

= Lochry 's Defeat =

Lochry 's Defeat , also known as the Lochry massacre , was a battle fought on August 24 , 1781 , near present @-@ day Aurora , Indiana , in the United States . The battle was part of the American Revolutionary War (1775 ? 1783) , which began as a conflict between Great Britain and the Thirteen Colonies before spreading to the western frontier , where American Indians entered the war as British allies . The battle was short and decisive : about one hundred Indians of local tribes led by Joseph Brant , a Mohawk military leader who was temporarily in the west , ambushed a similar number of Pennsylvania militiamen led by Archibald Lochry . Brant and his men killed or captured all of the Pennsylvanians without suffering any casualties .

Lochry 's force was part of an army being raised by George Rogers Clark for a campaign against Detroit , the British regional headquarters . Clark , the preeminent American military leader on the northwestern frontier , worked with Governor Thomas Jefferson of Virginia in planning an expedition to capture Detroit , by which they hoped to bring an end to British support of the Indian war effort . In early August 1781 , Clark and about 400 men left Fort Pitt in Pennsylvania by boat , floating down the Ohio River a few days ahead of Lochry and his men , who were trying to catch up .

Joseph Brant 's force was part of a combined British and Indian army being raised to counter Clark 's offensive . Brant had too few men to challenge Clark , but when he intercepted messengers traveling between Clark and Lochry , he learned about Lochry 's smaller group bringing up the rear . When Lochry landed to feed his men and horses , Brant launched his overwhelmingly successful ambush . Because Clark had been able to recruit only a fraction of the men he needed for his campaign , the loss of Lochry 's men resulted in the cancellation of Clark 's expedition .

= = Background = =

In the Ohio River valley , the American Revolutionary War was fought primarily between American colonists south and west of the Ohio River (in present @-@ day Western Pennsylvania , West Virginia , and Kentucky) and American Indians with their British allies north of the river (now the Midwestern United States) . From Detroit , the British recruited and supplied Indian war parties to attack American forts and settlements , hoping to divert American military resources from the primary theater of war in the East as well as keeping the Indians ? and the lucrative fur trade ? firmly attached to the British Empire . Indians of the Ohio Country , primarily the Shawnee , Mingo , Delaware , and Wyandot , hoped to drive American settlers out of Kentucky and reclaim their hunting grounds , which they had lost in the Treaty of Fort Stanwix (1768) and Lord Dunmore 's War (1774) .

The Americans sought to hold on to Kentucky and to secure territorial claims to the region by launching sporadic expeditions against hostile Indian settlements north of the Ohio River . George Rogers Clark , a Virginia militia officer in Kentucky , believed that the Americans could ultimately win the border war by capturing Detroit . He laid the groundwork for this objective in 1779 by seizing the British outpost of Vincennes and capturing the British commander of Detroit , lieutenant governor Henry Hamilton . " This stroke " , said Clark , " will nearly put an end to the Indian War . " Clark prepared for a Detroit campaign in 1779 and again in 1780 , but each time called off the expedition because of insufficient men and supplies . " Detroit lost for want of a few Men " , he lamented .

= = Planning Clark 's campaign = =

In late 1780 , Clark traveled east to consult with Thomas Jefferson , the governor of Virginia , about an expedition in 1781 . Jefferson devised a plan which called for Clark to lead 2 @,@ 000 men against Detroit , with the hope of preventing a rumored British offensive against Kentucky . To avoid potential conflicts over rank with Continental Army colonels while organizing the campaign , Clark requested that Jefferson promote him to brigadier general in the Continental Army . Army rules precluded Clark from receiving a Continental commission , however , because Clark held his colonel 's commission from Virginia rather than the United States . Jefferson instead promoted Clark to the

Virginia rank of " Brigadier General of the forces to be embodied on an expedition westward of the Ohio " . In January 1781 , Clark left for Fort Pitt in western Pennsylvania to assemble his men and supplies . His goal was to have the expedition ready for departure from Fort Pitt by June 15 .

As with earlier campaigns , recruiting enough men was a problem . Jefferson called for the western counties of Virginia to provide militia manpower for Clark 's campaign , but county officials protested that they could not spare the men . Militiamen did not want to set out on a lengthy expedition ? they would be gone for six months to a year ? while their families and homes were threatened by Lord Cornwallis 's army in the east , by Indian raids from the north , and by Loyalists at home . Because of this resistance , Jefferson called for volunteers rather than ordering the militia to accompany the expedition .

In addition to volunteers , Jefferson also arranged for a regiment of 200 regular Continental soldiers under Colonel John Gibson to accompany Clark . Longstanding tensions between Continental Army officers and the militia made such cooperation problematic , however . Colonel Daniel Brodhead , the Continental Army commander at Fort Pitt , refused to detach men for Clark 's campaign because he was staging his own expedition against the Delaware Indians , who had recently entered the war against the Americans . Brodhead marched into the Ohio Country and destroyed the Delaware Indian capital of Coshocton in April 1781 . This resulted in the Delaware becoming more determined enemies , and deprived Clark of badly needed men and supplies for the Detroit campaign .

Clark also had problems recruiting men from Pennsylvania : lingering resentment due to the recently settled border dispute between Virginia and Pennsylvania meant that few Pennsylvanians were willing to participate in an expedition headed by a Virginian . Clark 's controversial attempt to draft Pennsylvanians into service created even more ill will . One Pennsylvanian who supported Clark was Colonel Archibald Lochry , commander of the Westmoreland County militia . On July 4 , 1781 , Lochry wrote to Joseph Reed , the President of the Supreme Executive Council of Pennsylvania :

We have very distressing times Here this summer . The Enemy are almost constantly in our County Killing and Captivating the Inhabitants . I see no way we can have of defending ourselves other than by offensive operations . General Clarke [sic] has Requested our assistance to Enable him to carry an Expedition into the Indian Country .

With Reed 's approval , Lochry began recruiting men for Clark 's expedition . Many Westmoreland men did not want to leave their homes undefended , and so Lochry was only able to enlist about 100 volunteers for the campaign .

When Clark finally left Fort Pitt in August 1781 , he was accompanied by only 400 men , although he expected to meet Lochry and his Pennsylvanians at Fort Henry (present Wheeling , West Virginia) . Clark was angry about the lack of support given his campaign , but he still hoped that the Kentucky militia , who were to rendezvous with him at Fort Nelson (Louisville , Kentucky) , would provide additional men . He intended to at least carry out an expedition against enemy Indians if he did not have enough men to attack Detroit .

= = Indian and British preparations = =

Thanks to an effective intelligence network , British officials and their American Indian allies were aware of Clark 's planned expedition as early as February 1781 . In April , a council was held at Detroit in order to prepare a defense . The commander at Detroit was Major Arent DePeyster , Henry Hamilton 's replacement , who reported to Sir Frederick Haldimand , the Governor General of British North America . DePeyster used agents of the British Indian Department such as Alexander McKee and Simon Girty , both of whom had close relations with American Indians of the Ohio Country , to coordinate British and Indian military operations .

Joining the Detroit conference was an Iroquois delegation headed by Joseph Brant (or Thayendanegea) , a military leader of the Mohawks , one of the Six Nations of the Iroquois Confederacy . Brant was a minor war chief when the war began , but his ability to speak English and his connections with British officials made him prominent in British eyes . When Brant traveled to London in 1775 to discuss Mohawk land grievances , Lord George Germain , the colonial secretary ,

vaguely promised him that if the Iroquois supported the Crown during the war , native land grievances would be redressed after the rebellion had been suppressed . Brant returned home and encouraged the Iroquois , who lived mostly in upstate New York , to enter the war as British allies . Four tribes of the Six Nations eventually did so .

Brant became a skilled partisan commander during the war , initially leading about 100 men known as " Brant 's Volunteers " . Because the traditional Iroquois leaders regarded Brant as an upstart who was too closely connected to the British , most of his volunteers were white Loyalists . Brant gained additional native followers during the war and was perhaps the only Indian to be commissioned as a British captain , but he was not , as has sometimes been claimed , the head war chief of the Iroquois . Brant took part in a joint British @-@ Indian invasion of New York in 1777 , which for the British ended in a disastrous surrender at Saratoga . Afterwards , he led numerous frontier raids , both before and after the massive American invasion of 1779 , which left the Iroquois lands devastated .

In April 1781 , with the New York frontier in ruins , the British transferred Brant to Detroit . The official reason for the move was that Brant was needed to help rally Indian support to counter Clark 's anticipated campaign . An apparent unofficial cause was that Brant , who was usually a moderate drinker , had been transferred after getting into a drunken fistfight with an Indian Department officer at Fort Niagara . Although the " Western Indians " of the Ohio Country and Detroit region had strained relations with the Iroquois , they cautiously welcomed Brant 's help .

At the Detroit council , DePeyster encouraged the Indians to unite and to send a force to oppose Clark 's expedition . In May 1781 , Indian leaders and Indian Department officials began to gather warriors at the Wyandot town of Upper Sandusky for this purpose . In mid @-@ August , Brant and George Girty , Simon 's brother , headed south to the Ohio River with about 90 Iroquois , Shawnee , and Wyandot warriors , as well as a few white men , while McKee and Simon Girty continued to collect reinforcements .

= = Lochry follows Clark = =

In early August , Clark moved his troops by boat down the Ohio River to Wheeling , where he was to rendezvous with Lochry and his men . After waiting five days longer than planned , Clark decided to leave Wheeling without Lochry because men were deserting the expedition , and Clark believed that if he got them further away from home , they would be less inclined to run off . When Lochry finally reached Wheeling on August 8 , he found that Clark had departed only a few hours earlier . Lochry sent the following message to Clark :

My dear General . I arrived at this Post this moment . I find that there is neither Boats , provisions or ammunition left . I have sent a small canoe after you to know what is to be done . If you send back these articles mentioned and with directions where I will overtake you , I will follow . We are upwards of one hundred strong including Light Horse .

Writing from Middle Island on August 9 , Clark replied to Lochry :

I am heartily sorry that after waiting so long for you I would set out but a day before your arrival I am exceeding unhappy at our not joining at Weelind [Wheeling] , but don 't know that either of us are to blame , the militia with us continue to desert , and consequently I cannot remain long in one place otherways should be happy in forming a junction here I shall move on slowly for the reasons before recited and you will use the greatest industry as you cannot possibly pass us without our knowledge . I have suffered much lately but you again encourage me .

After building boats , Lochry and his men set off from Wheeling , hoping to catch up with the main body of the expedition . Meanwhile , Clark left Major Charles Cracraft with provisions and a small group of men on Camp Three Island to await Lochry 's arrival . Further down the Ohio , Clark stopped at the mouth of the Kanawha River , but again he decided to keep moving in order to prevent desertion . Clark left a letter fastened to a pole which instructed Lochry to keep following .

On August 14 , Lochry wrote to Clark that his men were " in great spirits and determined to go where ordered " , and that he had even apprehended 16 deserters from Clark 's force and were bringing them along . The next day , Lochry found Major Cracraft on Camp Three Island . Cracraft

turned over a large horse boat to Lochry , and then left by canoe to rejoin Clark 's troops . The following day , on August 16 , Lochry sent Captain Samuel Shannon and seven men with a letter to Clark . In the letter , Lochry asked Clark to leave more provisions because he was running short of flour and did not want to be delayed by having to send out hunters . Lochry sent two men out to hunt the next day , but they never returned .

= = Ambush on the Ohio = =

On the night of August 18 , 1781 , Clark and his men floated past the mouth of the Great Miami River , near the present @-@ day border between Ohio and Indiana . Brant 's party was hidden on the northern bank of the Ohio , but with too few men to confront Clark 's larger force , Brant remained silent and let Clark pass unhindered . This was a missed opportunity for the British and Indian war effort : had McKee and Simon Girty not been delayed while gathering reinforcements , they would have been able to ambush Clark , whom the Indians feared more than any other commander , at a moment when desertion had made him vulnerable . According to historian Randolph Downes , " Students of the life of George Rogers Clark have never sufficiently emphasized how close he and his expedition came to utter destruction as they descended the Ohio River in 1781 . "

Although he missed a chance to ambush Clark , Brant soon found another target . On August 21 , Brant captured Major Cracraft and six men who were trying to catch up with Clark . Brant also captured a few men from Captain Shannon 's detachment . From the letters his prisoners carried , Brant learned that Lochry 's party was not far behind . Brant sent a letter to McKee , urging him to hurry because " whilst the enemy are scadred [scattered] we can easy manage them " . Brant prepared to attack Lochry regardless of whether McKee 's reinforcements arrived in time .

At about 8 : 00 a.m. on August 24 , the day of the battle , Lochry 's party landed on the northern bank of the Ohio River , near the mouth of a creek about 11 miles (18 km) below the mouth of the Great Miami . According to some brief accounts , Lochry was lured ashore in a ruse by Brant , who left captured Americans in sight and attacked after Lochry landed . According to more detailed accounts , however , Brant had planned this deception , but the Pennsylvanians happened to land a short distance upriver without having seen the captives . Nevertheless , Lochry 's men came ashore close enough that Brant , who had not yet been reinforced by McKee , was still able to make his attack .

Although Lochry knew that he was in hostile territory , he landed his little flotilla after two days of nonstop travel because he needed to feed his men and horses . After landing , the Americans cooked fresh buffalo meat for breakfast and cut grass for their horses , apparently not taking proper security precautions . Concealed in the nearby woods , Brant repositioned his men and then opened fire , taking the Americans completely by surprise . Some Americans fought until their ammunition ran out , although others apparently did not have their weapons ready when the attack began . Some of the Americans attempted to escape by boat , but Brant had anticipated this and had positioned men in canoes to cut off any retreat . Seeing that he was hopelessly trapped , Lochry called for his men to surrender .

Although the two sides were about even in number , Brant had won a lopsided victory . All of the Americans were killed or captured ; none of Brant 's men were injured . According to a detailed list prepared by Brant and sent to Detroit , 37 Americans were killed and 64 were captured . Some of the American dead ? some sources say most ? had been executed after surrendering . This included Lochry , who was sitting on a log after the battle when a Shawnee warrior killed him with a tomahawk blow to the head . According to some accounts , Brant prevented the Indians from killing even more of the prisoners . The dead were scalped and left unburied .

= = Aftermath = =

After the battle , the native warriors and rangers hesitated to close on Clark 's main force . Brant marched the prisoners up the Miami River . On August 27 , he rendezvoused with about 300 Indians

led by McKee and about 100 Butler 's Rangers led by Captain Andrew Thompson . Leaving a detachment to guard the prisoners , the combined Indian and British force of about 500 set off towards Fort Nelson in pursuit of Clark 's main army . On September 9 , two captured Americans revealed that Clark 's expedition had been called off because of a shortage of men . Satisfied that the campaign had been successfully concluded , most of the British @-@ Indian army dispersed , although McKee convinced 200 men to accompany him on a raid into Kentucky , which culminated in what Kentuckians called the " Long Run Massacre " .

The 64 American prisoners were divided between the tribes . A few of these prisoners were subsequently killed . As was their custom , the Indians took some of the prisoners home and ritually adopted them in order to replace fallen warriors . Most , however , were sold to the British in Detroit and then transferred to a prison in Montreal . A few managed to escape from captivity ; the remainder were released after the war ended in 1783 . Of the 100 or more men who had taken part in Lochry 's expedition , the number who eventually made it back home has been estimated from " less than half " to " more than half . "

Lochry 's Defeat , as the battle generally came to be called in American history , was a devastating blow to the people of Westmoreland County . Nearly every home was affected . Residents of the county were alarmed at having lost so many of their most experienced soldiers at a time when they were needed to defend the frontier . On December 3 , 1781 , General William Irvine , the new commander at Fort Pitt , wrote to Joseph Reed :

I am sorry to inform your Excellency that this Country has got a severe stroke by the loss of Colonel Lochry and about one hundred (tis said) of the best men of Westmoreland County , including Captain Stockely & his Company of Rangers . They were going down the Ohio on General Clarke 's Expedition , many accounts agree that they were all killed or taken at the mouth of the Miame [sic] River . I believe [they were] chiefly killed . This misfortune , added to the failure of General Clarke 's Expedition , has filled the people with great dismay . Many talk of retiring to the East side of the Mountain early in the Spring . Indeed there is great reason to apprehend that the Savages , & perhaps the British from Detroit will push us hard in the Spring , and I believe there never were Posts ? nor a Country ? in a worse state of defence .

The loss of Lochry 's detachment proved to be the fatal setback to Clark 's 1781 campaign . In early September , Clark held a series of councils with Kentucky militia officers at Fort Nelson . Clark still advocated carrying out an expedition into the Ohio Country , saying that " I am ready to lead you on to any Action that has the most distant prospect of Advantage , however daring it may appear to be . " Given the lateness of the season and the shortage of available men , the council overruled Clark and decided instead to remain on the defensive , although they proposed that another campaign against Detroit should be carried out the next year . On October 1 , 1781 , a disappointed Clark wrote , " My chain appears to have run out . I find myself enclosed with a few troops , in a trifling fort , and shortly expect to bear the insults of those who have for several years been in continual dread of me . " Clark led an expedition against the Shawnee towns on the Great Miami River in 1782 , one of the last actions of the war , but he was never able to mount an expedition against Detroit .

Sometime after Lochry 's Defeat , Brant and Simon Girty got into an altercation along the Ohio River . According to contemporary gossip , Girty took exception to Brant 's boasting about the success of the expedition , perhaps because Girty believed his brother George deserved more credit . The two men , who were reportedly drunk , came to blows , which ended when Brant slashed Girty in the head with his sword . The wound , which took several months to heal , left a scar on Girty 's forehead . When Brant returned to Detroit in October , he had a sword cut on his leg , which had become infected and initially looked as if it would result in amputation . The wound was officially reported as accidentally self @-@ inflicted , although gossipers said that it was the result of the fight with Girty . Brant 's Iroquois companions returned home , but Brant was compelled to stay in Detroit over the winter in order to recover .

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British letters relating to Lochry 's Defeat were published in Pioneer Collections : Collections and Researches Made by the Pioneer Society of the State of Michigan 2nd ed . , vols . 10 and 19 (Lansing , 1908 ? 13) , and are online at the American Memory website , published by the Library of Congress . Highlights include :

Brant to McKee August 21 , 1781 . Brant writes that Clark has just passed and that Lochry is approaching .

Thompson and McKee to DePeyster August 29 , 1781 Thompson and McKee report Brant 's victory and forward captured American correspondence .

De Peyster to Captains Thompson and McKee , September 13 , 1781 . De Peyster expresses satisfaction at Brant 's victory , mixed with disappointment that the Indians did not move against Clark .

John Macomb to Colonel Claus , September 14 , 1781 . A merchant at Detroit reports news of Brant 's victory .

Thompson to DePeyster September 26 , 1781 . Thompson reports on the dispersal of the Indians after news that Clark 's expedition is cancelled .

McKee to DePeyster September 26 , 1781 . McKee relays his activities after the battle , and the difficulty in getting the Indians to pursue Clark .

DePeyster to McKee October 4 , 1781 . DePeyster instructs McKee to tell the Indians that no rum will be distributed at Detroit until he is sure Clark is finished for the season .

Haldimand to DePeyster October 6 , 1781 . Haldimand expresses hope that Brant 's example will inspire the Indians to make further efforts against Clark .

Haldimand to Germain , October 23 , 1781 . Haldimand sends word to London about Brant 's victory .

Haldimand to unknown November 1 , 1781 . Haldimand complains that the money spent on the Indians this year had been " thrown away " , with the exception of Brant and his 100 men .