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THE WYOMING VALLEY BATTLE AND 'MASSACRE'

Images of a Constructed American History

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of History

The College of William & Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

by

Lisa Anne Francavilla

2002

APPROVAL SHEET

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT

The Wyoming Valley surrounds a stretch of the Susquehanna River just as it bends gently from east to west in the northeast corner of present-day Pennsylvania. Within this valley on 3 July 1778, a battle took place between Americans and a combined force of British, Tories, and Indians.

The Wyoming Valley Battle—or Massacre, depending on who is telling the story—has inspired ballads and poems, been included in family histories and recollections, appeared in histories of the American Revolution, Pennsylvania, and the Wyoming region, served as the focal point of community celebrations, and been the subject of etchings and paintings. Each version of the event emphasizes different details and changes, adds, or omits others. Some of the accounts perpetuated misconceptions and misrepresentations about the event until the original identity and purpose had nearly disappeared, leaving something less like history and more like legend behind. Earlier historians romanticized or memorialized the battle, while later scholars tried to discern and disseminate what really happened and why.

Rather than attempt to discover the true image of the battle, this thesis uses the event and several of its versions to explore the creation of a collective memory and a regional historical identity. Examination of some of these versions reveals that each is a mirror of its contemporary social, political, and economic environment. The motives, perspectives, and memories of the authors and creators, whether intentionally or not, altered the battle's historical record. This record illustrates the evolution of Indian/white relations, changing gender roles, and white perceptions of the "others" within the community. It also demonstrates the impact of popular culture, and the role of commemorative ceremonies and monuments in the formation of a collective historical memory.

This study calls into question the reliability not only of secondary sources but of the primary sources on which they depend. Tracing the evolution of the battle's historical record demonstrates that histories are subjective constructions, not objective recollections.

THE WYOMING VALLEY BATTLE AND ‘MASSACRE’

INTRODUCTION

A Battle on the Pennsylvania Frontier

On 1 June, 1778, British Major John Butler and 110 of his Rangers were making their way down the Susquehanna River toward the Wyoming Valley. Their primary goal was to devastate the valley region so that it could no longer support the American army with the crops and livestock it raised on its rich, alluvial soil. Accompanied by "a large force of Six Nations Indians," mostly Seneca and Cayuga, they arrived in the valley on 30 June and camped on a high point of ground.[1] Their location provided them with a sweeping view of the settlement, and scouts sent out soon returned with scalps and eight prisoners. At about the same moment, Loyalist spies arrived to inform Butler of the preparedness of the settlement, estimating a combined force of about eight hundred men assembled in the three forts, Wintermoot, Jenkins, and Forty.[2]

Down in the settlement at Forty Fort, the scouts of American colonels Nathan Denison and Zebulon Butler reported the arrival of the British and the Indians. They saw "about fifty cannoe loads of enemy" and large parties gathered on each side of the river.[3] At this intelligence, the inhabitants of the settlement around Forty Fort became alarmed, some wanting to move into the fort, others wanting to leave the settlement as quickly as possible. After some discussion, the majority of the men decided that they would rather march out to meet the British and Indians than wait in the fort while their homes were destroyed. So when Major Butler demanded the surrender of Forty Fort on July 1, Colonels Butler and Denison refused.

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[1] Barbara Graymont, *The Iroquois in the American Revolution* (New York: Syracuse UP, 1972), 167.

[2] Major John Butler to Lieut.-Colonel Mason Bolton, in *Documents of the American Revolution, 1770-1783, (Colonial Office Series)*, 21 vols., ed. K. G. Davies (Dublin, Ireland: Irish Univ. Press, 1976), 15:165. (Hereafter *DAR*).

[3] Nathan Denison to Jonathan Trumbull, 28 July 1778, in *The Susquehanna Company Papers,* 10 vols., ed. Robert J. Taylor (New York: Cornell University Press, 1969), 7:47. (Hereafter *SCP*).

This refusal perplexed Major Butler, who had already secured the surrender of forts Wintermoot and Jenkins. Assured that their peaceful surrender and promise to remain neutral in the war would ensure their protection from harm by rangers or Indians, the settlers in those two forts had readily and willingly capitulated.[4] Forty Fort's refusal meant that Butler and his army would have to take the fort by force.

The sun was hot when the Americans prepared to march on 3 July. Between three hundred and four hundred men had assembled at Kingston Fort, about three miles from the British camp.[5] By two p.m. Indian foragers in the area had reported settler movements back to Major Butler. That the Americans were approaching "pleased the Indians highly who observed they should be upon equal footing with them in the woods."[6] Around four p.m., the Americans were within one mile of the British. To deceive the Americans into believing that his forces were retreating, Major Butler ordered the Wintermoot and Jenkins forts fired. The Americans continued their progress toward Major Butler's forces without faltering, so he prepared to meet them. Posting his rangers on the left and the

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[4] Graymont, *Iroquois,* 168.
[5] Denison to Trumbull, *SCP,* 7:48.
[6] Butler to Bolton, *DAR,* 15:166.

Indians on the right, a combined force of 564 men lay flat on the ground and silently awaited the approach of the Americans.[7]

Meanwhile, Colonels Butler and Denison formed their soldiers into battle lines, and Butler instructed the men to "stand firm the first shock and the Indians will give way. Everything depends on standing firm the first shock."[8] Marching forward, guns ready, the Americans fired their first volley at two hundred yards. The rangers and Indians continued to lie still without returning fire. By the time the Americans were within a hundred yards of Butler's forces, they had fired three volleys. It was then that Sayenqueraghta, the Seneca war chief, gave the signal for the Indians to fire, and the rangers followed suit.[9] At such close range, the Americans suffered greatly. The Indians closed in around their flanks and an attempt by the American left wing to fall back to a better position was taken by others as a signal for retreat, resulting in a rout. Overpowered and unprepared, the Americans panicked, dropped their guns, and fled in different directions. The Indians were relentless in their pursuit, cutting the Americans down as they ran and tomahawking many who attempted to escape across the river. After half an hour, only a "pathetic remnant" of the Americans made it back to the fort.[10]

When it was over, Colonels Butler and Denison had both survived the battle, but the British and the Indians had the scalps of 227 soldiers who had not. They also had taken five prisoners, and Major Butler remarked later that it was with "the greatest difficulty" that he prevented the Indians from killing more.[11]

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[7] Ibid.

[8] Graymont, *Iroquois*, 169.

[9] Ibid.; Butler to Bolton, *DAR*, 15:166.

[10] Graymont, *Iroquois*, 169-171.

[11] Butler to Bolton, *DAR*, 15:166.

The next morning, Colonel Denison and Major Butler met to discuss the terms of surrender, Colonel Zebulon Butler having gone down river with his family the night before. Denison claimed a loss of 1 lieutenant colonel, 2 majors, 7 captains, 13 lieutenants, 11 ensigns, and 268 privates, a total of 302 men. Butler claimed the loss of one Indian and two rangers, and eight Indians wounded in the battle.[12] The articles of capitulation demanded that the inhabitants lay down their arms and occupy their farms peaceably "preserved entire from hurt;" that the stores be surrendered and the garrisons demolished; that any property taken "from the people called Torris" be returned and they be allowed to live peaceably as well; that the inhabitants together with Denison not take up arms during the present war; and "that Major Butler will use his utmost influence that the private property of the inhabitants shall be preserved entire to them."[13] Soon after the papers were signed and the surrender was completed, Denison left the valley.[14]

Although Major Butler had promised to use his utmost influence to preserve the people and property of the settlement, evidently he was unable to do so, or perhaps his promise was only a ruse. His report to Lieutenant Colonel Bolton on July 8 did not include the conditions of the surrender, but boasted that eight palisaded forts were destroyed, along with all the mills, and about a thousand homes. In addition, he reported that a thousand head of cattle had been killed or driven off, as well as a great number of sheep and swine. Major Butler was also proud that he could "with great truth assure [Bolton] that in the destruction of the settlement not a single person [had] been hurt of the inhabitants but such as were in arms; to those indeed the Indians gave no quarter."[15] By July 28, Denison had heard not only about the destruction of the settlement but that five settlers had been killed on the road as they tried to leave the area. This information he included in his report to Connecticut governor Jonathan Trumbull, along with a promise to return and take up arms again, since the British had broken the articles of capitulation first.

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[12] Ibid.

[13] Graymont, *Iroquois,* 171.

[14] Denison to Trumbull, *SCP,* 7:48.

* * *

There were other battles along the frontier as the war continued. But something about the Wyoming Valley Battle struck a chord and its story soon took on a life of its own.

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[15] Butler to Bolton, *DAR*, 15:166.

CHAPTER I

"A True Relation"

The devastation of the Wyoming Valley following the battle was complete. Few buildings were left standing, crops were destroyed, and the river and roads were full of men, women, and children "flying for their lives."[1] The region was abandoned and the settlers "thoroughly demoralized," believing that the "whole country [had] broke loose."[2] Stories of more settler murders and other depredations at the hands of the Indians continued to circulate among those fleeing the region. Anxieties increased and the stories combined with the additional hardships suffered in flight through the wilderness were carried to the cities by the survivors. The personal accounts of these suffering witnesses to the battle at Wyoming soon appeared in newspapers throughout the colonies.

The *Connecticut Courant* printed its first story about the battle on July 21. Written on July 15 by Samuel Avery—possibly a relative of Christopher, who was killed in the battle—it details the first appearance of the British in the valley, the location of the battle, and the number of soldiers on each side. Samuel recalled that Colonel Butler marched out "with about 400" and "supposed the Enemy was about equal in number."[3] This is consistent with the reports of both Major Butler and Colonel Denison. But here the story changes. Samuel believed the battle lasted one or two hours, with only about 30 American soldiers surviving, and that the enemy party consisted of "Tories chiefly." In addition, he placed the population of the valley at about five thousand inhabitants, with about half of them having been killed or taken prisoner.[4]

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[1] William Maclay to Timothy Matlack (Secretary of the Supreme Executive Council), 12 July 1778, *SCP*, 7:45-46.

[2] Ibid.

[3] *Connecticut Courant*, 21 July 1778, p. 1 col. 1-3.

The only difference in Samuel's story that is easy to understand is in time. If Samuel was fighting and then trying to escape, it is possible that the battle would have seemed longer to him. Even so, Samuel's version of the battle was not tragic enough for the papers. By far, the most popular and widely distributed version of the battle came out of Poughkeepsie on July 20, 1778.

The Poughkeepsie story first appeared in the *Connecticut Courant* on July 28 and two days later in Philadelphia in the *Pennsylvania Packet.* From there it went to the August 3 edition of the *Boston Gazette,* the August 8 edition of New York's *Royal Gazette*, and finally came to rest in the *North Carolina Gazette* on September 4. Within two months of this battle on the Pennsylvania frontier, every American colony had heard the Poughkeepsie story.[5]

The story was presented as an account from the "distressed refugees from the Wyoming Settlement...who escaped the general massacre." A prelude provided a brief description of the conflict between the Connecticut and Pennsylvania colonies, and informed the reader that Wyoming was inhabited by Connecticut settlers. After the prelude the narrative takes a decidedly dramatic and exaggerated turn. The author described the Wyoming Valley as prosperous, peaceful, and beautifully situated on the easily-navigable

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[4] Ibid.

[5] All of these versions of the Poughkeepsie story are identical, thus, in the interest of saving space, no other footnote citations will be made while its text is described and discussed.

Susquehanna River. The fertility of the land was suitable to almost any crop and capable of producing in abundance. In fact, the land was so fruitful that it not only kept the Continental Army in provisions, it was also able to furnish the army with a thousand soldiers and to garrison four forts. The narrative's heroes, Colonel Nathan Denison and Colonel Zebulon Butler, were in one of these forts, together with "upwards of four hundred soldiers."

The narrative then backtracks slightly to remind the reader that "Tories and Indians had given some disturbance to the settlements last year," but that after the skirmishes and battle at Schohary, they had been dispersed and the "Tories [had] concealed themselves" among the different settlements. When these Tories-in-hiding had been discovered, twenty-seven of them were arrested and eighteen were sent to Connecticut for interrogation. The others were freed for lack of evidence, and it was soon believed by the inhabitants that they had joined the enemy and were working to raise the Indians against the settlers in the valley. The author explained that the inhabitants frequently had reason to believe the Indians were plotting against them, but that the Indians would always reassure them that they had no designs upon them. The truth was finally revealed by one Indian whom the settlers had plied with alcohol.

In March, "appearances became more alarming," driving settlers from within thirty miles to the forts at Wyoming. By April and May "strolling parties of Indians and Tories" were openly terrorizing the settlers, "robbing and plundering" at will; and in June they attacked a small group of men working in a field and killed the wife and children of one of the Tory prisoners taken to Connecticut. With these details, the author proved that alliances no longer mattered and no one was safe from these marauding bands.

Having described recent past events, the narrative proceeded to the battle and subsequent massacre. John Butler was now elevated to colonel and arrived in the valley on the first of July with a force of 1,600. The reader was told in an aside that this man was a Connecticut Tory and a cousin to Zebulon, a detail that increased the level of treachery later on.

By July 2, the enemy had appeared on the hill behind Kingston Fort, terrifying the women and children who fled inside. John Butler demanded Exeter Fort, which being full of "treacherous Tories," surrendered willingly. He next attacked Lackawanna Fort, which could offer only a little resistance before it surrendered.[6] Jenkins, his family, and several others in this fort were killed in "a barbarous manner" and most of the women and children were taken prisoner.

On Friday, July 3, Colonel Zebulon Butler marched from Wilkesbury Fort to Kingston Fort with about four hundred men, leaving a small number behind as guards. John Butler sent a flag demanding surrender, to which "cousin" Zebulon answered that "he should not surrender, but was ready to receive them." A second flag was sent calling for immediate surrender or the fort would be "stormed, plundered, and burnt with all its contents." Zebulon proposed a parley instead, to which John agreed.

With this purpose in mind, Zebulon marched out toward the designated place of parley with "400 well-armed men." Finding no one there, he and his men proceeded toward the base of the hill where they saw a flag. As they advanced toward it, it receded, until the Americans realized that they had been led into an ambush. Given "the great disproportion of 1600 to 400," Zebulon and his soldiers "bravely stood and returned fire for three quarters of an hour" with such "briskness and resolution" that the "enemy began to give way." The Tory force was "on the point of retiring" when one of Zebulon's men cried out, "either through treachery or cowardice," that the Colonel had ordered a retreat. This caused the American soldiers to stop firing. They became panicked and confused and a "total rout ensued." The Americans tried to escape to Wilkesbury, but the enemy "pursued them with the fury of Devils" and only seventy of the four hundred men made it back to safety.

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[6] These forts often had two or even three names in various sources. Kingston Fort was also known as Forty Fort, Exeter as Wintermoot, and Lackawanna was Jenkins Fort. Wilkesbury was referred to alternately as Wilkesbarre or Wyoming Fort.

On July 4, Colonel John Butler sent 196 scalps into Kingston Fort and kept a continual fire upon it. When Colonel Denison took a flag and went to Exeter Fort to know John Butler's terms for surrender, he answered "THE HATCHET." Denison returned to the fort and continued to defend it until July 5, when he and his last few men could hold out no longer. When the fort fell into the hands of Butler and his Indians, the real massacre began.

"The Enemy" took some of the inhabitants in the Kingston Fort prisoner, then shut the rest within the fort and burned them alive. "These infernals" next crossed the river to Wilkesbury, "inhumanly butchered with every circumstance of horrid cruelty" the seventy continentals, shut up the women and children, and "set fire to them and they all perished together in the flames." Next, they destroyed all the other buildings of the settlements, except those belonging to Tories, and rendered all "a scene of desolation and horror almost beyond description, parrallel, or credibility."

Lest any readers doubted the veracity of the narrative, they were reassured that if it were not for the stories of the survivors, it would "be impossible to believe that human nature could be capable of such prodigeous enormity." But the author continued with still more "particular acts of distinguished" barbarity. Tory soldier Thomas Terry killed his entire family himself. Another Tory, Partial Terry, had already threatened his own father many times that he "hoped to wash his hands in his hearts blood." The "monster" soon got his wish, killing his family, taking their scalps, and decapitating his father. Captains James Bedlock, Robert Durgee, and Samuel Ransom had been taken prisoner by the enemy. Bedlock was stripped, "stuck full of splinters of pine knots," and set on fire, with Durgee and Ransom thrown on top of him and held down with pitchforks. Colonel Denison was seen surrounded by the enemy and was also presumed murdered.

In the last bit of testimony to the treachery of the Tories, "it is said" that Zebulon Butler had written many letters to General Washington and Congress about the situation on the frontier. All of his letters had been intercepted by Tories. The reader was then told that help must be given to these survivors, and warned that to withhold aid was to bring upon oneself a similar fate. Finally, the narrative finished with a few words to remind the reader of the devastation that the one thousand soldiers from the Wyoming Valley would suffer once they learned that they had lost "all that was dear to them in life."

The next mention of the Wyoming Valley appeared in the *Pennsylvania Packet* on August 18, 1778. A brief story informed readers that Colonel Hartley and his forces were stationed at the fork of the Susquehanna providing protection while a few settlers gathered the pitiful remnants of their harvest. The story of the battle and massacre lingered in the news, and periodic calls to aid the survivors motivated people in other regions to collect funds for their support. Some of these calls were heard as far away as Williamsburg, where the *Virginia Gazette* challenged its readers to match or exceed the funds raised in other parishes.[7]

Unfortunately, the authorship of the Poughkeepsie story is unknown. But it bears a striking resemblance to a story printed elsewhere. In the London *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser*, "Part of a letter from Philadelphia" appeared on July 12, 1778. The author described a peaceful and flourishing settlement where the lives of "humble families" were torn apart by the ravages of frontier warfare. This letter lacked the brutality reflected in the Poughkeepsie story, but the course it followed and the images that were included in it were very similar. The letter was printed far too early for it to have been about Wyoming. Atlantic crossings often took several weeks, thus the information simply could not have reached London so soon.[8] Possibly it reflected knowledge of John Butler's attack and destruction of the settlement at Cobleskill, New York, which had taken place on 30 May 1778. Whatever its origin and inspiration, it is possible that both stories, so similar in detail, shared the same author. Clearly, they were both highly effective uses of propaganda. The Philadelphia letter must have added fuel to the ongoing debate in Parliament, where opposition to the war, and particularly the use of Indians in battle, was heating up.[9] In the colonies, the Poughkeepsie story encouraged charity and fired a growing American patriotism. Perhaps that is why it became the recognized historical account, from the moment it first appeared in print, of what became known as the Wyoming Valley Massacre.

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[7] *Virginia Gazette*, Dixon & Hunter, 9 October 1778, p. 3 col. 2.

[8] Ian K. Steele, *An Exploration of Communication and Community* (New York & Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1986), 274-75. Steele explains that pre-1740 eastbound Atlantic crossings took from three to fourteen weeks depending on the season and the point of departure. This rate decreased over the years as the number of ships making the crossing improved the average passage time. A conversation on 14 May, 2002 with the Master Printer at Colonial Williamsburg, Virginia, put the crossing time at twenty to thirty days in the years just before the war. During the war it is likely that the average passage time would have lengthened again.

[9] Peter Oliver in *The American Revolution: Writings from the War of Independence*, ed. John Rhodehamel (New York: Library of America, 2001), 487-89; The letter was addressed to "Mr. John Wilkinson," possibly a pseudonym for opposition leader John Wilkes.

In 1802, an "Account of the dreadful devastations of the Wyoming Settlements in July, 1778" made its first appearance as part of a collection of stories highlighting Indian hostilities on the frontiers, and in 1804 Supreme Court justice John Marshall included an account of the battle in his *Life of George Washington.* Based primarily on the details given in the Poughkeepsie story, these retellings elaborated more on the political events leading up to the battle, and the 1802 version introduced a new character into the plot, Joseph Brant. [10]

This version of the story began with General Schuyler's attempts to convince Congress of the imminent danger of Indian attacks on the New York, Pennsylvania, and Virginia frontiers. Arguing that since a gathering of Mohawks, Onondagas, Cayugas, and Senecas "will commence Hostilities against us as soon as they can," it would be better if the Americans struck first. Congress failed to heed Schuyler's call, and the Indians and their growing body of Tory allies "commenced their horrid depredations and hostilities upon the back settlements." Colonel John Butler and Joseph Brant commanded these forces. "Brandt" was "an half-blood Indian of desperate courage," said to be "ferocious and cruel beyond example." Indian hostilities and Tory spies led Butler and Brant to the Wyoming settlement.[11]

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[10] Joseph Brant, also known as Thayendenegea, was a Mohawk Indian, translator, war chief, and statesman. Well-educated and a Christian, Brant dedicated his life to the education, advancement, and protection of his people. He and some of the other leaders of the Six Nations believed an alliance with the British would secure their lands from further American encroachment. During the war, Brant led bands of Indians, combined with British and Tory soldiers, in the destruction of several frontier settlements. For more on Brant and British/Indian alliance negotiations, see Graymont, *Iroquois*, esp. 115-61; and William L. Stone, *Life of Joseph Brant-Thayendenegea: Including the Border Wars of the American Revolution...*2 vols. (Buffalo, NY: Phinney & Co., 1851); and Isabel T. Kelsay, *Joseph Brant, 1743-1807: A Man of Two Worlds* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse Univ., Press, 1984).

Explaining briefly the reasons the Connecticut settlers believed their charter gave possession of the territory to them, the author moved right into a description of the valley and the "unhappiness" the settlers had with "a considerable mixture of royalists among them." In language that epitomizes the popular literary Romanticism of the day, the author writes,

> the two parties were actuated by sentiments of the most violent animosity, which was not confined to particular families or places; but creeping within the roofs and to the hearths and floors, where it was least to be expected, served equally to poison the sources of domestic security and happiness, and to cancel the laws of nature and humanity.[12]

The author changed the tenor of the Poughkeepsie story, but the treachery remained and became even more insidious. He also changed the emphasis: the Tories were still part of the story, but now the Indians were responsible for the hostilities, minus the Tory pressure pushing them to it.

Events move in the same sequence as the Poughkeepsie story, maintaining the same dramatic and romantic style of expression thoughout. In this version, however, when

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[11] [Gordon Ramsey?], "Account of the Dreadful Devastations of the Wyoming Settlement, in July 1778," in *Affecting history of the dreadful distresses of Frederic Manheim's family...and an account of the destruction of the settlements at Wyoming* (Bennington, VT: Collier & Stockwell, 1802), 25.

[12] Ibid., 26.

Zebulon Butler went out to parley, the four hundred well-armed men who followed were there only to protect him, not to fight; and he pursued the flag because he wanted to reassure the flag holder that he meant no harm, not because he was looking for John Butler.

After the battle and rout, "the enemy, to sadden the drooping spirits of the weak remaining garrison, sent in for their contemplation, the bloody scalps of a hundred and ninety-six of their late friends."[13] The now-familiar story continued, wrapped in the same emotive language, only now exclamation points appeared and the words dripped with sympathetic tears.

John Marshall's account came directly from the Poughkeepsie story as well. But to it he added some rather revealing commentary, expressing opinions about the past that also reflected issues and beliefs of his own time. First, there is little doubt that Marshall laid a good deal of the blame for what occurred at the feet of Congress. The "acts of the government did not correspond with the vigor of its resolutions...the necessary preparations were not made, and the inhabitants of the frontiers remained insufficiently protected."[14] It was true that Congress had been slow to respond to the petitions of the settlers who asked repeatedly for permission and funds to muster military units for their defense. Having finally been granted permission, the settlers had gathered, trained, and outfitted the soldiers, only to have them almost immediately ordered by Congress to join General Washington. Once again the settlers were defenseless and they presented new petitions. Congress did not respond to these until it was nearly too late, and even then the settlers were told that the soldiers must outfit themselves. Marshall did not elaborate on these details in his account, but the records of Congress reflect its hesitancy to act on these petitions.[15] His position as Supreme Court justice acquainted him with the manner in which Congress handled such matters. Marshall's comments were also indicative of the ongoing tensions between the legislative and judicial branches of the new government. He may even have been drawing on memories of his experiences as a soldier at Valley Forge in late 1777, where many of the Wyoming Valley soldiers may have spent the winter.[16]

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[13] Ibid., 30.

[14] John Marshall, *Life of Washington, Commander in Chief of the American Forces...and First President of the United States* (Philadelphia: C. P. Wayne, 1804), 555.

Second, in Marshall's opinion Colonel Denison surrendered because he believed that the British could be trusted, never supposing "it possible that the unresisting could be coolly and deliberately massacred...He misunderstood the character of those into whose hands he had fallen."[17] This comment reflected the suspicion with which many Americans still viewed the British in 1804, particularly in light of renewed hostilities between the British and French in 1803. Naval warfare between these two powers disrupted American trade as routes were blocked and American ships, though neutral at that time, were captured. Even as Marshall was writing, there was ongoing debate as to how America should respond and whose, if either, side the country should take.[18]

Marshall ended his relation of the Wyoming Valley battle by observing, "of such crimes are we capable, when the torch of civil discord is once lighted among us, and all the endearing social ties which sweeten life are made to yield to political fury."[19] This statement, while a suitable end for his relation of the battle, was undoubtedly also commentary on political issues that had led to conflict and division within the new, and fragile, American government.[20]

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[15] For more about the acts of Congress, the petitions of those in the settlements, and the sequence of events leading up to the battle, see *SCP* and Wyoming Historical and Geological Society, *The Massacre of Wyoming* (Wilkesbarre, PA: R. Baur & Son, 1895).

[16] Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., ed., *The Almanac of American History* (Greenwich, CT: Putnam Gosset, 1993), 177-78, 181.

[17] Marshall, *Life of Washington*, 559.

[18] Schlesinger, *Almanac*, 179-81; and James A. Henretta, David Brody, & Lynn Duminel, *America: A Concise History*, 2nd edition (Boston & New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2002), 233-34.

Finally, it is in Marshall's account of the battle that the first references to American negotiations with the Indians appeared. Marshall stated that there was "a considerable degree of solicitude to engage the numerous tribes of Indians on the frontier, either to take part with them in the war, or to preserve a neutrality," but American negotiators were unsuccessful because the British had offered better presents.[21] He went on to explain that during these negotiations Indian "barbarities" had already occurred on the frontier and that the entire region from the Mohawk River to the Ohio was "threatened with the tomahawk and the scalping knife."[22] With these words Marshall expressed the fear that white American society still felt towards Indians in the early nineteenth century as hostilities between white settlers and Indians continued on the westward-moving frontier.

Whether it was the Poughkeepsie story, its 1802 version, or Marshall's biography of Washington that first found its way to Europe is unknown. But somehow the story of the Wyoming Valley battle eventually made its way to Thomas Campbell, a poet of great renown, in Scotland. His *Gertrude of Wyoming* was first printed in 1809, and when Sir Walter Scott decided to publish a selection of his literary reviews in 1841, he included his 1809 commentary on Campbell's work.

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[19] Marshall, *Life of Washington*, 560.
[20] Schlesinger, *Almanac*, 177-83.
[21] Marshall, *Life of Washington*, 554.
[22] Ibid.

Campbell included all the ingredients necessary to create an epic poem. His paradise was the pristine, peaceful valley with its abundant plant and animal life, and simple, honest, industrious people. The heroine, Gertrude, was a sweet girl who doted on her widowed father, Albert, the patriarch of the settlement. A foundling boy, having been brought to Albert by a friendly Indian chief, grows up with Gertrude, and the two marry once he has returned from traveling in Europe on his quest for an education.

Neither their wedded bliss nor this utopian settlement were meant to last, however, and soon news came to Albert, by way of the same friendly Indian chief, that

> The mammoth comes—the foe,—the Monster Brandt,—
> with all his howling desolating band /...Accursed Brandt! he left
> of all my tribe / Nor man, nor child, nor thing of living birth; /
> No! not the dog that watch'd my household hearth / Escaped
> that night of blood, upon our plains! / All perish'd!—I alone am
> left on earth![23]

As the enemy approached, "Whoop after whoop with rack the ear assail'd," and the settlers, who intended to go out to meet them, were turned back toward the safety of the forts by Albert. Rather than end the poem with the battle and its aftermath, Campbell chose instead to end it with the mournful funeral of Albert and Gertrude, who had been shot by Indians lurking in the woods just outside the fort's walls—symbols of innocence and virtue destroyed by Indian treachery.

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[23] Thomas Campbell, *Gertrude of Wyoming; or, The Pennsylvanian Cottage* (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1858), 62.

Campbell's epic drew praise for its imagery but criticism for its subject matter, particularly in Britain. In his critique in the May 1809 issue of the *Quarterly Review*, Sir Walter Scott first explained that the setting of the poem was the Wyoming Valley in America, which was "completely laid waste by an incursion of Indians and civilized savages under a leader named Brandt" in 1778.[24] While Scott agreed with the author that it was a worthy topic for a poem, he expressed disappointment that one of Britain's own should choose it. Scott argued that "Britain was disgraced by the atrocities of her pretended adherents" and that the poet, unlike the historian, "may well excuse himself from selecting a subject dishonourable to his own land."[25] That being said, Scott wondered why the author did not have Albert and Gertrude witness more of the destruction before their deaths, thus affording "a more lengthened detail" of "those numerous groups who must necessarily have accompanied the flight or remained to perish with their dwellings."[26] Scott believed that the piece lacked force because the author failed to add more about "the general scene of tumult and horror."[27]

Obviously, Scott was quite familiar with the story of the Wyoming Valley, and his commentary indicates that many of his readers were as well. There is no mention of the British army, and neither the term 'Loyalist' nor 'Tory' appears in the poem. In fact, if one had no prior knowledge of the battle, a reader of the poem would believe that only Brant and his Indians were responsible for it. That Scott chastised Campbell for his choice in subject, and also expressed regret over the omission of what he believed were important details, indicates that by 1809 the famous Poughkeepsie story, and its 1802 retelling, were recognized internationally as American history reliably recorded.

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[24] Scott, Walter, Sir, *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays of Sir Walter Scott, Collected by Himself* (Philadelphia: Cary & Hart, 1841), 197.
[25] Ibid., 198.
[26] Ibid., 205.
[27] Ibid., 198.

In the 1858 re-publication of *Gertrude of Wyoming*, Campbell tried to correct his mistake about Brant's involvement in the battle. In a note at the back of the text, Campbell stated that "he took the character of Brandt from the common histories of England, all of which represent him as a bloody and bad man (even among savages), and chief agent in the horrible desolation of Wyoming."[28] Campbell explained that this misrepresentation was not corrected until many years later when he met Brant's son, who showed him documents proving that the "accounts of Brandt's cruelties at Wyoming...were gross errors, and that in point of fact Brandt was not even present."[29] Nevertheless, the name remained within the poem exactly as it was first written, and Campbell urged readers to remember that it represented a character only, not the real man. By this point, however, Brant had been so firmly linked to the Wyoming Valley battle that he had become a permanent part of its historical record.

* * *

Earlier writings about the Wyoming Valley battle recounted the event as historically significant, but the emphasis was placed on memorializing the settlement and eulogizing the people slain there. In the mid-nineteenth century, this emphasis shifted slightly as historians tried to correct the exaggerated horrors of the Poughkeepsie story. Instead, their efforts actually compounded the problem.

Joseph Brant continued to appear as a prominent figure in the regional history written by Charles Miner and published in 1845. Miner's history stated that the main body of Indians with Major Butler was under Brant. The rest of the account of the battle is a combination of elements from the Poughkeepsie story and details provided to Miner by a few aged survivors and numerous descendants of those in the battle. It is in Miner's history that Queen Esther appeared.[30]

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[28] Campbell, *Gertrude of Wyoming*, 93.

[29] Ibid., 93-94.

Miner described Queen Esther as "a fury in the form of a woman, [who] assumed the office of executioner with death maul, or tomahawk."[31] Presiding over a group of sixteen or eighteen prisoners who had been arranged in a circle around a large stone, Queen Esther sang and danced as she killed each in turn. This story had apparently been told to Miner by the descendants of Lebbeus Hammond and Joseph Elliot, who had escaped the circle amid a hail of bullets and tomahawks. The next morning when Forty Fort was turned over to the British, Miner states that Queen Esther marched in at the head of the Indian contingent. In a footnote, Miner acknowledges historian "Col." Stone's assertion that Queen Esther could not have carried on in such a manner, "especially as represented at the Bloody Rock."[32] However, Miner believed that Stone "may have misapprehended the person" because it appeared that "she and Col. Denison were acquainted" and he reminded readers of the "kindred atrocities perpetrated by women during the French Revolution."[33] Miner believed that history had proven that women were more than capable of such behavior.

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[30] Charles Miner, *History of Wyoming, In a Series of Letters, from Charles Miner, to his son, William Penn Miner, Esq.* (Philadelphia: J. Crissy, 1845), 222.

[31] Ibid., 226.

[32] Ibid., 232; "Col" Stone is William L. Stone, *Life of Joseph Brant.*

[33] Ibid.

In his *Pictorial Field-Book of the Revolution*, Benson Lossing stated that Brant and his warriors, together with various groups of British and Tories, were active on the upper waters of the Susquehanna. However, he did not include Brant among those at Wyoming. Lossing believed adamantly that Brant had been wronged and his name permanently damaged by the assertion of other writers that he had been responsible for the atrocities, despite evidence to the contrary.[34]

Lossing did include Queen Esther, though, and provided further information about her true identity. He explained that her real name was Catherine Montour and "she was a native of Canada, and her father was one of the French governors, probably Frontenac."[35] She was said to have been taken captive and carried into Seneca country and married a Seneca war chief sometime around 1730. Her "superior mind gave her great ascendancy over the Senecas" and she "accompanied delegates of the Six Nations to Philadelphia on several occasions, where her refinement of manners and attractive person made her an object of much regard."[36] Like Miner, Lossing acknowledged Stone's denial that Queen Esther was at Wyoming or behaved in the manner described. But he sided with Miner whose proof that she was known to Colonel Denison appeared conclusive.

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[34] Benjamin J. Lossing, *The Pictorial Field-Book of the Revolution...History, Biography, Scenery, Relics, and Traditions of the War for Independence...* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1851), 354.

[35] Ibid., 357.

[36] Ibid. The identity of Queen Esther remains unknown. What does seem certain is that Lossing, Miner, and Stone had all confused Madame Montour with Catherine/Catrina Montour. Mme. Montour, was believed to have been the daughter of a French governor who lived among the Indians, was educated, had served as an interpreter at a conference in Philadelphia in 1727, and was believed to have died shortly after 1748. Historians have speculated that Catherine/Catrina was either a grandniece of Mme. Montour, a sister-in-law, sister, or no relation at all. See John G. Freeze, "Madame Montour" in *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 3 (1879): 79-87; and William H. Hunter, "Couc, Elizabeth? (La Chenette, Techenet, Montour)" in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*. vol. 3. Ed. Frances G. Halpenny (Toronto: Univ. Of Toronto, 1965), 147.

In 1858, George Peck wrote his own version of the history of the Wyoming Valley. In it he recognized the exaggerations of the Poughkeepsie story, but defended those who had believed them, stating that it was no more than could be expected, given the reputation of the Tories and the Indians for savagery. Still, he believed it unfortunate that men like Miner and Marshall had not been more thorough in checking their facts before passing them along as historically accurate.[37] In his work, Peck went to great lengths to demonstrate that Brant was not at Wyoming but was indeed wreaking havoc elsewhere. As for Queen Esther, he sees "no good reason for doubting the part attributed to Catharine Montour, or Queen Esther, in the affair of Bloody Rock, in the popular traditions of Wyoming."[38]

Each of these writers did what he believed was necessary to authenticate his history. Miner visited every living survivor of the battle or sought out their descendants. He wandered the countryside, visiting the places where the forts had once stood, the location of the fight, the small island where a few fleeing soldiers had taken refuge only to be discovered and killed, the homes of Denison and Zebulon Butler, and the monument erected in 1842. Lossing visited many of the same sites and included sketches of them as well as drawings of battle artifacts to support his history. And Peck scrutinized numerous primary documents, compared the writings of others, and either supported or refuted their conclusions in his version.

Authors who followed these three added to the colorful mix of fact and folklore. For example, Stuart Pearce's *Annals of Luzerne County*, published in 1866, included accounts of Tory men brutally killing their American patriot brothers; wives and children fleeing the valley tormented by visions of the "mutilated and unburied" remains of their loved ones; accounts of the humiliations and tortures of captives as witnessed by others from afar; and Queen Esther, that "wholesale murderess, and disgusting squaw," riding away on a stolen horse waving seventeen scalps on a stick and wearing a stack of a dozen bonnets on her head.[39] Where Pearce got these last details is unclear, but what is evident from the work of all the writers who tackled this event, each professed a desire to get at, in Miner's words, "an exact picture" of what had really taken place on that day in July 1778. And each argued with the others that his was the most accurate account of the Wyoming Valley battle.

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[37] George Peck, *Wyoming; Its History, Stirring Incidents, and Romantic Adventures* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1858), 58-59.
[38] Ibid., 290.

While the historical debate raged throughout the nineteenth century over who was or was not present at the battle, the people living in the valley in 1877 decided it was time to plan the ceremony that would mark the commemoration of the battle's one-hundredth anniversary. With the motto "An honest tale speeds best when plainly told," the leaders of the community set out to preserve the historical account of the battle and to record their activities as they organized the commemoration.[40]

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[39] Stuart Pearce, *Annals of Luzerne County; A Record of Interesting Events, Traditions, and Anecdotes...to 1866* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1866), 132-35.

[40] Wesley Johnson, ed., *Wyoming Memorial Battle & Massacre, 1778-1878* (Wilkesbarre, PA: Beardslee, 1882), frontispiece.

CHAPTER II

"That we may bequeath to future generations..."

On a warm day in June 1877 Steuben Jenkins and Calvin Parsons happened to meet on the court-house grounds in Wilkesbarre.[1] Their conversation slowly turned to the upcoming centennial of the battle in which the ancestors of both men had died. The notion to hold some sort of memorial ceremony had come up in previous conversations among other townspeople but nothing had been done. As Jenkins and Parsons talked, they resolved to begin planning for a ceremony at once. They immediately sent out invitations for a meeting to discuss the possibilities on 4 July 1877.

Ten of the men invited were able to attend. They were all descendants of men who had marched out to meet the enemy a hundred years before. Jenkins and Parsons each in his turn rose to address the others, urging immediate action to make the anniversary "one to be long remembered in Wyoming, by renewing in the minds of the rising generation a just appreciation" of their ancestors "and teaching them to emulate the example of those brave and heroic men."[2] They all agreed to create a formal association that would undertake the planning and execution of this singular event to take place within a year.

The first order of business was to inform the local press of the creation of the association and its intentions. The press release stated that there was no desire to make this an exclusive event, explaining that "history is the property of the nation, and the object is to make this a national celebration, as the event which it is to commemorate was of national importance."[3] The recent years of economic hardship following the Panic of 1873 had resulted in business failures, strikes, lockouts, and riots.[4] The region was beset by hard times and a commemorative ceremony to remind the local people of their history, and perhaps draw in some tourist dollars, was just what was needed. The press release encouraged the attendance of all citizens on 25 July to learn more of what was planned.

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[1] Wilkes-Barre, as it is presently spelled, usually appears as one word in earlier sources. When I refer to an earlier source, I shall use its spelling.

[2] Johnson, *Wyoming Memorial Battle*, 29.

The next meeting was well attended by the public who listened attentively to the report of the new organization, now known as the Wyoming Centennial Association. The association proposed that "the exercises of the first day be of a solemn and impressive character [and] those of the second day of a dignified, patriotic rejoicing."[5] They introduced their organizational leadership and the standing committees that would attend to various responsibilities. All together, eighty-seven of the region's business, legal, religious, and former military leaders would oversee the event. There was an official invitations committee, and several men to solicit orators and original poetic and musical compositions; some were to gather historical documents and artifacts for display, others to arrange for the grounds and buildings, refreshments, processions, publications, receptions, and decorations. Suggestions were welcome, provided they were submitted through one of the association's members. The meeting was adjourned and the association set off to its work, planning to meet again in October so that members could report on their progress.

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[3] Ibid., 34.

[4] Wayland Fuller Dunaway, *A History of Pennsylvania* (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1935), 532-33; William E. Whyte, *Centennial Chronology of the County of Luzerne, 1776-1876* (Pittstone, PA: D. R. Huntington, 1886), 93-95; Schlesinger, *Almanac*, 336.

[5] Johnson, *Wyoming Memorial Battle*, 38.

Apparently, there was not as much progress to report as some desired. At the 11 October meeting, all were reminded how important it was to keep moving forward and "to awaken an interest in the public mind by keeping the matter well advertised in the newspapers."[6] More railroad strikes and riots had occurred in August, the National Guard had been called in, and just a few days before the meeting, fire had swept through the nearby town of Nanticoke.[7] Regional morale was terribly low. It simply would not do if the public thought that these men were all talk and willing to let the project fall out of sight. Everyone was counting on the success of the event to lift their collective spirits and fill their pocketbooks. After unanimously agreeing upon these sentiments, the men next moved to change the name of their organization from "centennial" to "One Hundredth," because centennial was too frequently used and might draw ridicule rather than respect to the ceremony. The motion was made "to reform this thing...by eliminating this much abused exotic word" and substituting "words derived from our sturdy English ancestors."[8]

The scope of the program began simply, but expanded considerably as the days and weeks passed and word of the event spread. In October the program was to begin with an oration, an historical address, poems, hymns, and music, all given from the balcony of a log cabin to be erected "in imitation of the homes of our fathers" on the fairgrounds.[9] After these opening ceremonies, the people would form a procession complete with banners and mourning draperies and march to the battleground monument, where they would listen to more hymns and solemn dirges, then return to the fairgrounds for refreshments. By November the association decided to add to the program a "representation of some of the tragic events, such as Queen Esther's horrid orgie and murder on the bloody rock."[10] Someone suggested that the extensive collections of Indian relics owned by Jenkins and Dr. Hollister be exhibited as another attraction. All the bands within a reasonable distance were invited to attend and perform, and the members of the Grand Army of the Republic were expected to attend as well. In December the gentlemen added the Scranton Veteran Soldiers Association to the list of participants, as well as Captain Parker and his gunners who would arrange an artillery display. The project was certainly having its desired effect on the regional community, but as the program expanded to include more participants and performances, the finance committee began to get nervous and asked the association just how much they intended to spend. They suddenly realized that they would have to monitor expenditures more carefully, a necessity they had not anticipated.

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[6] Ibid., 41.

[7] Dunaway, *A History of Pennsylvania*, 532-33; Whyte, *Centennial Chronology*, 93-95.

[8] Johnson, *Wyoming Memorial Battle*, 42.

[9] Ibid.

Still, the prudent enthusiasm of the association continued to grow and the group began to move faster in its preparations. At every step the members emphasized the need to "place before the multitude such an exhibition as is not likely to occur again," to convince people that "this is their last chance of witnessing so grand a reverential display." The association "must agitate the matter—agitate—agitate, keep the thing red hot, and all will be well."[11] A solemn memorial ceremony would still take place, but they hoped to make it a successful financial venture as well. The larger the crowds the more money spent and the more attention drawn to the valley, demonstrating to the nation both its natural beauty and potential for industry.

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[10] Ibid., 45.
[11] Ibid., 50.

In March 1878, Colonel Charles Dorrance proudly reported to the association that he had just returned from meeting with President Rutherford B. Hayes, who told Dorrance that he had always wanted to visit the "far-famed Wyoming Valley" and if Congress was not still in session in July, he planned to do so.[12] Someone observed dryly that Congress seemed to act with or without the president's approval, but all agreed to wait until the president confirmed his visit before planning for his attendance.

They next turned their attention to the consideration of an Indian presence at the event. The Onondaga Indians had proposed sending a delegation, but the association wanted to know how much it would cost and "how many of the braves [could] be induced to come here if it is decided to bring them at all."[13] All too aware of the continued violence between Indians and the U. S. Army in the West, particularly of the defeat of General Custer at Little Big Horn in June 1876, the association knew they would have to address this issue carefully. Asking for more specific information from Chief Thomas Webster would delay the need to decide and possibly provide an excuse in the event the association had to decline the proposal.

By April the preparations were coming together. The exhibits of Indian relics and of historic documents and artifacts would reside within existing buildings on the fairgrounds, a map to depict the way the valley appeared at the time of the battle was being prepared, arrangements had been made with the railroads and canal companies to offer half fares to those thousands expected to attend, and at last, with so much accomplished, the ceremonial program was falling into place. The following press release appeared in early May;

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[12] Ibid., 57.

[13] Ibid., 58.

> The quiet vales of Wyoming and the busy streets of Wilkesbarre will re-echo with the recital of the thrilling story by orator and poet, with the thunders of artillery, with the tramp of thousands...over the plain where the battle commenced at historic Wintermute, ending at Queen Esther's Bloody Rock...the oration will be delivered which tells of the surrender, the broken faith of the treaty, the horrid butchery, and the wild hurrying to and fro of the terror-stricken women and children and aged men to escape the torture of fire and the ruthless scalping knife.[14]

On 4 July the commemoration would continue, moving from the fairgrounds to the city of Wilkesbarre. A spectacular pageant would tell the history of the valley, beginning with the occupation of the Indians, through the introduction of Christianity, the Pennamite War, the battle and massacre in 1778, the coming of the post-rider, stage coach, and the railroad, the Mexican and Civil War, and finally ending in a tableau "foretelling the future of the valley."[15] In addition, the statement continued that the President of the United States would attend the centennial, as would the governors of the original thirteen colonies, “and many others, great by their abilities and honored by the country for their services.”[16]

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[14] Ibid., 70.
[15] Ibid., 72.

The entertainment was not to stop with the ceremonies, however. A choir of three hundred voices and a sixty-piece orchestra would perform during the day and band concerts would fill the nights. Visitors could go back in time wandering the valley that was transformed to its “primeval condition,” complete with a rebuilt Forty Fort and colonial log homes “dotting the river bank” just as “in the olden time.”[17] The report ended with a reminder of the identity of the association’s members, that they had controlled the entire affair, giving their time and energies to “making the coming event an appropriate tribute to the memory of their fathers.”[18] The press release did not say so explicitly, but the implication was definitely there—society would consider nonattendance ungrateful, unpatriotic, and foolish.

Arrangements continued up to the very last minute. On 29 June the Onondaga Indians confirmed that a contingent would attend, complete with warpaint and feathers. The “colored citizens” would receive $100 for their participation in the parade. A group of statuary representing the massacre was prepared for display. And in all the anxious activity, someone pointed out that nothing had been planned for welcoming President Hayes and his family when they arrived. This set the association into a brief frenzy but soon all was arranged; as they adjourned they agreed to meet the morning of 3 July not as a committee but as part of the attending multitude.

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[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Ibid., 73.

The gentlemen of the association issued statements to the press throughout the year they were making the preparations. But the press also made its own observations. Reporters loved the triumphal arches and congratulated the artist, but they hated the "profusion of chaos in green foliage to tire and distract the senses."[19] They agreed that the artillery display was a splendid idea, but suggested that the old redoubt would suit the purpose better than the center of town, where the elderly and babies lived. The press warned of crowded railroads, hotels, fairgrounds, and streets, as well as the certain attendance of campaigning politicians, pickpockets, and visiting journalists and photographers. Reporters watched and commented every step of the way, alternating between admiration of the association's efforts, and criticizing the circus-like atmosphere that was taking over the once-considered-solemn event. Despite the occasional tone of mockery, the press acknowledged that the centennial was bringing business into the area, was encouraging citizens to paint and repair their homes and businesses, and the street commissioner's men were finally clearing and repairing streets and trimming overgrown trees and shrubs. They pointed out that,

> All this betokens better times...the spirit that is needed...let those...who have poo-poohed the attempt of a few enterprising old fogies to engineer this thing on to success, remember that it is not by sitting down with folded hands to bewail the hardness of the times that the times are made any better. The

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[19] Ibid., 93.

> country is as rich as ever it was.[20]

Whatever visions and divisions there had been at its earlier planning stages, the growing interest and enthusiasm that the centennial had generated among the citizens, the press, and the members of the association had changed or eliminated them. On 3 July 1878, the world itself, it seemed, was in attendance.

President Hayes opened the services with an address in which he reminded the audience that they were there to honor the men and women who had settled the valley, "fitting it up for the habitation of a civilized people."[21] He connected what had taken place a hundred years before with what was still happening in Idaho, Arizona, Colorado, and other regions of the West. Whatever the manner of "intercourse with the red men, white men should be protected in their homes and possessions."[22] Paying "an eloquent tribute to the gallant Custar," he stated that when conflicts could not be avoided they "should be as short, sharp, and decisive as possible."[23] When he finished his speech, he was presented with an elegant cane made from the buck-horn wood of the battlefield, capped in gold, and engraved with the words "Presented to the President of the United States by the Ladies of Wyoming, July 3d, 1878."

Just as the chairman of the association, Colonel Dorrance, was introducing the next speaker, a great commotion arose from the crowd. A group of eighteen Onondaga Indians in full war regalia was approaching the platform and taking seats "in true Indian style, by squatting upon the floor."[24] As the crowds jostled each other to get a better look at the Indians, Colonel Dorrance told them that they "behaved more like savages than did these children of the forest."[25] Curiosity satisfied for the moment, order was restored and the proceedings continued.

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[20] Ibid., 101.
[21] Ibid., 110.
[22] Ibid., 111.
[23] Ibid.
[24] Ibid., 111.

Colonel Hendrick Wright gave the formal opening address stating that it was not his place to "dwell upon the repulsive and sanguinary deeds" of the British and the Tories whose behavior "was in accord with the wild and untamed children of the forest."[26] The conduct of the "untutored children of nature" could be forgiven because they knew no better than what their instincts directed. But no excuse could be offered for the deeds of the white men who either participated in the barbarities or did nothing to prevent them. The "carnival of blood that made that night hideous" Wright would not speak of as there were others who would elaborate. Instead, he bid them all welcome "to the land once occupied by heroes! This is no empty and unmeaning pageant. It is an electric chord that binds the living to the dead."[27]

Among the numerous other speeches made to the assembly was Judge Edmund Dana's account of the battle. The crowds listened attentively while the grandson of the hero Anderson Dana spoke. The battle, he said, was not one of the great battles of history, but the motives and courage that inspired the heroes against numbers that far exceeded their own demanded acknowledgment. They stood where the crowd stood, with the same sun shining on their heads and the same soil beneath their feet. Their deaths on the battlefield and later at "Bloody Rock...amid the glare of torches and savage yells and dances, with such aggravation of cruelty as malice and mockery could devise, have caused the day and event to be designated as a massacre rather than a battle."[28] More he would not relate since that was for others coming after him. They would tell of the destruction of homes and property, the flight of widows and children, and the prosperity that had taken hold in the valley over the last one hundred years.

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[25] Ibid., 112.
[26] Ibid., 114.
[27] Ibid., 115.

Steuben Jenkins, a regionally-recognized historian whose ancestors had been present long before the battle, elaborated on the events leading up to, during, and after it. He described for the audience the appearance of the valley, the layout of the homes and forts, the flora and fauna, and the ever-present threat of the "blood-thirsty Indian."[29] The early settlers were honest yeomen and their wives, who cleared the land to make way for a religious, intellectual, and moral community. But intercolonial conflict and the approaching revolutionary war brought hardship and death to the valley. Jenkins included details of every action taken by the settlers, the Indians, and the Tories. Names and places spilled forth to demonstrate "what the scope of the Indian warfare for 1778 embraced. The whole frontier was aglow with fire, desolation and death, beneath the fagot, tomahawk, rifle and scalping-knife of the Indians, and their cruel and implacable allies, the British and Tories."[30]

When the battle was finally brought to the Wyoming Valley, the small band of settlers rose up and fought bravely, as the condition of their dead bodies testified. They had been tricked by the British, who Jenkins explained fired on the advancing Americans then fell back, leading them on to be surrounded by the Indians lying in wait for them. Misunderstood orders and misinterpreted movements led to panic and flight. The "flight became a slaughter, the slaughter a massacre. Such was the battle."[31] Jenkins next described the tortures inflicted on prisoners by the Indians, of the betrayals of old Tory friends, and the horrible deaths of those taken to Queen Esther's Bloody Rock. He then led his listeners back to the battlefield, describing the positions and conditions of the fallen heroes. He told of bodies burnt nearly beyond recognition, of missing limbs and heads, and the smell of death that "polluted the atmosphere."[32]

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[28] Ibid., 126.
[29] Ibid., 141.
[30] Ibid., 162.

Finally, Jenkins addressed the question of whether or not Joseph Brant was present at Wyoming. Citing a tally of scalps said to have been gathered by John Butler and Joseph Brant and "sold in the British market," Jenkins stated that this evidence, together with "the story as told by both sides" left little doubt that Brant was there.[33] He finished by adamantly denying that there was any truth to the story that whole families had been burned alive within their homes, or that women and children had been killed in the valley. But he conceded that whether any had been killed in the woods when they fled was unknown.

After Jenkins had finished, there followed sermons, poetic recitations, and hymns. The crowds made their way from the fairgrounds to the monument and back again. Under the heat of the July sun, the gathering began to suffer and the program was cut short by one third. During a pause for the noon meal, the assembly, estimated at about fifty thousand, sought refreshment and shade. Accommodations "proved utterly inadequate" and the makeshift hospital set up on the grounds was kept busy tending to those who suffered from the heat or had been crushed in the crowded tents. Still, the collection of

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[31] Ibid., 181.
[32] Ibid., 185.
[33] Ibid., 190-91.

Indian relics which gave "an approximate illustration of the habits, manners and religion of the Indians in their primitive condition" drew considerable attention, as did the gathering of historical documents.[34] Furniture from the original Forty Fort, including the little walnut wood table on which Denison and John Butler had signed the articles of capitulation, was included in another part of the historical museum. These exhibits, together with the attendance of the aged direct descendants of the heroes, linked the people of the present to those of the past.

The association proudly reported later that there was no drunkenness, no disorderliness, no serious accidents at the event, nor in the comings or goings of the crowds, though the press stated that "the rush that followed for the trains and ferries was a sight to be remembered."[35]

On 31 December 1881, by order of the Court of Common Pleas of Luzerne County, the Wyoming Commemorative Association became a body corporate and the Recorder's Office entered its charter the following February. The association then pulled together all its records, commissioned engraved portraits of its ten official members, and bound all together in a commemorative album published in 1882.

From the beginning the association desired that the preparations and proceedings be carefully recorded and published in an album. They believed that future generations would use it as a guideline for future memorial ceremonies, and that it would be displayed after another one hundred years had passed. This not only served to preserve the history of the Wyoming Valley battle, as they spoke of it and portrayed it, but ensured that the association itself would be included in that history.

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[34] Ibid., 227.
[35] Ibid., 224-25.

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After the first memorial event in 1878, the Wyoming Commemorative Association continued to hold public ceremonies every year, but none was as grand as the one in 1928. As the foreword to the 1928 commemorative album states, "for a brief time the busy citizenry did turn the pages of life's book backward and in fete, in parade, in pageant, tableau, and dance they memorialized their forbears."[36] Indeed, the variety and scope of the celebration was truly spectacular. For the planning of this 150th anniversary, the association's twelve members were aided by the efforts of literally hundreds of men and women serving as members of committees and groups arranging for and taking part in the various activities.

The Music Festival of Nations opened the celebration on 1 July with the voices of two thousand colorfully costumed singers. Numerous groups performed representing America as well as others "who have from 1850 to the present left Europe and found a new home on this side of the ocean."[37] The

> combined chorus gave familiar patriotic airs of this country. The other groups as they formed in front of the stand were heard in folk melodies and characteristic music, now becoming more familiar to the American people. Most of the foreign national groups were of the second or third generation, born

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[36] Wilbur A. Myers, ed., *The Book of the Sesqui-Centennial Celebration of the Battle of Wyoming, July 1st-4th, 1928* (Wyoming Valley, PA: H. E. Atkins & A. Hoffman, 1928).

[37] Ibid., 63.

> here, and they wore the costumes of their races, thus forming
> a throng of great picturesque charm and color.[38]

All sang with the dignity and solemnity befitting the importance of the commemorative celebration and captivated the audience with their melodies. The Music Festival set the tone for the remaining days of pageantry.

July 2nd opened with a twelve-mile "historical marathon" run that ran from the starting line in town to Queen Esther's Rock and back again. The first three across the finish line received gold wristwatches, and the winner, Charles Solomon of Brooklyn, New York, also received a medal. This was followed in the afternoon by a parade through the heavily festooned and flag-lined streets of Wilkes-Barre. A contingent of "smartly dressed State Constabulary" led the car containing parade marshal Sterling E. W. Eyer and celebration president Ernest G. Smith. Right behind them came the 109th Field Artillery with the 75mm piece that they used at Mount Blainville, France, during the Great War. Awe swept over the crowd as they saw for themselves the hole made by a German shell in its trailer. A total of 35 bands, 125 floats, and 20,000 marchers stretched back nearly five miles before a crowd of 250,000 onlookers. A sudden summer storm cooled the stifling afternoon air and drenched many a straw hat, but spirits remained high and the march continued undaunted to the tune of "It Aint Gonna Rain No More."[39]

The downpour and subsequent high water caused the rescheduling or relocation of some events, but the celebration continued on the morning of 3 July with a gathering of thousands to hear the commemorative services at the monument. President Coolidge could not attend, but Congress passed a bill allowing for the selection of a delegation of seven to attend as his representatives. Three were chosen by each house and the seventh member was Wyoming's own outstanding citizen and community benefactor, Fred M. Kirby, whom the president had selected personally. The audience heard addresses from former military and religious leaders, historians, and politicians, whose voices floated out over the vast assembly from the raised, banner-draped platform. So solemn and respectful were the crowds that many men held their hats over their hearts as they listened, leaving their heads bare under the hot sun.

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[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid., 100-01.

After the morning ceremonies, the crowds could choose from several exhibitions and displays to visit while they waited for the productions of the afternoon and evening. A spectacular anthracite mining exhibit awaited their admiration in the Matheson Exposition Building in Forty Fort. Wyoming Valley was the birthplace of the anthracite industry, with forges using the 'stone coal' as early as 1765. Visitors to the exhibit could see for themselves the grate in which Judge Jesse Fell first burned the coal for heat at the Fell Tavern in 1808. They could view a progression of coal-burning stoves dating from 1820 to an example of one possibly found in their own homes. They learned that the canal construction in the 1820s was instrumental to the growth of their coal industry, which improved even more with the advent of the railroads. Visitors to the exhibit could smile with pride at the knowledge that "from these humble beginnings developed an industry which in 1921 showed a total value of product of $223,000,000, and the sum of $121,000,000 paid in wages to seventy-one thousand employees of the industry in Luzerne County alone."[40]

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[40] Ibid., 121.

From the mining exhibit visitors could wander over to the Miami Indian Village in Kirby Park. The Indians, descendants of "the lost sister of Wyoming," Frances Slocum, who had been taken captive at the age of five in the fall of 1778, were visiting from Wabash, Indiana.[41] With teepees, "trade goods," and "native dances," visitors could experience the Indians' "picturesque mode of living."[42]

One of the major attractions, next to the mining exhibit, was an exhibition of Women's Activities of the Wyoming Valley from 1778 to 1928. This collection of period rooms was open every day of the sesquicentennial celebration and often crowded. In fact, that there were always lines of visitors waiting to get in was taken by the women of the valley as a great compliment.

The Women's Activities Committee, nearly 170 strong, constructed rooms to represent four periods in Wyoming Valley history, wrote explanatory captions on "beautiful tablets, characteristic of the times," and placed several costumed women in each room. A tablet inscribed with a dedication greeted the visitors as they entered the set of rooms;

> This Exhibit Is Dedicated by the Women of Wyoming
> Valley as a Tribute to the Indomitable Spirit, Steadfast

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[41] For more on Frances Slocum, see Lewis Hepburn Minor, ed., *The Valley of Wyoming: The Romance of Its History and Its Poetry, Also Specimens of Indian Eloquence* (New York: R. H. Johnson, 1866), 46-57; Peck, *Wyoming; Its History*, 237-83; and Pearce, *Annals of Luzerne County*, 137-39, for details of Frances Slocum's captivity and rediscovery when she was an elderly women. Also captivity narratives by John F. Meginnes, *Biography of Frances Slocum; the Lost Sister of Wyoming* (Williamsport, PA: n. p., 1891), and John Todd, *The Lost Sister of Wyoming: An Authentic Narrative* (Northampton, MA: n. p., 1842). Details of Frances Slocum's captivity narratives are also included in Frances Roe Kestler, *The Indian Captivity: A Woman's View* (New York & London: Garland, 1990), and Pattie Cowell, ed., *The Indian Captivity Narrative, 1550-1900* (New York: Twayne, 1993), examines portions of Slocum's story within the larger context of narrative literature.

[42] Myers, *Sesqui-Centennial*, 42.

> Loyalty, Universal Hospitality and Christian Influence of the Women of Earlier Days. May an Atmosphere of Veneration for Their Traditions and Ideals Be Felt By All Who Enter.[43]

As the Women's Activities Committee explained, their history in the valley developed from the Pioneer Period, 1762-1778, where home was the center of the women's lives, to the Post-Colonial Period, 1778-1850, and the expansion of women's activities in the home through the "interchange of hospitality," through the Victorian Period, 1850-1900, when women's activities emerged from the home, and finally to the Modern Period, when from 1900 onward women's activities "extended to the world."[44] After touring each room, the visitors could adjourn to the Cambrian Tea Room, hosted by the women of the Cambrian Club dressed in their traditional Welsh costumes.

In the afternoon came the Exhibit of Children's Activities. When plans for the sesquicentennial were first discussed, the association agreed that the proceedings "must include something for the children of Wyoming Valley, some event of their very own in which they might participate in large numbers" in order to make the celebration memorable.[45] The Playground and Recreation Association of Wyoming Valley, responsible for the management of thirty-five playgrounds and parks in the area, would take on the planning and organization of the exhibit. Eighty-two adults, having undergone training provided by the association beforehand, together with 5,000 children of various ages, presented the Mardi Gras and Festival of Rhythm before a crowd of over 10,000 undoubtedly proud parents and others. The festival began with a parade onto the grounds featuring all the children, together with over five hundred floats and decorative pieces they made themselves. The children wore colorful, thematic costumes and were arranged in the procession by hue. Once on the grounds the performances began. There was the Dance of the Sleigh Bells, an Athenian Idyll, a French Pastoral, a Japanese dance, a Virginia Reel, and a Scandinavian Impressions dance. The boys, whose bodies had been "powdered and painted to their extreme satisfaction," wore feathers, breech clouts, and waved tomahawks while performing a Dagger Dance. Although their smiles displayed their joy, "fifty pounds of cold cream couldn't save many little burned Indians."[46] Each performance involved the participation of hundreds of children, who had spent many afternoons in rehearsal, in addition to the choreographic and costume-making efforts of dozens of adults. It was a loudly proclaimed success.

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[43] Ibid., 47.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Ibid., 55.

By far the most extravagant presentation of the sesquicentennial was the Pageant of Wyoming Valley. As a production and expression of the entire Wyoming Valley community, "it glorified the founders...and reflected honor upon us; it was about us, it was for us, and it belonged to us."[47] George Seymour Godard, the Connecticut State Librarian who represented colonial governor Jonathan Trumbull in one of the tableaus, said "without a doubt it is the finest historical pageant ever staged in America."[48] Even Albert Bushnell Hart, visiting professor emeritus of Harvard's history department, admitted it was the "biggest thing done."[49]

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[46] Ibid., 58.
[47] Ibid., 75.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Ibid.

Another 5,000 people participated in the pageant, coming from every part of the valley, presenting tableaus and re-enacting important moments in history for the immense audience. A Great Chorus and orchestra provided music throughout to lend the appropriate tone, whether it be the "dirge-like" sounds of defeat, the "exulting notes" of victory, or the "prankish, lilting strains" of a domestic scene. During the Drama of Fortitude depicting the pioneers coming to "possess the land," the chorus sang "Onward! Christian Soldiers," and after the flag scene with Betsy Ross, the whole multitude sang "The Star Spangled Banner." When Colonel Zebulon Butler and the refugees returned to the valley after the battle to claim what was left of their homes, an Echo Chorus sang "Courage, America" while the Pageant Chorus responded with "Rejoice, America."

For three nights the crowds were treated to this spectacle. They heard the voices of the symbolic figures of Mystery, Decision, Fortitude, Courage, War, and Independence speak from the tops of daises. They saw 175 young women perform "The Dawn of Freedom" dance in front of actors who presented the Signing of the Declaration of Independence en tableau. They watched as hundreds of British Red Coats entered Forty Fort after the capitulation. Costumed pioneers consoled each other near the fort walls as dozens of Indian, led by Joseph Brant and Queen Esther on horseback, filed in after the British. Mounted "squaws" waited for their Indian warriors off to one side.

Time marched on, unstoppable, before the eyes of the spectators. Frances Slocum's mother watched in helpless horror as her daughter was dragged away by Indians, growing up to become Ma-Con-A-Quah, Queen of the Miami. Dozens of powdered and costumed actors danced at George Washington's Inaugural Ball. And Judge Jesse Fell burned the first anthracite coal as the "four roisters" stood by taunting him. The Dance of the Coals celebrated the growth of the valley's coal industry and a host of heavenly angels performed the Epilogue of Good Will. The symbolism, pantomime, and drama of the pageant provided the perfect ending to the celebration, and undoubtedly left permanent impressions within the minds of the participants and the audiences, which was, after all, the association's intention.

CHAPTER III

Making History

We cannot know from the albums and their carefully constructed and preserved versions of the Wyoming Valley battle exactly what did occur on 3 July 1778. But this does not mean that they should be disregarded as historical sources. On the contrary, they reveal a great deal about the societies that created them, and if considered from that perspective, they are quite valuable.

First, and most obvious, the albums reflect the evolution of Indian-white relations over a fifty-year period. What is made abundantly clear after reading through the album of 1878 is that, in the eyes of the association and probably the rest of the community, what was most important to remember about the battle was the role the Indians played in it. This is obvious from beginning to end. The cloth cover of the album features discreetly embossed scrollwork arranged so as not to detract from the central motif of Indian shield, feathers, tomahawk, and warclub. The title, *Wyoming Memorial Battle & Massacre, 1778-1878*, is embellished with a few wildflowers and vines and placed in such a way that the words "Battle & Massacre" are immediately next to the shield and in reverse color, instantly drawing the eye to them. Toward the center of the book is a representation of the memorial medal created for the ceremony. On one side is an image of the battlefield monument erected in 1842 surrounded with the phrase "Dulce Et Decorum Est Pro Patria

Mori."[1] On the obverse is a scene depicting one slain settler and another partially prone about to be struck from behind by the raised tomahawk of an Indian. There are four fully-armed Indians advancing aggressively over the defenseless bodies of the two settlers, while a home burns in the background. The phrase that encircles this image is "In Commemoration Of The Battle And Massacre Of Wyoming July 3, 1778." With only Indians depicted as aggressors, it appears that they alone were responsible for the devastation of the valley. That there are no weapons on or near the settlers suggests that they never fought back. Finally, that the odds are four to two preserves the notion that the settlers were seriously outnumbered. There is no symbolic representation of the British or Tories either within or without the album.

The text itself reflects the state of Indian-white relations in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Editor Wesley Johnson wrote a grandiloquent introduction to familiarize the reader with the significance of the Wyoming Valley. The reader learns, among other things, that history has already recorded the tales of this "land of blood" and that counties and territories have been named for it in recognition of its importance. He explained the origins of the name of the valley, that "Wyoming, as we pronounce it, a word of exceeding beauty and sweetness of expression, to the aborigines of the country meant nothing more than Bear Valley."[2] The implication is that the white residents of the region believed they had a right to the land because they alone appreciated it for what it was; a beautiful, pristine, and fertile valley. This reflects the continued belief in manifest destiny that permeated white society and would evolve into another "Age of Imperialism" in the last decades of the nineteenth century.[3]

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[1] It is sweet and noble to die for the fatherland.

[2] Johnson, *Wyoming Memorial Battle*, 10.

Language is vital to the assertion of superiority and the maintenance of control. The speeches, poems, and historical orations reproduced in the album overflow with colorful words and graphic phrases depicting the brutality of the battle and the torments inflicted on the settlers by the Indians. References to the British soldiers and the Tories appear only a few times, whereas "savage" is ubiquitous. The president and other speakers emphasized the importance of the protection of white settlement and white possessions from the Indians. Such descriptive speeches would have embedded the words and images in the minds of the white audience, whose eyes must have darted back and forth between the speaker and the Onondagas seated on the platform.

The white citizenry believed that the Indian could and would be tamed eventually. President Hayes' speech focused on the eventual triumph over the Indians rather than the 1778 battle as part of the larger colonial quest for independence. The large exhibit of artifacts collected by Jenkins and Dr. Hollister supported this belief as well. The artifacts represented all the diversity and complexity of Indian cultures reduced to the benign and general terms that categorized them for the white visitors. That they had been gathered and were "owned" by two prominent white men was symbolic of the U. S. government's control and containment of Indians on reservations. The Onondaga Indians at the ceremony, whom the audience had been told descended directly from those who attacked the settlements in 1778, sat silently on the floor of the platform. They neither spoke nor participated in any other way. Their expenses were paid so that they would appear as they did, looking fierce in their warpaint, yet subdued into "children of the forest." Thus named and removed from their context, the Indians became another part of the artifact exhibit.

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[3] Anders Stephanson, *Manifest Destiny: American Expansionism and the Empire of Right* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1995), esp. chapter one which discusses the origins of the American idea of providence and chosenness; Frederick Merk, *Manifest Destiny and Mission in American History: A Reinterpretation* (New York: Knopf, 1963), 231-37 for the evolution of manifest destiny from continentalism to insular expansion; Nathaniel Peffer, *The White Man's Dilemma: Climax of the Age of Imperialism* (New York: John Day, 1927), 84-86, which asks whether survival morally justifies "taking what we need from those who cannot make proper use of that which is theirs?"

Like the album of 1882, the 1928 version also uses the Indian as the central motif, but this time he lends a far less malevolent tone. The cover features a mounted Indian clothed in fringed leggings and holding a rifle. He holds the reins of his horse tightly as if to control its urge to bolt away. The title page includes the image of another Indian within an arrow-shaped cartouche. Each page of the book is edged with a feather motif border and the entire album portrays a southwestern influence in an Art Deco design.

Photographs in the album capture various images of the twentieth-century Indian. Nine strike a gruff pose in feathers and warpaint, tomahawks in hand, for the camera. Four others are caught in a "native dance," their steps frozen above the quip, "Can this be the Fox Trot?"[4] Representatives from the Seneca tribe, "descendants of those who fought here in 1778," were brought to the celebration by the Kingston Business Men's Association and given a float to ride on in the parade.[5] The Miami Indian Village went beyond the Indian artifact exhibit of 1878 by offering visitors the opportunity to view the Indians in their natural habitat, so to speak, complete with western-style teepees. Visitors could even barter for "trade goods," just as they believed many of their pioneer ancestors had done. That the "village" was recreated in Kirby Park, land given to the community by a prominent business and political leader, reflects the larger image of Indians trying to maintain their culture within the confines of a U. S. government-appointed reservation.

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[4] Myers, *Sesqui-Centennial Celebration*, 42.
[5] Ibid., 97, 105.

The image of Indian "reality" did not extend to the pageant, however. There the association members drew the line. Indians were portrayed by white men in paint and feathers and the only depiction of Indian hostility was in the Dagger Dance playfully performed by hundreds of young boys. In 1926, Indians and army veterans rode side by side to symbolize racial harmony at the site of the Battle of Little Big Horn.[6] Apparently, the citizens of Wyoming Valley were not yet prepared to make a similar gesture. Still, by 1928, Indians were no longer considered a threat to white society. Who they were had been reduced to one all-encompassing Hollywood-like male image, and that image was used to sell everything from business signs to "Brave-Man" workshirts.[7]

There was a sense of otherness about the Indians that kept them separate from the rest of the community of the Wyoming Valley region. This prejudice extended to other members of the population as well. In 1878 the rise of nationalism and the desire to emphasize the preeminence of white British colonial ancestry led the association to drop the exotic Latin word "centennial" from their title in favor of a sturdier "English" word. (The fact that the English language has Latin, Danish, Saxon, and Norman roots seemed to have temporarily slipped their minds.) The "colored citizens" who received $100 for their collective participation in the parade—less than white participants but more than the Indians—were given separate quarters for refreshment in keeping with the beginnings of a Jim Crow society. There is no mention of the growing immigrant population, nor their attendance at the commemoration, possibly because their presence was at the center of some of the region's strife. Poor immigrants, newly arrived to the region, were willing to work for any wages, no matter how low, and they often replaced those who were on strike for higher wages and better working conditions. This increased tension, helped fuel the riots that the association was trying to overshadow, and increased the economic hardships that the association was trying to alleviate.[8] By ignoring their presence, the association was able to lift them out of their society.

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[6] Edward Tabor Linenthal, *Sacred Ground: Americans and Their Battlefields* (Urbana & Chicago: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1991), 138.

[7] Myers, *Sesqui-Centennial Celebration*, 116, 118.

This otherness continues into the twentieth-century. The population of the Wyoming Valley region of the 1920s was very diverse, with Russians, Ukrainians, Lithuanians, Greeks, and "Slovaks" adding to the already present Irish, German, Scots, and English.[9] Despite the fact that "most of the foreign national groups" who performed in the Music Festival of Nations "were of the second or third generation, born here," they were still "foreign," though just as American by virtue of birth and residence as the association members themselves.[10] Their music was "characteristic" and their costumes "picturesque," two words often used in the album to describe anything strange or primitive in the eyes of the white, middle-class society. Clearly, it would take several more years before residents were comfortable with the cultural variations within their community.

In addition to changes in ethnic diversity, the community was also adjusting to changing gender roles. In the 1830s, when interest in erecting a monument over the remains of the dead soldiers of the Wyoming Valley battle waned and construction funds dwindled, it was the women of the region who formed the Wyoming Monument Association and raised the funds necessary for the monument's completion in 1842. But as Victorian notions about a woman's proper place within society began to take over in the second half of the nineteenth century, her role as protector of the fallen and guardian over their history changed. In 1878 the women of the Monument Association were neither consulted, nor invited to help in the organization of the 100th commemoration, although chairs on the speaker's platform were provided for them should they accept the invitation to send representatives to the proceedings. The women must have decided to take this minimal participation one step further by presenting the engraved cane to President Hayes as a gift from the "Ladies of Wyoming."

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[8] Robert D. Parmet, *Labor and Immigration in Industrial America* (Boston: Twayne, 1988), 70-87, which discusses immigrant labor in the anthracite mine regions of Pennsylvania as well as attempts to unionize and conflicts between "old" and "new" Americans. Also, Leonard Dinnerstein, Roger L. Nichols, and David M. Reimers, *Natives and Strangers: Ethnic Groups and the Building of America* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1979), 101-18 for the connection between times of economic hardship and increased animosity toward foreigners and minorities.

[9] Ibid., 66-72.

[10] Ibid., 63.

But in 1928 women were trying to make up the ground they had lost by tentatively demanding recognition for their roles in the history of the valley. The president of the association was now Ernest G. Smith, but in 1922 it had been Anne Dorrance, descendant of Lieutenant Colonel George Dorrance who had died in the battle. Although no longer president, Anne Dorrance was still a very active member of the community and instrumental in the organization of the celebration. Nearly all of the various committees had at least one female member, and nine of the ten who organized the children's activities were women (the lone male was the director). Hundreds of other women participated in the celebration. Their civic organizations marched in the parade, their choral groups sang in the Music Festival, and many of them assumed the roles of their ancestors in reenacting historic moments in the pageant. But they were proudest of the Exhibit of Women's Activities, of which they had complete control.

The exhibit received praise for its "exemplification of the development of American domestic architecture and economy."[11] It sought to celebrate the women's sphere of occupation and influence from the colonial era to the "modern" day, recreating homey environments and filling each with those artifacts associated with a woman's world. "There were hundreds of these articles and their beauty, quaintness, and interestingness captivated the visitor's attention at every point."[12] The exhibit was dedicated as "a Tribute to the Indomitable Spirit, Steadfast Loyalty, Universal Hospitality, and Christian Influence" of the women of the valley's past. Unfortunately, although they intended to draw attention to the role women played in history through their activities, the exhibit was little more than a gathering of museum pieces into fanciful, idealized settings. It was as if, having received the right to vote only eight years before, the women were still testing the waters to find out how their independent public presence would be received. One also wonders, if they wanted to draw attention to their progress in expanding the "scope of women's activities to the world," why they would choose the Cambrian Club to operate the tea room at the end of the exhibit. The Cambrian Club was "one of the oldest and best known women's choruses in the valley [and] represented the Welsh race in the pageant."[13] Although this may have just been another attempt to highlight the diversity of the population, one of the other women's groups participating in the celebration—the Serve-Your-City Club or better yet, the Quota Club, whose membership was comprised of regional business women—may have better served the overall theme of the exhibit.

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[11] Ibid., 47.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Ibid., 69.

Perhaps the ladies did not recognize the irony in juxtaposing progress with a term that also identifies the earliest period of the Paleozoic era.

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The status of Indian-white relations, changing gender roles, and social perceptions of otherness present images of American society that the associations of 1878 and 1928 had not realized they were recording. Perhaps closer to their original purpose, the associations also preserved what people thought and believed about their region's history.

Both albums prove that elements of the Poughkeepsie story and the work of early historians, despite inaccuracies and exaggerations, continued as part of the historic record of the battle. In 1928, many of the people of the region still believed that Joseph Brant had led the Indian forces, that Queen Esther did indeed murder her circle of prisoners the evening after the battle, and, although the British were there, that the Indians made up the larger, more brutal part of their force. The citizens also knew that despite the battle's tragic outcome, white settlement could not be halted, and for their Christian fortitude the pioneers of the valley were owed a debt of gratitude, which must be paid through annual commemorative ceremonies and continued respect to their descendants. Lastly, the residents believed that the battle, and the exaggerated accounts published afterward, were instrumental in persuading France to lend her support to the American cause, thus turning the tide of the war and enabling Americans to secure their freedom from England.[14] That France had actually signed the treaty of alliance on 6 February 1778, five months before the battle, was either unknown or overlooked 150 years later.[15]

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[14] Johnson, *Wyoming Memorial & Battle*, 25-26; Myers, *Sesqui-Centennial Celebration,* 22.

[15] Schlesinger, *Almanac*, 128.

Although story-line changes do not always imply intentional manipulation, the association members of 1878 and 1928 clearly had specific objectives in mind when they organized their commemorative ceremonies. These objectives caused the members to latch on to certain aspects of the battle story and to highlight those elements in the commemoration. This promoted a particular version of the past to suit the interests of the present.[16] The 1878 memorial ceremony was somber in tone and portrayed a white society that faced its future with ambivalence. The association members sought to raise the morale of the region by reminding the people of the perseverance of the early settlers and the role the valley played in the revolutionary war. They also made certain that the event offered a variety of attractions and was well-publicized so as to boost the local economy by drawing a large attendance. Finally, they tapped into the recent hostilities between Indians and the U.S. Army by emphasizing the actions of the Indians at the battle, thus linking the past to the present through common experiences and justifying continued U. S. efforts to defeat the Indians in the West.

By 1928 the tone and image had changed greatly, and association members traded in the mourning draperies for banners of patriotic red, white, and blue. Commemorating the battle was only part of the four-day event, which was more a celebration of the region's history and prosperity than a memorial to fallen heroes. This time the goal was to make the commemoration "the biggest thing going" during a time when commemorative ceremonies were happening all over the country and pageantry was all the rage.[17] The 1928 commemoration was a regional phenomenon that touched on the mood of the valley, the state, and the nation. Here history was used as a measure for progress, to see where the region had been and where it was going. The mining exhibit was just one example of the civic pride felt as a result of an economic prosperity that began during World War I. Pennsylvania made tremendous contributions to the war effort, purchasing nearly $2.8 billion in liberty and victory bonds and paying $1.15 billion in taxes. Industry produced enormous amounts of coal, oil, trains, trucks, and munitions, and built 170 ships. The state government had reorganized itself and was now operating with greater fiscal responsibility and efficiency. The state legislators had passed a Mental Health Act, a State Employment Act, built numerous hospitals and colleges, and improved the public school system, all without incurring any debts.[18] Pennsylvanians, like Americans everywhere in the 1920s, were self-assured and optimistic about the future, and this outlook permeates the 1928 commemorative album.

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[16] For more on the formation of collective memory and reshaping the past to suit the interests of the present, see Michael Schudson, "Dynamics of Distortion in Collective Memory," in *Memory Distortion: How Minds, Brains, and Societies Reconstruct the Past*, ed. Daniel L. Schacter (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ., 1995), 353.; Barry Schwartz, "The Social Context of Commemoration: A Study in Collective Memory," *Social Forces: An International Journal of Social Research* 61 (Dec., 1982): 374-402; and David Thelen, ed., in *Memory and American History* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana Univ., 1989), vii-xix.

Both association groups intended their albums to serve as examples to future generations of the appropriate manner in which to memorialize the Wyoming Valley battle. By sponsoring and organizing the commemorations and publishing the books afterward, the association groups set themselves up as guardians and teachers of public history and thus were able to maintain a great deal of control over the formation of the region's collective historic memory.[19] Specific images about the history of the valley, as well as how that history was memorialized and celebrated, were preserved in word, sketch, and photograph, leaving little room for alternative interpretations. This control strengthened the roles of the members as social and cultural leaders and guaranteed their own inclusion within the historic record. But the commemorative ceremonies had far greater influence on the minds and memories of the attending community than the albums ever would on those who saw them years afterward.

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[17] For more on the popularity of pageants in the 1920s, see David Glassberg, "History and the Public: Legacies of the Progressive Era," *Journal of American History*, 73 (March 1987), 957-80.
[18] Dunaway, *A History of Pennsylvania*, 580-81.

Memorial objects, ceremonies, and reenactments "connect the past to the present in a personal and manageable way."[20] The important event itself is not enough to plant it in the memory. It must have an image and often a physical and emotional experience connected to it for its meaning to remain. The associations of both 1878 and 1928 used symbolic and representative objects and people, music, reenactment, and pageantry to construct a collective memory of the battle and history of the valley.

In the nineteenth century, rhetoric could still hold an audience's attention. But the image of the battle that the association of 1878 was trying to convey was definitely aided by the portrayal of the 'massacre' on the memorial medal, the collection of Indian artifacts, and the presence of the Onondaga Indians on the platform. The audience listened to the speeches, then were able to connect the words to three-dimensional objects or human beings. Walking the route from the fairgrounds to the battlefield and the monument and standing on the same soil that the soldiers had stood on a century before allowed the crowd to reenact a part of that wartime experience, connecting themselves to it physically. The "solemn dirges" playing at the fairgrounds and again at the monument stirred the emotions of the gathering and intensified the experience, thereby embedding shared memories of the battle in the minds of the attending crowd.

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[19] See Jacques Le Goff, *History and Memory*, trans. Steven Rendall & Elizabeth Claman (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1992), 50-55, for discussion of the use of collective memory in the struggle for power among social groups.
[20] John Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1992), 3.

The scope of the event in 1928 was much grander and more complex than the earlier version. It involved the direct participation of nearly 30,000 individuals—male and female, young and old—from all over the Wyoming Valley region. With a purported attendance of over 250,000, the association was able to make a sizable impression. The wide variety of activities and exhibits ensured that everyone could find something of interest during the four-day proceedings. But of all the offerings of the celebration, the Pageant of Wyoming Valley was universally popular and best demonstrates the use of Commemoration and the importance of reenactment in the creation of a collective historic memory.

The association used nostalgia, patriotism, local tradition, and popular culture to draw the audience into the stories they saw unfolding before them each evening. Quaint domestic scenes painted early settlement life in an idealistic light. The creation of the American flag and the signing of the Declaration of Independence prompted the entire assembly to sing the National Anthem. Neoclassical representations turned American history into a morality play of good against evil as legendary villains John Butler, Joseph Brant, and Queen Esther once again terrorized the colonial settlement. Pioneer courage and persistence brought success and prosperity to the valley and made the region invaluable to the rest of the nation. Vivid costume colors and elaborate, thematic dances in

Buzby Berkly-style reflected the influences of Hollywood and Broadway. The Grand Chorus and symphony punctuated every scene, dictating the emotions that each tableau and dance was designed to instill in the viewers. When the pageant was finished, the association had presented a diverse audience with a single, coherent public history lesson.

They had also perpetuated some of the exaggerations of the Poughkeepsie story, some of the inaccuracies of the earlier histories, and introduced new interpretations of their own.

EPILOGUE

Faced with so much variation in the accounts of the Wyoming Valley Battle not only causes one to question the reliability of the primary documents—there were differences even in the reports of the commanding officers at the battle and in the statements of the survivors years later—but also to doubt the conclusions reached by historians whose research rested on these and other sources. For example, Barbara Graymont adamantly denied that Queen Esther existed, yet several of the petitions presented to Congress in the 1830s mention the execution ring either as a story they heard from one of the escapees, or as something they saw with their own eyes.[1] Nathan Denison reported to Governor Trumbull that he left the area after the articles of capitulation were signed, but the Poughkeepsie story states that witnesses saw him surrounded by Indians and about to be killed. According to William Maclay's letter to Timothy Matlack, "men, women, and children were flying for their lives" away from the region. Everyone was leaving except, it seems, Mrs. Bidlack who was twenty years old at the time and hung around for between ten days and two weeks.[2]

Historians have traditionally focused their research into historical events on determining what actually happened rather than what the variations in any account may mean. Yet, how a story is told is just as important as what it says, and why a story continues to be believed, despite its debatable or insupportable elements, reveals much about the society that clings to it and perpetuates it.

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[1] Graymont, *Iroquois*, 172-75, Graymont mentions several exaggerations one of which is that Catherine Montour was a macabre executioner. See also *Massacre of Wyoming*, 21-67 for statements of survivors and their descendants as part of the petition for restitution submitted to Congress in 1838 and 1839.
[2] Bidlack statement in *Massacre of Wyoming*, 44.

Recording history is a subjective rather than an objective exercise. Marshall, Miner, Lossing, Pearce, and several others all thought they were producing the definitive account of the Wyoming Valley battle. They refused to acknowledge, or perhaps were unaware, that their sources were poor and their personal perceptions and individual interests affected their ability to remain objective in their accounts.

Some of the questionable elements of the battle and its aftermath are still believed by some community members today.[3]

The Sesqui-Centennial of the Battle of Wyoming celebration was the last big commemoration of the event. Although memorial services still continue today, they are much more subdued, far less complex, and occupy only a few hours, generally on the morning of July 4th.

Before an audience ranging in size from a couple hundred to several hundred (depending on the weather), the service begins with a 10 a.m. band concert, followed by the arrival of the 109th Field Artillery to present the standard. The band plays the National Anthem while the audience stands and sings. This is followed by an invocation, brief welcome speeches, and then, while the band plays a dirge, the representatives of thirty civic organizations proceed as their names are called to the monument to lay floral wreaths. Then the 24th Connecticut Militia re-enactors fire a volley salute, after which a twenty-to-thirty-minute speech is given by the speaker invited for that year. The topic varies according to the speaker's preference. The proceedings end with a benediction and the retirement of the standard. By noon the audience has dispersed to attend their own individual brunches and family barbecues.[4]

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[3] Telephone conversation with William Lewis, member of the Wyoming Commemorative Association, 13 May 2002, as well as in-person conversations with various attendees of the 4 July 2002 ceremonies.

There are no more pageants, tableaus, or reenactments of the battle. Without these elaborate displays, and in the face of comparatively small attendance numbers, one wonders what, if anything, is remembered about Wyoming Valley's early history. Perhaps it is only its continued inclusion in Pennsylvania's Academic Standards for History at the sixth-grade level that keeps the memory of the "Wyoming Massacre" alive.[5]

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[4] Telephone conversation with Stephen Killian, Secretary of the Wyoming Commemorative Association, 1 May 2002. (In a rather ironic twist of fate, I was invited to be the principle speaker for the 4 July 2002 ceremony, thus becoming part of the historic record that has been the focus of this thesis.)

[5] Pennsylvania, *Proposed Academic Standards for History*, Title 22, chapter 4 (Nov., 2001), 9.

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2002

PROCEEDINGS

of the

224th Anniversary

WYOMING COMMEMORATIVE ASSOCIATION

Finding the Battle of Wyoming: An Oft-Told Tale Becomes an Historic Record

An Address by:

Lisa Francavilla

Graduate Student at the College of William & Mary
at the Observance of the 224th Anniversary
of the Battle and Massacre of Wyoming

July 4th, 2002

Two Hundred and Twenty Fourth Anniversary
and
ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY FOURTH
ANNUAL COMMEMORATIVE SERVICE
of the

BATTLE AND MASSACRE OF WYOMING

Thursday, July 4, 2002

PROGRAMME

24th CONNECTICUT MILITIA

BAND CONCERT(10:00 to 10:30 A.M.)	Wyoming Valley Band donald r. williams, bandmaster
COMMEMORATIVE SERVICE (10:30 A.M.)	William Leandri, Pres. Luzerne National Bank
PRESENTATION OF STANDARDS	Standard Guard 1st. Btn.,109th Field Artillery
SELECTION: " The Star Spangled Banner"	Assemblage
INVOCATION	Pastor Laura Lewis First Presbyterian Church Nanticoke
WELCOME	Mrs. Coray H. Miller president, wyoming monument association
SPECIAL PRESENTATION	Honorable Paul Kanjorski U.S. House of Representatives
REMARKS	Frank E. P. Conyngham president, wyoming commemorative association
PRESENTATION OF FLORAL TRIBUTES	Mrs. Fred C. Hirner, jr.
VOLLEY TRIBUTE	24th Connecticut Militia
ADDRESS	"Finding the Battle of Wyoming: An oft-told Tale Becomes an Historic Record" Lisa Francavilla, Graduate Research Assistant, Department of History College of William & Mary
DESCRIPTIVE: "The 4th of July" Arranged by John Cacavas	Wyoming Valley Band
RETIREMENT OF STANDARDS	Standard Guard
BENEDICTION	Pastor Laura Lewis
RECESSIONAL MARCH	Wyoming Valley Band

USHERS: Brownie Troop #900, Wyoming

FLORAL TRIBUTES, JULY 4, 2002

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James Wildoner, Central Section Vice-Commander
John Joseph, Past District Commander

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Representative: Harry Heck, James Reimer,
Joseph Vanderhoff, Joseph Lanteigne

Children of the American Revolution, Frances Slocum Society
Representative: Sarah C. Killian, President

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ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY FOURTH COMMEMORATION BY THIS ASSOCIATION

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ANNUAL COMMEMORATION

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Finding the Battle of Wyoming: An Oft-Told Tale Becomes an Historic Record

An Address by

Lisa Francavilla

Graduate Student at the College of William & Mary
at the Observance of the 224th Anniversary
of the Battle and Massacre of Wyoming

July 4, 2002

In the Spring of 2001, just before I finished my undergraduate degree at the University of Colorado in Boulder, I was working part-time as a research assistant to one of my history professors. In the course of this work, I came across a single sentence that said simply "so-and-so and his brother killed in the Wyoming Valley Massacre of 1778." Being from the Pacific Northwest, I knew very little about frontier warfare during the American Revolution and I had no idea where the Wyoming Valley was. The footnote was no help to me either—it said only "Wyoming River Valley Massacre led by Tory Colonel John Butler and 700 Indians." I decided to try to find out more as soon as I had the opportunity.

When I began graduate school at the College of William & Mary last fall, I chose the battle as my thesis topic and decided to focus my attention on telling its story. But the more I searched for information about it, the more numerous and varied were the interpretations I found.

The Wyoming Valley Battle—or Massacre, depending on who is telling the story—has inspired ballads and poems, been included in family histories, appeared in histories of the American Revolution and Pennsylvania, served as the focal point of community celebrations, and been the subject of etchings and paintings. Each variation emphasized certain aspects of the battle, or added or omitted others. I would like to take this opportunity to tell you a little about some of the early versions beginning with the one that became the basis for several of the others, a newspaper story that came out of Poughkeepsie.

The Poughkeepsie story appeared in the *Connecticut Courant* on July 28, 1778 and two days later in Philadelphia in the *Pennsylvania Packet.* From there it went to the August 3 edition of the *Boston Gazette,* the August 8 edition of New York's *Royal Gazette,* and finally came to rest in the *North Carolina Gazette* on September 4. Within two months of this battle on the Pennsylvania frontier, every American colony had heard the Poughkeepsie story.[1]

The story was presented as an account from the "distressed refugees from the Wyoming Settlement...who escaped the general massacre." After a brief prelude in which the author described the prosperous, peaceful Wyoming Valley, the narrative takes a decidedly dramatic and exaggerated turn.

In March 1778, the threat of impending violence at the hands of their enemies drove settlers from within thirty miles to the forts at Wyoming. By April and May "strolling parties of Indians and Tories" were openly terrorizing the settlers, "robbing and plundering" at will; and in June they attacked a small group of men working in a field and killed the wife and children of one of the Tory prisoners who had been taken to Connecticut. With these details, the author demonstrated that alliances no longer mattered and no one was safe from these marauding bands.

Having described these recent past events, the narrative proceeded to the battle. British Colonel John Butler arrived in the valley on the first of July with a force of 1,600 behind him. By July 2, the enemy had appeared on the hill behind Kingston Fort, terrifying the women and children who fled inside. John Butler demanded Exeter Fort, which being full of "treacherous Tories," surrendered willingly. He next attacked Lackawanna Fort, which could only offer a little resistance before it surrendered.[2] Jenkins, his family, and several others in this fort were killed in "a barbarous manner" and most of the women and children were taken prisoner.

On Friday, July 3, American colonels Zebulon Butler and Nathan Denison marched from Wilkesbury Fort to Kingston Fort with about four hundred men, leaving a small number behind as guards. John Butler sent a flag demanding surrender, to which Zebulon Butler answered that "he should not surrender, but was ready to receive them." A second flag was sent calling for immediate surrender or the fort would be "stormed, plundered, and burnt with all its contents." Zebulon proposed a parley instead, to which John agreed.

It was with this purpose in mind, the narrative continued, that the American colonels marched out toward the designated place of parley with their "400 well-armed men." Finding no one there, they proceeded toward the base of the hill where they saw a flag. As they advanced toward it, it receded, until the Americans realized that they had been led into an ambush. Despite "the great disproportion of 1600 to 400," Zebulon and his soldiers "bravely stood and returned fire for three quarters of an hour" with such "briskness and resolution" that the "enemy began to give way." The Tory force was "on the point of retiring," the story explains, when one of Zebulon's men cried out, "either through treachery or cowardice," that the colonel had ordered a retreat. This caused the American soldiers to stop firing. They became panicked and confused and a "total rout ensued." The Americans tried to escape to Wilkesbury but the enemy "pursued them with the fury of Devils" and only seventy of the four hundred men made it back to safety.

On July 4, John Butler sent 196 scalps into Kingston Fort and kept a continual fire upon it. When Colonel Denison took a flag and went to Exeter Fort to know John Butler's terms for surrender, Butler answered only "THE HATCHET." Denison returned to the fort and continued to defend it until July 5 when he and his last few men could hold out no longer. When the fort fell into the hands of Butler and his Indians the real massacre began.

Some of the inhabitants in the forts were taken prisoner, the rest, including women and children, were shut within the forts and burned alive. Next, the enemy destroyed all the other buildings of the settlements, except those belonging to Tories, mutilated and killed the livestock, and rendered all "a scene of desolation and horror almost beyond description, parrallel, or credibility."

The author provided descriptions of several "particular acts of distinguished" barbarity—of Tory soldiers murdering their own entire families, American captains being taken prisoner, tortured and killed, and of Colonel Denison being seen surrounded by the enemy and thus presumed murdered. Lest any readers doubted the veracity of the Poughkeepsie narrative, they were reassured that if it were not for the stories of the survivors, it would "be impossible to believe that human nature could be capable of such prodigeous enormity."

Unfortunately, the authorship of the Poughkeepsie story is unknown. But it bears a striking resemblance to a story printed elsewhere. In the London *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser*, a column entitled "Part of a letter from Philadelphia" appeared on July 12, 1778. The author described a peaceful and flourishing settlement where the lives of "humble families" were torn apart by the ravages of frontier warfare. This letter lacked the brutality reflected in the Poughkeepsie story but the course it followed and the images that were included in it were very similar. It appeared too soon to have been about Wyoming, however. East-bound Atlantic crossings took three weeks or more, depending on the season and the point of departure. Possibly it reflected knowledge of John Butler's attack and destruction of the settlement at Cobleskill, New York, which had taken place on May 30. Whatever its origin and inspiration, perhaps both stories, so similar in detail, shared the same author. Clearly, they were both highly effective uses of propaganda. The Philadelphia letter undoubtedly added fuel to the ongoing debate in Parliament, where opposition to the war, and particularly the use of Indians in battle, was heating up.[3] In the colonies, the Poughkeepsie story fired an already-growing American patriotism. Perhaps that is why it became the recognized historic account, from the moment it first appeared in print, of what became known as the Wyoming Valley Massacre.

In 1802, an "Account of the dreadful devastations of the Wyoming Settlements in July, 1778" made its first appearance as part of a collection of stories highlighting Indian hostilities on the frontiers, and in 1804 Supreme Court justice John Marshall included an account of the battle in his *Life of George Washington.* Based primarily on the details given in the Poughkeepsie story, these retellings elaborated more on the political events leading up to the battle, and the 1802 version introduced a new character into the plot, Joseph Brant.[4]

This version began with General Schuyler's attempts to convince Congress of the imminent danger of Indian attacks on the New York, Pennsylvania, and Virginia frontiers. Congress failed to heed Schuyler's warning, and the Indians and their growing body of Tory allies, "commenced their horrid depredations and hostilities upon the back settlements." [5] Colonel John Butler and Joseph Brant commanded these enemy forces, and Indian hostilities and Tory spies eventually led Butler and Brant to the Wyoming settlement.

In language that epitomizes the popular literary Romanticism of the early nineteenth century, the author changed the tenor of the Poughkeepsie story, but the treachery of the enemy remained and became even more insidious. He also shifted the emphasis: the Tories were still part of the story, but now the Indians were responsible for the violence, minus the Tory pressure pushing them to it.

Events move in the same sequence set by the Poughkeepsie story. In this version, however, when Zebulon Butler went out to parley, the four hundred well-armed men who followed were there only to protect him, and he pursued the flag because he wanted to reassure the flag holder that he meant no harm, not because he was looking for John Butler.[6] The familiar story continues, only now exclamation points appear and the words drip with sympathetic tears, thus making the story very appealing to early nineteenth-century readers.

John Marshall's account came directly from the Poughkeepsie story as well. But to it he added some rather revealing commentary, expressing opinions about the past that also reflected issues and beliefs of his own time. For example, there is little doubt that Marshall laid a good deal of the blame for what occurred in 1778 at the feet of Congress. He states that the "acts of the government did not correspond with the vigor of its resolutions...the necessary preparations were not made, and the inhabitants of the frontiers remained insufficiently protected."[7] It was true that Congress had been slow to respond to the petitions of the settlers who asked repeatedly for permission and funds to muster military units for their defense. Having finally been granted permission, the settlers had gathered, trained, and outfitted the soldiers, only to have them almost immediately ordered by Congress to join General Washington. Once again the settlers were defenseless and they presented new petitions. Congress did not respond to these until it was nearly too late. Marshall did not elaborate on these details in his account, but the records of Congress reflect its hesitancy to act on these petitions.[8] His position as Supreme Court justice acquainted him with the manner in which Congress handled such matters. Marshall's comments were also indicative of the ongoing tensions between the legislative and judicial branches of the new government.

It was also Marshall's opinion Colonel Denison surrendered because he believed that the British could be trusted. Marshall stated that Denison never supposed "it possible that the unresisting could be coolly and deliberately massacred..[and that]..He misunderstood the character of those into whose hands he had fallen."[9] This comment reflected the suspicion with which many Americans still viewed the British in 1804, particularly in light of renewed hostilities between the British and French in 1803. Naval warfare between these two powers disrupted American trade as routes were blocked and American ships, though neutral at that time, were captured. Even as Marshall was writing, there was ongoing debate as to how America should respond and whose side, if either, the country should take.

Finally, it is in Marshall's account of the battle that the first references to American negotiations with the Indians appeared. Marshall stated that the American representatives went to considerable trouble either to persuade the Indians to side with the patriot cause or to remain neutral in the war, but these negotiators were unsuccessful because the British had offered better presents.[10] He went on to explain that "barbarities" were occurring on the frontier despite these negotiations. With these words, Marshall reminded his readers that there had been and continued to be reason to fear the Indians.

Whether it was the Poughkeepsie story, its 1802 version, or Marshall's biography of Washington that first found its way to Europe is unknown. But somehow the story of the Wyoming Valley battle eventually made its way to Thomas Campbell, a poet of great renown, in Scotland. His *Gertrude of Wyoming* was first printed in 1809, and when Sir Walter Scott decided to publish a selection of his literary reviews in 1841, he included his 1809 commentary on Campbell's work.

Campbell included all the ingredients necessary to create an epic poem. His paradise was the pristine, peaceful valley with its abundant plant and animal life, and simple, honest, industrious people. The heroine, Gertrude, was a sweet girl who doted on her widowed father, Albert, the patriarch of the settlement. A foundling boy, having been brought to Albert by a friendly Indian chief, grows up with Gertrude, and the two marry once he has returned from traveling in Europe on his quest for an education.

Neither their wedded bliss nor this utopian settlement were meant to last, however, and soon news came to Albert, by way of the same friendly Indian chief, that "the Monster Brandt,—with all his howling desolating band" was approaching the valley.[11] As the enemy drew near, "Whoop after whoop with rack the ear assail'd," but the settlers, who had intended to go out to meet them, were turned back toward the safety of the forts by Albert. Rather than end the poem with the battle and its aftermath, Campbell chose instead to end it with the mournful funeral of Albert and Gertrude, who had been shot by Indians lurking in the woods just outside the fort's walls—symbols of innocence and virtue destroyed by Indian treachery.

Campbell's epic drew praise for its imagery but criticism for its subject matter, particularly in Britain. In his critique in the May 1809 issue of the *Quarterly Review*, Sir Walter Scott first explained that the setting of the poem was the Wyoming Valley in America, which was "completely laid waste by an incursion of Indians and civilized savages under a leader named Brandt" in 1778.[12] While Scott agreed with the author that it was a worthy topic for a poem, he expressed disappointment that one of Britain's own should choose it. He argued that "Britain was disgraced by the atrocities of her pretended adherents" and that the poet, unlike the historian, "may well excuse himself from selecting a subject dishonourable to his own land."[13] That being said, Scott wondered why Campbell did not have Albert and Gertrude witness more of the destruction before their deaths, thus affording "a more lengthened detail" of "those numerous groups who must necessarily have accompanied the flight or remained to perish with their dwellings."[14] Scott believed that the piece lacked force because the author failed to add more about "the general scene of tumult and horror."[15]

Obviously, Scott was quite familiar with the story of the Wyoming Valley, and his commentary indicates that he believed many of his readers were as well. There is no mention of the British army, and neither the term 'Loyalist' nor 'Tory' appears in the poem. If one had no prior knowledge of the battle, a reader of the poem would believe that only Brant and his Indians were responsible for it. That Scott chastised Campbell for his choice in subject, and also expressed regret over the omission of what he believed were important details, indicates that by 1809 the Poughkeepsie story, and its 1802 retelling, were recognized internationally as American history reliably recorded.

In the 1858 re-publication of *Gertrude of Wyoming,* Campbell tried to correct his mistake about Brant's involvement in the battle. In a note at the back of the text, Campbell stated that "he took the character of Brandt from the common histories of England, all of which represent him as a bloody and bad man (even among savages), and chief agent in the horrible desolation of Wyoming."[16] He explained that this misrepresentation was not corrected until many years later when he met Brant's son, who showed him documents proving that the "accounts of Brandt's cruelties at Wyoming...were gross errors, and that in point of fact Brandt was not even present."[17] Nevertheless, the name remained within the poem exactly as it was first written, and Campbell urged readers to remember that it represented a character only, not the real man. By this point, however, Joseph Brant had been so firmly linked to the Wyoming Valley battle that he had become a permanent part of its historic record.

Earlier writings about the battle recounted the event as historically significant, but the emphasis was placed on memorializing the settlement and eulogizing the people slain here. In the mid-nineteenth century, this emphasis shifted slightly as historians tried to correct the exaggerated horrors of the Poughkeepsie story. Instead, their efforts actually compounded the problem.

Joseph Brant appeared as a prominent figure in the regional history written by Charles Miner and published in 1845. Miner's history stated that the main body of Indians with Major Butler at Wyoming was under Brant. The rest of the account of the battle is a combination of elements from the Poughkeepsie story and details provided to Miner by a few aged survivors and numerous descendants of those in the battle. It is in Miner's history that Queen Esther appeared.[18]

Miner described Queen Esther as "a fury in the form of a woman, [who] assumed the office of executioner with death maul, or tomahawk."[19] Presiding over a group of sixteen or eighteen prisoners who had been arranged in a circle around a large stone, Queen Esther sang and danced as she killed each in turn. The next morning when Forty Fort was turned over to the British, Miner states that Queen Esther marched in at the head of the Indian contingent. In a footnote, Miner acknowledges historian "Col." Stone's assertion that Queen Esther could not have carried on in such a manner. However, Miner believed that Stone "may have misapprehended the person" because it appeared that "she and Col. Denison were acquainted" and he reminded readers of the "kindred atrocities perpetrated by women during the French Revolution."[20] Miner believed history had proven that women were more than capable of such behavior.

In his *Pictorial Field-Book of the Revolution,* Benson Lossing stated that Brant and his warriors, together with various groups of British and Tories, were active on the upper waters of the Susquehanna. He did not include Brant among those at Wyoming, however. Lossing believed adamantly that Brant had been wronged and his name permanently damaged by the assertion of other writers that he had been responsible for the atrocities, despite evidence that proved the contrary. Lossing did include Queen Esther, though, citing Miner's proof that she was known to Colonel Denison as conclusive. [21]

In 1858, George Peck wrote his own version of the history of the Wyoming Valley. In it he recognized the exaggerations of the Poughkeepsie story, but defended those who had believed them, stating that it was no more than could be expected given the reputation of the Tories and the Indians for savagery. Still, he believed it unfortunate that men like Miner and Marshall had not been more thorough in checking their facts before passing them on as historically accurate.[22]

All of these writers did what they believed was necessary to authenticate their histories. They interviewed survivors of the battle or sought out their descendants and visited many of this town's historic sites. Lossing even included sketches and drawings of these sites and the battle artifacts to support his history. And Peck scrutinized numerous primary documents, compared the writings of others, and either supported or refuted their conclusions in his version.

What is evident from the work of all the writers who tackled the history of the battle, is that each professed a desire to get at, in Miner's words, "an exact picture" of what had really taken place here on that day in July 1778. Indeed, this was my own original intent. But as I continued to search backward, I realized that I may never be able to determine with any certainty what really happened or who was or was not there. I could not rely on the sources available to me. Even the original reports from the officers involved varied in several respects. There were also unanswered questions about motives behind actions, and the effects of trauma and time on human memory.

Fortunately, during my search I had become just as interested in the evolution of the battle's historic record as I was in the battle itself. I began to appreciate each version not only as the story of the battle in 1778, but also as a mirror of the social, political, and economic environment of its author or creator. When I began this project ten months ago, one of my professors asked me "What does it matter if there are different versions? Who cares?" I don't know if anyone cares, but I do know that each history, ballad, poem, artwork, and commemorative album serves not only to memorialize the battle and the men who died here, but also preserves images of the community that honored their memory in one way or another.

It is a weighty thing for a historian to realize that the history he or she is studying is not removed from modern life, but is indeed still strongly tied to it. We fool ourselves into believing that we understand how and to what extent the past is linked to the present. But when I first spoke with members of this community two months ago, I suddenly realized a sense of responsibility I had not felt before. I thank everyone here for this realization, as it has made my thesis mean more to me than just a graduate school requirement. And I am incredibly honored to be here today. Thank you.

The majority of this text is a condensed version of the first chapter of my Master's thesis. A copy of the full thesis will be given to the historical society as soon as it has been bound. The thesis title is "The Wyoming Valley Battle and 'Massacre': Images of a Constructed American History." An abstract follows:

The Wyoming Valley surrounds a stretch of the Susquehanna River just as it bends gently from east to west in the northeast corner of present-day Pennsylvania. Within this valley on 3 July 1778, a battle took place between Americans and a combined force of British, Tories, and Indians.

The Wyoming Valley Battle—or Massacre, depending on who is telling the story—has inspired ballads and poems, been included in family histories and recollections, appeared in histories of the American Revolution, Pennsylvania, and the Wyoming region, served as the focal point of community celebrations, and been the subject of etchings and paintings. Each version of the event emphasizes different details and changes, adds, or omits others. Some of the accounts perpetuated misconceptions and misrepresentations about the event until the original identity and purpose had nearly disappeared, leaving something less like history and more like legend behind. Earlier historians romanticized or memorialized the battle, while later scholars tried to discern and disseminate what really happened and why.

Rather than attempt to discover the true image of the battle, this thesis uses the event and several of its versions to explore the creation of a collective memory and a regional historical identity. Examination of some of these versions reveals that each is a mirror of its contemporary social, political, and economic environment. The motives, perspectives, and memories of the authors and creators, whether intentionally or not, altered the battle's historical record. This record illustrates the evolution of Indian/white relations, changing gender roles, and white perceptions of the "others" within the community. It also demonstrates the impact of popular culture, and the role of commemorative ceremonies and monuments in the formation of a collective historical memory.

This study calls into question the reliability not only of secondary sources but of the primary sources on which they depend. Tracing the evolution of the battle's historical record demonstrates that histories are subjective constructions, not objective recollections.

NOTES

[1] Every one of these versions of the Poughkeepsie story is identical. Thus, in the interest of saving space, no other footnote citations will be made while its text is described and discussed.

[2] These forts often had two or even three names in some of the different sources. Kingston Fort was also referred to as Forty Fort, Exeter as Wintermoot, and Lackawanna as Jenkin's Fort. Wilkesbury was referred to alternately as Wilkesbarre or Wyoming Fort.

[3] Peter Oliver in *The American Revolution: Writings from the War of Independence*, John Rhodehamel, ed. (New York: Library of America, 2001), 487-89; The letter was addressed to "Mr. John Wilkinson," possibly a pseudonym for opposition leader John Wilkes.

[4] Joseph Brant, also known as Thayendenegea, was a Mohawk Indian, translator, war chief, and statesman. Well-educated and a Christian, Brant dedicated his life to the education, advancement, and protection of his people. He and some of the other leaders of the Six Nations believed an alliance with the British would secure their lands from further American encroachment. During the war, Brant led bands of Indians, combined with British and Tory soldiers, in the destruction of several frontier settlements. For more on Brant and British/Indian American/Indian alliance negotiations, see Barbara Graymont, *The Iroquois in the American Revolution* (New York: Syracuse Univ., 1972), esp. 115-61; and William L. Stone, *Life of Joseph Brant-Thayendenegea: Including the Border Wars of the American Revolution*...2 vols. (Buffalo, NY: Phinney & Co., 1851); and Isabel T. Kelsay, *Joseph Brant, 1743-1807: A Man of Two Worlds* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse Univ., 1984).

[5] [Ramsey, Gordon?]. "Account of the Dreadful Devastations of the Wyoming Settlement, in July 1778," in *Affecting history of the dreadful distresses of Frederic Manheim's family: to which are added the sufferings of John Corbly's family,and encounter between a white man and two savages, extraordinary bravery of a woman, adventures of Capt. Isaac Stewart, deposition of Massey Herbeson, and an account of the destruction of the settlements at Wyoming* (Bennington, VT: Collier & Stockwell, 1802), 25.

[6] Ibid., 29.

[7] John Marshall, *Life of Washington, Commander in Chief of the American Forces...and First President of the United States* (Philadelphia: C. P. Wayne, 1804), 555.

[8] For more about the acts of Congress, the petitions of those in the settlements, and the sequence of events leading up to the battle, see the *Susquehanna Company Papers,* 10 vols., Robert J. Taylor, ed. (New York: Cornell Univ., 1969); and *The Massacre of Wyoming*, Wyoming Historical and Geological Society (Wilkesbarre, PA: R. Baur & Son, 1895).

[9] Marshall, 559.

[10] Ibid., 554.

[11] Thomas Campbell, *Gertrude of Wyoming: or, The Pennsylvania Cottage* (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1858), 62.

[12] Sir Walter Scott, *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays of Sir Walter Scott, Collected by Himself* (Philadelphia: Cary & Hart, 1841), 197.

[13] Ibid., 198.

[14] Ibid., 205.

[15] Ibid., 198.

[16] Campbell, 93.

[17] Ibid., 93-94.

[18] Charles Miner, *History of Wyoming, In a Series of Letters, from Charles Miner, to his son, William Penn Miner, Esq.* (Philadelphia: J. Crissy, 1845), 222.

[19] Ibid., 226.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Benjamin J. Lossing, *The Pictorial Field-Book of the Revolution...History, Biography, Scenery, Relics, and Traditions of the War for Independence...* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1851), 354. There is less doubt that there was a Queen Esther or that the Bloody Rock episode took place, then there is confusion over just who Queen Esther was and how she came to be at Wyoming. The identity of Queen Esther remains unknown today. What does seem certain is that Lossing, Miner, and Stone had all confused Madame Montour with Catherine/Catrina Montour. Madame Montour was believed to have been the full French daughter of a French governor, who lived among the Indians, was educated, had served as an interpreter at a conference in Philadelphia in 1727, and was believed to have died shortly after 1748. Catherine/Catrina was said to have been a "half-breed." Some historians have speculated that Catherine/Catrina was a grandniece of Madame Montour, or a sister-in-law, or a sister, or no relation at all. Others, like Barbara Graymont, have adamantly denied that she was present or that prisoners were executed in this fashion. See John G. Freeze, "Madame Montour" in *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 3 (1879): 79-87; and William H. Hunter, "Couc, Elizabeth? (La Chenette, Techenet, Montour) in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, 14 vols., Frances G. Halpenny, ed. (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto, 1965), 3:147; and Graymont, 169-174.

[22] George Peck, *Wyoming: Its History, Stirring Incidents, and Romantic Adventures* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1858), 58-59.

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W. Curtis Montz	1983-1987
Coray H. Miller	1988-1990
Frank E.P. Conyngham	1990-

CHAIRMEN OF THE WYOMING COMMEMORATIVE EXERCISES

Harry B. Schooley	1928
General Thomas H. Atherton	1952-1953
General Corey E. Patton	1954
General Frank Townend	1955
Harry B. Schooley, Jr.	1956
William L. Conyngham	1957
Mrs. C. Welles Belin	1958
Bruce Payne	1959
Honorable Daniel J. Flood	1960
General Thomas H. Atherton	1961
Harry B. Schooley, Jr	1962
Charles H. Miner, Jr.	1963
S. Keene Mitchell, Jr	1964
Gail B. Young	1965
Ralph L. Hazeltine	1966
Lieut. General Fletcher C. Booker, Jr.	1967
Gilbert V. Perry	1968
Harry B. Schooley, Jr.	1969
Harrison H. Smith	1970
W. Curtis Montz	1971
George A. Spohrer	1973
Colonel Robert D. Carroll	1974
Phillip Post	1975
Frank G. Harrison	1976-1977
W. Curtis Montz	1978
Dr. Richmond D. Williams	1979
Howard B. Fedrick	1980
Mrs. Bruce Postupack	1981
William H. Siener	1982
L .Burt Logan	1983
Mrs. Robert E. Shortz	1984
Frank E. P. Conyngham	1985
Dr. Monica Reynolds	1986
Harry B. Schooley, III	1987
Richard A. Kastl	1988
Mrs. Coray H. Miller	1989
Frank M. Henry	1990
Frank E. P. Conygham	1991
Stephen B. Killian	1992-1993
Richard M. Hughes, III	1994-1995
James P. Harris, III	1996
John Lord Butler, Jr.	1997
Brian Grove	1998
James T. Shoemaker	1999
Jesse Teitelbaum	2000
Dr. Monica Reynolds	2001
William V. Leandri	2002

With the exception of 1928, for the Sesqui-Centennial Celebration, the president acted as chairman, until 1954