



George Rogers Clark National Historical Park

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Historical Site Bulletin



TRANS-APPALACHIAN INDIAN TRIBES AT THE TIME OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

The many Indian tribes located between the Appalachian Mountains and Mississippi River constituted a strong military force on the western frontier throughout the long years of the Revolutionary War. Although never unified, the warriors from these tribes greatly outnumbered both the British and the Americans in this region. The threat posed to their way of life by the beginning of the American settlement west of the Appalachian Mountains caused most of the Indians to favor the British. Starting in 1777, English officials actively encouraged the Indians to attack the rebellious American frontiersmen by supplying warriors with weapons and ammunition. In addition, successful war parties returning with scalps and prisoners were rewarded with presents. The Indians' major tactic was surprise; this, combined with their wilderness fighting skills, made them formidable adversaries.

THE MIAMI had their main villages at present-day Fort Wayne, Indiana. Two important sub-groups of the Miami were the Wea, located at present-day Lafayette, Indiana and the Piankashaw, centered further south on the Wabash River in the Vincennes area. Only the Miami gave substantial support to the British during the Revolution; the Wea seemed to prefer remaining neutral and most of the Piankashaw openly favored the Americans.

THE DELAWARE, already pushed westward from the Atlantic coast by pressure from the white

advance, had taken up residence in present-day Ohio and Indiana by the start of the Revolution. During the conflict, the tribe divided into pro-British, pro-American, and neutral factions. Those Delawares favoring the English gained in numbers and became increasingly active during the latter part of the conflict.

THE SHAWNEE were among the most active and relentless tribes in raiding the American frontier settlements in what is now West Virginia and Kentucky. In retaliation, their villages in present-day southern Ohio were attacked by forces under George Rogers Clark in 1780 and 1782.

THE MINGO were a detached portion of the Iroquois that had migrated westward from present-day New York into what is now western Pennsylvania and eastern Ohio by the time of the Revolution. Although not large in numbers, they took a very active part in raiding American settlements during the war.

THE WYANDOT, centered along the southern shore of Lake Erie, were very active in their support of the British during the war. In addition to raiding American settlements, they constituted a major buffer against any contemplated attack on the British headquarters at Detroit by American forces from the East.

THE POTAWATOMI were split in their allegiance during the Revolution. The western

Potawatomi around the shores of Lake Michigan tended to favor Clark and the Americans, while the eastern portion of the tribe located at Detroit was loyal to the British. During war, the latter group took part in raids on American settlements in Pennsylvania, Ohio and Kentucky.

THE OTTAWA, located near present-day Detroit, Michigan, were very active as British allies. Warriors from this tribe joined war parties against the American frontier settlements throughout the conflict.

THE KICKAPOO, situated in the Illinois country, did not aid the British to any extent until the latter part of the conflict. They spent most of the war fighting their traditional enemies, the Chickasaw.

THE SAC and FOX had formed a close alliance in the mid-1700s. Occupying land along the Mississippi River in present-day northern Illinois, they did not elect to play an active role during most of the Revolution.

THE WINNEBAGO and MENOMINEE, located in present-day Wisconsin, were among the most loyal of the British allies. Warriors from these tribes took part in campaigns against the Americans in locations as widely separated as New York and what is now Missouri.

THE CHIPPEWA extended in range

through what is now Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota and Ontario. During the Revolution, the portion of the tribe in the western Great Lakes region continued to devote most of their attention to the fur trade. Warriors from eastern Chippewa bands near the British headquarters at Detroit were more active militarily and raided American settlements in Pennsylvania, Virginia and Kentucky.

THE CHEROKEE were a large tribe living in what is now western North Carolina and eastern Tennessee.

Drawn early into the war on the side of the British, they soon suffered reverses from the Americans. Thereafter, the most hostile portion of the tribe, the Chickamauga, moved westward to the middle Tennessee region and continued their warfare against the American settlers around present-day Nashville.

THE CREEK, located in present-day Alabama and western Georgia, remained neutral for a time, but eventually the majority took the side of the British. The Upper Creek joined the Chickamauga faction of the Cherokee in

attacking American Settlements in the middle Tennessee region.

THE CHICKASAW, situated in what is now northern Mississippi, had been strongly allied to the British throughout the 1700s. Removed from the main theater of the war, their major efforts were made against Clark's western outpost at Fort Jefferson near the junction of the Ohio and Mississippi rivers.

THE CHOCTAW, located in present-day southern Mississippi, were officially pro-British, but contributed little to the war effort.

