapeake Bay or in the Delaware Valley when colonists encroached on their territory in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.<sup>2</sup> During the eighteenth century the upper Valley had become a home for displaced Indians from other areas. Delawares, Shawnees, Conoys, Nanticokes, Tutelos, and Mahicans, along with members of Six Nations' tribes, often lived together in small, primarily agricultural communities. Shamokin had Delaware, Mahican, and Tutelo occupants; Delawares and Shawnees inhabited Great Island, along the West Branch of the Susquehanna; Mahicans and Delawares lives at Wyoming, where a Nanticoke town was so close that a group of missionaries believed it part of the same settlement. From the late 1720s to the early 1770s, Otsiningo, near the confluence of the Chenango and Susquehanna rivers, had occupants from many tribes; in the early 1750s two missionaries found Onondagas, Shawnees, Oneidas, Tuscaroras, and Nanticokes at the town.<sup>3</sup>

Like other eastern Indians, those inhabiting the upper Susquehanna Valley reoriented their economies in response to demographic decline and new trade opportunities. Many hunted

indigenous fur-bearing animals and transported the pelts to local trade centers. Throughout the region Indians incorporated trade goods, such as metal axes and pots, into both daily activities and ceremonial occasions. Perhaps most important, many Valley Indians developed a taste for alcohol which traders gladly indulged, regardless of the complaints of local Indian leaders about the destructive impact of drinking on their communities. Periodic encounters with traders and other traveling Indians also exposed Valley Indians to various diseases, especially smallpox, which devastated their communities.<sup>4</sup>

The Indians' pre-war economy, like that of many primarily agrarian peoples, had strict seasonal requirements. Crops needed to be planted at certain times, kept free of pests as much as possible, and harvested at the appropriate moment. Failure to follow the traditional calendar easily led to food shortages and, if food could not be found elsewhere, disease and death. Hunting followed a slightly different calendar. Valley Indians, like the Iroquois and other northeastern Indians, hunted in winter when it was easier to track game, especially deer. Food obtained from the hunt could not be preserved like corn and was consumed when fresh. While limited storage and the adoption of livestock by at least some Valley Indians allowed them to maintain some control over annual food supplies throughout the year, most Indian groups still relied on the hunt for food during parts of the year.<sup>5</sup>

Even when the population of fur-bearing animals dwindled because of over-hunting, Valley Indians continued to bring pelts to trading centers, such as Fort Augusta at the confluence of the Susquehanna's two branches. In spite of the decline of beaver stocks in particular, threatening the fur trade in many places, the storekeeper at Fort Augusta received more beaver pelts in 1763 than any other furs. His inventory reflected the diversity of the mid-century peltry trade; he listed the hides of twelve other species he was shipping to market. Still, colonial observers noted that agriculture, particularly corn, legumes, and tubers, supplemented by fruit, fish, and some game birds, dominated the Valley Indians' economy.<sup>6</sup>

While Valley Indians managed to live peaceably together for the most part, they had to accommodate themselves to the Iroquois, who claimed suzerainty over the Susquehanna Valley after the demise of the Susquehannocks in the seventeenth century. Hostilities with other Indians and continued demographic decline

had taken a toll on the Confederacy's strength. But while the Iroquois of the eighteenth century did not have the authority the Six Nations enjoyed in the seventeenth century, the League still held the most power in the upper Susquehanna Valley. Perhaps more important, colonial officials, especially Sir William Johnson, the superintendent of Indian affairs in the northern colonies, accepted the Iroquois' claims to control over much of the northern backcountry. Thus, in spite of tensions between the Susquehanna Indians and the Indians in the Confederacy, British negotiators assumed Iroquois control over the upper Valley. In the treaty-defined political world of the hinterland, the refugee Indians found themselves politically, and at times economically, bound to decisions negotiated between representatives of the British and the Iroquois.<sup>7</sup>

The Iroquois used their favored status to negotiate with colonial officials, often deciding matters for other Valley Indians. At a treaty at Lancaster in August 1762, for example, the Iroquois at the meeting prevented Pennsylvania provincial authorities from building a trading house on the West Branch of the Susquehanna, even though it would have lowered the cost of goods for the Delawares in the region. Similarly, Shickellamy, an Oneida sachem, negotiated trade terms at Shamokin, even though most of the residents of the town were not from tribes in the League. Tensions between the Iroquois and other Indians prompted some Shawnees and Delawares to migrate to the Ohio country in the 1740s.<sup>8</sup>

Valley Indians also had to contend with colonists who defied colonial authorities and tried to settle along the Susquehanna on lands still belonging to the Indians. The struggle for the Valley erupted into violence on occasion. In August, 1762, for example, a group of ninety settlers from the Susquehanna Company tried to settle at Wyoming. The group, based in Connecticut, claimed that they had purchased the land from local Indians, but Valley Indians, as well as provincial authorities, declared the sale invalid. When the settlers arrived to stake their claim, they encountered over five hundred Iroquois, Delaware and other Indian warriors returning from a treaty at Lancaster. According to one colonial observer, the Indians "ordered the Connecticut people to go away, and quit the Land, and said if they had not done so forthwith, the Indians would have killed every Man of them before they could have got into the Inhabitants." The Company

members, wisely sensing the danger, left the area. The following year another group from the Susquehannah Company again sought to settle at Wyoming. They were less fortunate than their predecessors. The Indians, in the words of a colonist who arrived after the Indians departed, had "most cruelly butchered" nine men and one woman, leaving their mutilated corpses behind.<sup>9</sup>

While some Indians aggressively defended their territory, others found themselves the victims of colonial assaults. The so-called Paxton Boys, a group of backwoods vigilantes, massacred a group of peaceful Indians at Conestoga in 1763; later they offered their services to the Susquehannah Company in its continuing campaign to gain control of northern Pennsylvania. Colonial attackers were not always so boastful of their accomplishments. Teedyuscung, a Delaware sachem living at Wyoming, died when his house burned, possibly an act of arson and murder by members of the Susquehannah Company seeking control of the area.<sup>10</sup>

But while hostilities flared up periodically, Valley Indians and their colonial neighbors were usually able to live in harmony. At repeated treaty meetings provincial authorities in New York and Pennsylvania negotiated with Valley Indians over matters important to everyone in the area: the return of captives, the price of trade goods, the location of trade centers, the building of forts. Pennsylvania officials built a town for Teedyuscung and his community at Wyoming, completing the project even after an unknown group of Indians murdered one of the workers. Provincial officials also promised to prosecute colonial trespassers on Indian lands. A 1768 Pennsylvania statute even authorized the death penalty without benefit of clergy for squatters refusing to leave Indian lands. The following year the provincial legislature modified the temporary 1768 bill; thereafter violators would be fined £500 and be imprisoned for twelve months. In 1773, responding to violations of the law, particularly by the so-called Fair Play settlers along the West Branch of the Susquehanna who claimed lands beyond the Fort Stanwix treaty boundary, Pennsylvania Governor John Penn issued a proclamation promising to prosecute offenders. He feared that "the making [of] such Settlements doth greatly tend to irritate the minds of the Indians, and may be productive of dangerous and Fatal Consequences to the Peace and Safety of His Majesty's good Subjects." His proclamation, which he ordered distributed "thro' the back Counties," com-

manded colonial officials to enforce the law vigorously. While Penn primarily hoped to dissuade potential trespassers from going beyond the boundary line, his proclamation was also no doubt intended to reassure Indians in the upper Valley and elsewhere who feared the further expansion of colonial settlements into their territory.<sup>11</sup>

At treaty meetings Valley Indians from different tribes often worked together to address local political and economic issues. Sir William Johnson often met with such groups of Indians from the Valley, many of whom visited his estate at Johnson Hall to negotiate specific matters. For example, a group of Tuscaroras, Nanticokes, and Conoys living in or near Oquaga visited Johnson Hall in April 1757 to discuss French efforts to woo Iroquois tribes away from their alliance with the English. Such an action would break the Covenant Chain which, according to Adam, the Oquaga Indians' spokesman at the meeting, "our Forefathers made with our Brethren the English" and which these Valley Indians wanted to maintain. Johnson shared their belief in the desirability of preserving the Covenant Chain, and promised to do all in his power to counteract the French threat. The Oquaga Indians also had more mundane concerns relating to their village. At the end of the three-day meeting they asked for twelve hatchets and twelve hoes "as they were too poor to buy them & in great want of them to cultivate the Land they had newly come on." Johnson agreed to provide them with the tools; he also gave them provisions for their return trip and replaced a keg of rum and a blanket which colonial soldiers had stolen from them.<sup>12</sup>

Thus, in spite of the inroads of alcohol and European diseases, and even despite growing pressure to sell their lands to colonists, refugee Indians continued to inhabit the upper Valley. Even when Indian and colonial negotiators divided the region at the Fort Stanwix treaty of 1768, the Indians already settled on the eastern side of the boundary line, including communities along the West Branch of the Susquehanna and at Wyoming, retained title to their villages and surrounding fields. The Indians also kept the territory between Owego and Oswego which, they believed, could not be relinquished; as one Indian negotiator noted at the treaty, it was too "full of our Towns & Villages."<sup>13</sup>

After the Fort Stanwix treaty Valley Indians continued to live peaceably with colonists even while colonists spread into former



Indian territory and at times trespassed on lands the Indians still possessed. One group of Indians at Oquaga provided food and canoe-making tools to a group of colonists in November 1774, saving their lives even though the colonists were trespassing on Indian lands and surveying the region for colonial land speculators. Local Indians along the North and West branches of the Susquehanna also continued to trade with the new settlers whenever they had the opportunity.<sup>14</sup>

Even when the Indians believed that colonists were illegally seizing their lands, they sought a peaceful resolution to the situation. Thus in 1775 a group of Indians went to Johnson Hall to complain that they had been deceived at Fort Stanwix in 1768, and had inadvertently ceded more land than they expected. The error, provincial officials pointed out, was not an intentional deception; the problem stemmed instead from a poorly drawn map used at the treaty which did not depict the Susquehanna's course accurately. Provincial officials, in the tradition of the recently deceased Sir William Johnson and others who sought negotiated solutions instead of violence, promised to solve the problem, but the outbreak of the Revolution soon prevented any easy answer. Of greater importance was the Indians' response to this overture: they accepted the promise and did not try to force the settlers off the lands. But the resolution to this crisis was only temporary. Once the Revolution began Valley Indians soon realized that they could not press their claims peacefully with any real hope of success.<sup>15</sup>

### **The War Years**

The stability achieved by the Indians before the Revolution quickly disintegrated in the late 1770s. The war, from the beginning, undermined these Indians' economy and made their survival precarious. British officials, who commented on these events in depth, isolated two intimately related factors contributing to the Indians' decline. First, they wrote, direct military assaults of the Continental Army devastated Indian communities. Indeed, one of the Continental Army's stated aims was to destroy the backcountry Indians' economy, and they ruthlessly applied themselves to this task. Second, according to Crown

officials, the Indians' commitment to the British war effort prevented them from reestablishing their economy. In particular, the participation of Indians in military affairs deprived communities of necessary labor generally devoted to maintaining local economies. While using their time to fight the Crown's battles, Valley Indians found themselves increasingly dependent on King George's treasury for food and clothing.

During the early years of the Revolutionary War most Valley Indians allied themselves with the British. Both local circumstances and existing relations between the Iroquois and the British influenced their decision. Valley Indians presumably hoped to receive material assistance from the British, thereby allowing them to provide for their communities. But their decision to join the Crown's forces was largely based on political considerations, especially on maintaining an alliance with Crown officials and protecting the Indians' territory. The earlier efforts of provincial officials to support Valley Indians in their claims against trespassing colonists no doubt made Valley Indians favorably inclined toward the Crown's position. When many Valley colonists began to ally themselves with the rebels, evident as early as 1775,<sup>16</sup> Valley Indians apparently found the Crown's cause the best defense for their communities. Most likely, the Indians, sharing the logic of several of the tribes in the Iroquois confederacy, believed that fighting for the British would help preserve their territory. Indeed, Indians in the Valley might have followed the lead of others in their tribe living farther north in Iroquoia.<sup>17</sup> Still, what was logical politically had unforeseen economic consequences.

The outbreak of the war put an end to the Indians' agriculture and hunting. When the Continental Army invaded the Indians' territory in 1779 the soldiers deliberately destroyed all vestiges of the Indians' economy. At Chemung one troop destroyed approximately 1,000 bushels of corn and presumably burned extensive local supplies of pumpkins, beans, squash, and potatoes as well.<sup>18</sup> At Newtown, according to one soldier, another troop destroyed 150 acres of fresh produce as well as "great Quantities of Beans, Potatoes, Pumpkins, Cucumbers, Squashes & Watermellons."<sup>19</sup> The company traveling with Henry Dearborn was representative of many involved in Sullivan's campaign. At Chemung they burned forty acres of corn; at Chugnut

they destroyed "plenty of cucumbers squashes turnips &c." Several miles away, at an unidentified location, the party discovered a field of "70 or 80 acres of fine corn"; the following day it took them so long to destroy the crop that their march was delayed several hours.<sup>20</sup>

Continental Army soldiers destroyed important villages throughout the Valley, including Chemung, Newtychanning, Wyalusing, Chugnut, Otsiningo, and Owego. Their descriptions of the events demonstrate the callous nature of their actions. "This evening," Dearborn wrote in his journal in August, "the town of Owagea [Owego] was made a bone fire of to grace our meeting."<sup>21</sup>

The effect of the depredations of Continental Army soldiers on the Indians' economy was immediate and obvious, yet the Indians also suffered in other ways and for other reasons. Indeed, their decline began before Sullivan's 1779 raid and stemmed directly from the nature of their commitment to the English. After the decision to join the British war effort, many Indian groups, including virtually all of the Indians from the upper Susquehanna Valley, moved to the Crown's stronghold at Niagara, joining thousands of other Indians forced to abandon their territory and rely on the British for provisions.<sup>22</sup> Most important to the British, the cost of maintaining the Indians at Niagara itself proved increasingly difficult. Fighting the Continental Army prevented Indian men from hunting; Indian women, previously responsible for their communities' crops, could not tend their fields. British officials soon came to realize that the Indians were in danger of economic collapse.

John Butler, commanding the British military campaign in the backcountry, recognized signs of trouble as early as September 1778, when he toured the Indian country. "As the Young Men were already either out at War, or ready to go with me, they had nothing to subsist upon but the remains of the last Years Corn which was near expended, their hunting being neglected," he wrote to General Frederick Haldimand, the Governor of Quebec and a commander of British troops in North America. "Most of them too, were very bare of Clothes, however upon my promising them Clothing this fall they were satisfied."<sup>23</sup> Difficult times continued. "A Number of the Mohawks, Onandagoes and Ochquagoes are to remain here, having not Homes to go to," Butler wrote from Niagara in February 1779. "The Ochquago Village

being burnt by the Rebels, and the villages of the Mohawks situated in them of the Enemy."<sup>24</sup>

By July 1779, even before Sullivan's campaign, the Indians were using up food supplies without replenishing them. "Although there was last Fall a considerable Quantity of Cattle in the Indian Country these have been chiefly consumed by the Indians themselves," Butler wrote to Haldimand.

It is well known that they never raise more Corn, Pulse and things of that Kind which compose the principal Part of their Food than will just suffice for their own Subsistence: but they were so employed in various Excursions the last Summer that they did not cultivate the usual Quantity, and great Part of what they did cultivate was destroyed by some means or other before it came to Perfection.

Butler added that a number of travelers in the region, presumably other Indians or perhaps loyalists or Rangers working for the British cause, further depleted their food supplies. At various towns, both within the upper Valley and beyond, Butler found that the local Indians

have not had an Ear of Corn the whole Winter and were obliged to live such as had them upon Cattle, such as had no Cattle upon Roots. This by the Time we came into the Country made Beef exceeding scarce and dear: what there was we have made Use of, and so intirely has the Country been drained that at Shimong [Chemung] where Cattle were by far the most Plenty there is not a Creature to be got.<sup>25</sup>

The situation was so bleak that the Rangers had been sent to the Genesee Falls, where they could find enough fish to meet their nutritional needs. There, Butler concluded, they would not "have as many Indians about them to eat up their Provision," a fortunate circumstance since it was "impossible to avoid giving it [to] them when they are with you."<sup>26</sup> Haldimand too realized the problems of providing for both the Indians and other Crown soldiers, and believed the situation had devastating implications for the British war effort. "For, after the troops have been sent into the Country," he wrote to Butler in September 1779, "to have them stand or obliged to abandon the Purpose of their

Enterprise for want of Provisions, would be followed by much more fatal Consequences than if they had never undertaken it."<sup>27</sup>

Still, British officials struggled to supply the Indians with necessary goods. They realized, as Butler informed Lt. Col. Mason Bolton, commander of the Crown's forces at Niagara, that this was essential for the Indians' continued commitment to the British cause. "The Indians seem in better Spirits & more determined than I have seen them since they left Chuchnut [Chugnut]," Butler wrote, "and if they get any Succour from Niagara I am in hopes I shall be able to persuade them to attack the Rebels on their March, at any Rate I shall do my Endeavour to get them to make a Stand."<sup>28</sup>

British military officials realized that cattle could solve their problems, but they found themselves unable to procure sufficient head for the Indians' needs. The price for cows soared during the war. Mason Bolton, writing to Haldimand from Niagara in September 1779, noted that the price had risen from around £8 per head to £20 at Carleton Island and that those with cattle sought to move their stocks there to receive the better price. Bolton, wanting to keep the cattle near Niagara, refused their request, but faced a dilemma. "The Indians have not brought in Cattle this year," he wrote, "all we have purchased was a few Cows from the distressed Families."<sup>29</sup>

Cattle rustling became common during military forays. As early as January 1778 soldiers had orders to bring cattle back from their raids in the upper Susquehanna Valley, presumably to feed both soldiers and Indians.<sup>30</sup> "I shall collect all the Cattle of every kind I can," John McDonnell wrote to Butler in July 1779 from the Valley, "as I am Sensible that Provision will be an Object of the Utmost Consequence when all the Indians are Imbodied."<sup>31</sup> One group of Indians and Rangers at Wyalusing in September 1780 managed to take the cattle around the settlers' fort, but provisions remained scarce; there was little game to be hunted and the party needed more supplies.<sup>32</sup> In addition, as Continental Army soldiers discovered and as the Indians no doubt already realized, herding cattle through the upper Valley proved time-consuming and frustrating; cattle moved slowly along the region's paths and even, at times, fell off precipices to their death.<sup>33</sup>

The Indians' dependence on the British for food and other provisions threatened the Crown's efforts, mostly because of the great expense involved. None realized this more than Haldimand

when he urged Butler to cut costs and to encourage the Indians to begin cultivating during the spring of 1779.<sup>34</sup> Several months later he informed Butler that the costs of the Indian Department had actually exceeded those of every other department, including the army and navy. "I must therefore recommend to Your most Serious attention the Strictest economy wherever there is a possibility of observing it," he wrote in August. "the Credit of every Person at the head of Departments being concerned, and what is Still of greater Import, the Public Good."<sup>35</sup> But Butler believed such requests could not be satisfied. The costs of providing the necessary supplies, such as cattle, could actually raise the expenses of the Indian Department.<sup>36</sup> At the same time, the Indians would remain firmly in the British interest only if they were provided with what they needed, a sentiment that even Haldimand realized by August 1779. "We are Still Strong for the King of England," David, a Mohawk, informed Haldimand, "and we will lose our Lives chearfully for him if you will Shew us he is a man of his Word, & that he will not abandon his Brother the Six Nations who always Shed their Blood for him."<sup>37</sup>

This tenuous arrangement held out until Sullivan's troops destroyed the Indians' towns along the Susquehanna and its tributaries, when the situation for the Indians and their British allies became worse. Then a far greater number of Indians were forced to live near Niagara, dependent on the British. According to Butler, they had been "driven from their Country & [had] every Thing destroyed." Still, the Indians remained firmly allied to the British. "Notwithstanding the Losses the Indians have suffered by the Destruction of their Corn & Villages," Butler wrote to Haldimand in September 1779, "I am happy to acquaint your Excellency that they seem still unshaken in their Attachment to his Majesty's Cause, and declare as soon as they have placed their Women & Children in Security they will go and take Revenge of the Enemy."<sup>38</sup>

Nonetheless, the situation became more and more bleak, leading the British to reconsider their support of the Indians. Mason Bolton, in late September, summarized the problem concisely: "The Indians bear this misfortune with more patience than I could possibly expect, and seemed determined to take revenge when an opportunity offers," he wrote from Niagara, "but the loss of their Corn &c and the Scarcity of provisions here to supply the number I shall have at this Post, makes it impracticable

at present."<sup>39</sup> Fearful that the British would have to support almost 3,700 Indians at Niagara he later wrote to Haldimand describing the situation. "I am convinced your Excellency will not be surprised if I am extremely alarmed, for to support such a Multitude I think will be absolutely impossible." He prevailed upon Butler to convince as many Indians as possible to spend the winter at Montreal, and wanted him to "inform all the Rest who have not suffered by the Enemy, that they must return home, and take care of their corn &c."<sup>40</sup>

But the efforts to encourage the Indians to become self-sufficient, or at least to supply their own food, did not succeed quickly. The British continued to provide corn and hoes to many Indians from the upper Susquehanna Valley and elsewhere until at least May of 1781. Over 1,500 Indians received assistance because their corn had failed.<sup>41</sup>

Other factors prevented the Indians from reestablishing a stable economy in the Susquehanna Valley after the war. The winter of 1779-1780 was unusually severe, with snow up to five feet deep across much of western New York. Animals died for lack of forage, diminishing even further the ability of Indian hunters to capture necessary meat and pelts. In addition, the end of the war brought a period of epidemics among the Indians of the region: dysentery, measles, and smallpox devastated refugee communities. The resulting demographic decline which, including military casualties, has been estimated at approximately 50% for the Iroquois from the early 1760s to late 1790s, made economic recovery much more difficult.<sup>42</sup>

Land-hungry settlers and speculators, rushing to the region after the war, further prevented the Indians' economic recovery in the upper Susquehanna Valley and elsewhere. Even many Oneidas and Tuscaroras who had fought for the rebels were unable to maintain their land in the Susquehanna Valley. In 1785 they sold an enormous tract, encompassing what is today Broome and Chenango counties. The Indians initially did not want to part with the territory circumscribed by the Unadilla, Chenango, and Susquehanna rivers. This region was, as Petrus, an Oneida chief, declared in June 1785, "our Deer-hunting Country, and the Northern our Beaver-hunting Country." But under pressure they eventually sold much of the land to state-appointed negotiators in New York, thereby preventing the Oneidas and Tuscaroras from reestablishing communities in the upper Valley.<sup>43</sup>

After the war some Indians tried to move back to the upper Valley. Way-Way, a Nanticoke born at Chugnut, was among them. She was, she recalled later, "a little gal when the white man destroyed our crops and run us off in the war." Like other Indians she moved to Niagara and then to the Genesee. After the war she returned to the upper Valley, joining other Nanticokes and some Delawares trying to reestablish themselves in the region. But economic recovery proved elusive. They found settlers living on their former lands and, while they remained in the area for two years, the Indians apparently never prospered; one settler's family, Way-Way recalled, provided them with flour "& all kinds of provisions," evidence perhaps of the Indians' inability to grow sufficient food for their community. Soon Way-Way left the Valley, eventually living with other Nanticokes among the Iroquois settled at Grand River, Ontario.<sup>44</sup> Other refugees from the upper Valley probably joined displaced communities living in far western New York or southern Canada, or migrated, like many Delawares, even farther west. Perhaps many found themselves living in what Anthony Wallace has termed "slums in the wilderness." The upper Susquehanna Valley did not, however, remain depopulated. Under the direction of a group of wealthy landlord-speculators, thousands of people moved to the region. Few, if any, of these new settlers were Indians.<sup>45</sup>

### **The Susquehanna Indians' Revolution**

In spite of its place in a long history of European colonial aggression against Indians, the Revolutionary War was a stunning assault on interracial relations. While the expansion of a commercial market weakened Indian communities before the war and helped prepare the region for colonial settlement, colonists and Indians continued to work together peacefully to resolve their differences and maintain harmony in this borderland. This desire for peace in the Valley proved a great help to local Indians who periodically had to cope with epidemic diseases and colonial trespassers. Most Indians and colonists had demonstrated a willingness to live near each other. After the Revolution few post-war settlers in the Valley wanted Indian neighbors; they associated the Indians with the war and never trusted them



again. The Indians, their economy in disarray, could not reestablish stable communities in the region.

While the Revolution did not create racism against the Indians, it poisoned the minds of the settlers in the upper Susquehanna Valley. And those settlers, not the Indians, took control over the region after the crisis ended. The Indians of the Valley, caught in the larger struggle for power and land in eastern North America, could no longer find sanctuary along the Susquehanna. During the period when many others declared their freedom, Valley Indians found themselves dispossessed.

The economic decline of the Indians during the Revolutionary years has a greater meaning. In the intellectual ferment of the 1780s, those involved in creating the Constitution needed more than history and ideology to establish their new system of government. What they needed, and received, was the support of the people who would live with the government created by the Constitution. But when various states held ratifying conventions, few in attendance voiced eloquent pleas on behalf of the Indians. Even Indians who had fought for the Continental Army were excluded, along with those who had been allied with the British. Even more than the loyalists who fled to England and Canada, the Indians of the upper Susquehanna Valley, like many Indians elsewhere, were the real losers of the Revolutionary War.

#### NOTES

1. The military conflict in the Valley, and throughout much of the backcountry, has been well-described. See, in particular, Barbara Graymount, *The Iroquois in the American Revolution* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1972); Marjory Barnum Hinman, *Onaquaga: Hub of the Border Wars* (n.p., 1975); and Donald R. McAdam, "The Sullivan Expedition: Success or Failure," *New York Historical Society Quarterly* 54(1970): 53-81.

2. See Laurence M. Hauptman, "Refugee Havens: The Iroquois Villages of the Eighteenth Century," in *American Indian Environments: Ecological Issues in Native American History*, ed. Christopher Vecsey and Robert W. Venables (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1980), 129; Paul A. W. Wallace, *Indians in Pennsylvania* (orig. pub. 1961; rev. ed. Harrisburg, PA: Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, 1981), 108-117; Barry Kent, *Susquehanna's Indians* (Harrisburg, PA: Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, 1984). *passim*. For purposes of this study the upper Susquehanna Valley is defined as the northern half of the drainage basin, including the entire West Branch Valley as well as the region drained by the North Branch of the Susquehanna and its tributaries.

3. Jonathan Edwards, ed., *Memoirs of the Rev. David Brainerd, Missionary to the Indians on the Borders of New-York, New-Jersey, and Pennsylvania: Chiefly Taken From His Own Diary* (New Haven, CT, 1822; reprint St. Clair Shores, MI, 1970), 233; William Beauchamp, ed., *Moravian Journals Relating to Central New York, 1745-1766* (Syracuse: Onondaga Historical Association, 1916), 103, 55, 96; "Bishop J. C. F. Camerhoff's narrative of a Journey to Shamokin, Pennsylvania, in the Winter of 1748," ed. John W. Jordan, *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* [PMHB] 29 (1905): 160-161; Dolores Elliott, "Otsiningo, An Example of an Eighteenth Century Settlement Pattern," in *Current Perspectives in Northeastern Archaeology: Essays in Honor of William A. Ritchie*, ed. Robert E. Funk and Charles F. Hayes, III, *Researches and Transactions of the New York State Archaeological Association*, 17 (1977), 93-105; Barry Kent, Janet Rice, and Kakuko Ota, "A Map of Eighteenth Century Indian Towns in Pennsylvania," reprinted from *Pennsylvania Archaeologist* 51(1981).

4. Peter C. Mancall, "Environment and Economy: The Upper Susquehanna Valley in the Age of the American Revolution," (Ph.D.diss., Harvard University, 1986), chap. two.

5. For an overview of the Indians' economy see William N. Fenton, "Northern Iroquoian Culture Patterns," in *Handbook of North American Indians*, ed. William Sturtevant, vol. 15, *Northeast*, vol. ed. Bruce Trigger (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1978), 296-309 and Kent, *Susquehanna's Indians, passim*. Livestock noted in Samuel Harris, *Jornel and field Notes . . . don for Robt. Lettis Hooper and Compy*, Samuel Wallis Papers, microfilm at Historical Society of Pennsylvania [HSP], reel 6.

6. James Irvine's Invoice of Four Bundles of Peltry & Furrs, Gratz Coll., Case 14, Box 10, HSP. One of the most observant travelers was the naturalist John Bartram; see his description of the upper Valley in *Observations on the Inhabitants, Climate, Soil, Rivers, Productions, Animals, and other Matters Worthy of Notice made by John Bartram in his Travels from Pensilvania to Onondago, Oswego and the Lake Ontario, in Canada* (London, 1751), reprinted, with an introduction by Whitfield Bell, Jr. in *A Journey from Pennsylvania to Onondago in 1743* (Barre, MA, 1973).

7. On the treaty relation between the British and the Iroquois, and their ramifications for other backcountry Indians, see Dorothy V. Jones, *License for Empire: Colonialism by Treaty in Early America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), esp. 21-35, 60-62, 77-92; on the decline in Iroquois strength see Daniel K. Richter, "War and Culture: The Iroquois Experience," *WMQ* 3d. ser., 40 (1983): 551; for a discussion of the extent of Iroquois control over the Susquehanna Valley see Francis Jennings, "'Pennsylvania Indians' and the Iroquois," in *Beyond the Covenant Chain: The Iroquois and Their Neighbors in Indian North America, 1600-1800* ed. Daniel K. Richter and James H. Merrell (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1987), 75-91, and Wallace, *Indians in Pennsylvania*, 108-128.

8. *Pennsylvania Colonial Records* [PaCR] 8: 766-767; Jordan, ed., "Bishop J. C. F. Camerhoff's Narrative of a Journey to Shamokin, Penna.," 175-178; Richard Aquila, *The Iroquois Restoration: Iroquois Diplomacy on the Colonial Frontier, 1701-1754* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1983), 194; Jones, *License for Empire*, 108.

9. Julian Boyd and Robert Taylor, eds., *The Susquehannah Company Papers*

[SCP] 11 vols. (Wilkes-Barre, PA and Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1930-1971), 2: 166-170, 276-277. On the number of Indians at the Lancaster treaty see PaCR 8: 730.

10. Kent, *Susquehanna's Indians*, 66-68; SCP 4: i-vii, 5-6, 121-123. The circumstances surrounding Teedyuscung's death remain a mystery, and scholars have taken different stands on whether he was murdered. Francis Jennings and Anthony F. C. Wallace claim he was murdered; Paul Wallace wrote that his death was accidental. See Jennings, "'Pennsylvania Indians' and the Iroquois," 90-91; Anthony F. C. Wallace, *King of the Delawares: Teedyuscung, 1700-1763* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1949), 258-261; Paul A. W. Wallace, *Indians in Pennsylvania*, 182-183.

11. Joseph H. Coates, ed., "Journal of Isaac Zane to Wyoming, 1758," *PMHB* 30 (1906), 417-426; *Pennsylvania Statutes At Large*, 7: 152-155, 260-261; PaCR Vol 10, 94-96. On the Fair Play Settlers see George D. Wolf, *The Fair Play Settlers of the West Branch Valley, 1769-1784: A Study of Frontier Ethnography* (Harrisburg, PA: Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, 1969).

12. *The Papers of Sir William Johnson*, ed., James Sullivan, et al., 14 vols. (Albany, 1921-1965), 9: 703-713.

13. E. B. O'Callaghan, ed., *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York*, 15 vols. (Albany, 1856-1887), 8: 122.

14. Samuel Harris, "Jornel and field Notes"; J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur, *Letters from An American Farmer and Sketches of Eighteenth-Century America*, ed. Albert E. Stone (New York: Penguin, 1981), 373; Philip Vickers Fithian, *Journal, 1775-1776, Written on the Virginia-Pennsylvania Frontier and in the Army Around New York*, ed. Robert Albion and Leonidas Dodson (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1934), 82.

15. Guy Johnson to the Earl of Dartmouth, March 16, 1775, Colonial Office [C.O.] 5/76, f. 101-102; Meeting between Guy Johnson and 32 Chiefs and Warriors from Chenango and the Branches of the Susquehanna, March 3-5, 1775, C.O. 5/76, f. 114-117, Public Record Office (Kew). A copy of the map used at Fort Stanwix is in War Office [W.O.] 78-302, Public Record Office.

16. Fithian, *Journal*, 1775-1776, *passim*.

17. Cf. Graymont, *The Iroquois in the American Revolution*, esp. 86-128; Anthony F. C. Wallace, *The Death and Rebirth of the Seneca* (1969; reprint New York: Vintage Books, 1972), chap. 5.

18. "Journal of Lieut. William Barton," in Frederick Cook, ed., *Journals of the Military Expedition of Major General John Sullivan Against the Indians in 1779* (Auburn, NY, 1887), 6.

19. "Journal of Lieut. Erkuries Beatty," in Cook, ed., *Journals*, 27.

20. "Journal of Lieut.-Col. Henry Dearborn," in Cook, ed., *Journals*, 70-71.

21. Lester Cappon, ed., *Atlas of Early American History: The Revolutionary Era, 1760-1790* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976): 21; "Journal of Lieut.-Col. Henry Dearborn," in Cook, ed., *Journals*, 71.

22. See, for example, Return of Indians who received Cloathing, Arms, Ammunition &c at Niagara from Novemr 1778 to March 1779, Add. Mss., 21, 769, f. 16, British Library.

23. Butler to Haldimand, September 17, 1778, Add. Mss., 21,765, f. 34-35.

24. Butler to Haldimand, July 21, 1779, Add. Mss., 21,765, f. 82.

25. Butler to Haldimand, July 21, 1779, Add. Mss., 21,765, f. 115-116.

26. *Ibid.*
27. Haldimand to Butler, September 3, 1779, Add. Mss., 21,765, f. 136.
28. Butler to Bolton, September 8, 1779, Add. Mss., 21,760, f. 210.
29. Bolton to Haldimand, September 7, 1779, Add. Mss., 21,760, f. 208–209.
30. Butler to Haldimand, January 20, 1778, Add. Mss., 21,765, f. 9.
31. McDonnell to Butler, July 24, 1779, Add. Mss., 21,765, f. 122.
32. William Johnston Jr. to Guy Johnson, September 17, 1780, Add. Mss., 21,760, f. 366.
33. "Journal of Lieut. William Barton," in Cook, ed., *Journals*, 6.
34. Haldimand to Butler, April 8, 1779, Add. Mss., 21,765, f. 93.
35. Haldimand to Butler, August 1779, Add. Mss., 21,765, f. 134.
36. Butler to Haldimand, September 20, 1779, Add. Mss., 21,765, f. 140.
37. Message of David to Haldimand, August 22, 1779, CO 42/39, f. 247, Public Record Office (Kew).
38. Butler to Haldimand, September 20, 1779, Add. Mss., 21,765, f. 140–141.
39. Bolton to Major Nairne, September 22, 1779, Add. Mss., 21,760, f. 220.
40. Bolton to Haldimand, October 2, 1779, Add. Mss., 21,760, f. 226.
41. Distribution of Corn and Hoes for the Indians of Colonel Johnson's Department, planting at Buffaloe Creek, May 13, 1781, Add. Mss., 21,769, f. 120.
42. Wallace, *The Death and Rebirth of the Seneca*, 194–196.
43. Jack Campisi, "Oneida," in William Sturtevant, ed., *Handbook of North American Indians*, vol. 15, *Northeast*, 484; Franklin B. Hough, ed., *Proceedings of the Commissioners of Indian Affairs, Appointed by Law for the Extinguishment of Indian Titles in the State of New York*, 2 vols. (Albany, 1861); 1: 84–109. The history of post-war land sales is treated in Barbara Graymont, "New York State Indian Policy After the Revolution," *New York History* 57(1976): 438–474.
44. Statement of Way-Way, July 14, 1857, Draper Papers Photostat, Broome County Historical Society.
45. Wallace, *Death and Rebirth of the Seneca*, chap. 7; Mancall, "Environment and Economy," chap. six. The Six Nations of the Grand River, for example, which included refugees from the upper Susquehanna Valley like Way-Way, prospered compared to other nineteenth-century Indian communities in Canada. But by the 1830s many farming families still did not have sufficient storage facilities for their livestock and grain and as late as mid-century at least some relied on seed grants from the Indian Department to raise sufficient crops. See Sally M. Weaver, "Six Nations of the Grand River, Ontario," in Sturtevant, ed., *Handbook of North American Indians*, 15: 525–529.