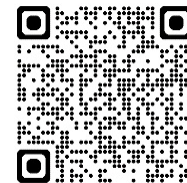




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From the President's Desk . . .

Central Ohio in Late 1775: Winter Shadows of a Distant Revolution

by Mike Wise

When most people picture the opening months of the American Revolution, they imagine the smoking ruins of Lexington and Concord or the siege lines outside Boston. But far beyond the settled Atlantic seaboard, the war's shadow stretched deep into the Ohio Country, quietly unsettling old balances and turning the region's future on its head.

In late 1775, the weather in central Ohio was cold, unsettled, and intermittently snowy—typical of an early-winter Ohio Valley climate of the time. It was not a catastrophic winter, but it brought enough frost, ice, snowfall, and mud to heighten isolation, complicate diplomacy, and deepen the tensions of a frontier on edge as the Revolution unfolded. The land was certainly more forest than farmland—an expanse of dense woods, semi-frozen rivers, and scattered Native villages rather than towns or colonial homesteads.

Yet the conflict between Great Britain and its rebellious colonies was anything but distant. For the Shawnee, Delaware (Lenape), and Wyandot peoples whose towns lined the Scioto and Muskingum rivers, the Anglo-American war threatened to redraw the lines of power in their “akiwaki” (Shawnee), “hàkink” (Delaware), or “onontä” (Wyandot) homeland.

British agents, operating out of Detroit and other Canadian garrisons, crept through the territory that winter. Their goal was simple: to turn Indigenous anxieties against the colonists pushing west over the mountains. Councils were convened, laden with gifts—gunpowder, blankets, tools—and warnings that the American rebels meant to seize every acre between the Appalachians and the Mississippi. Yet despite these promises, the British position was fragile. Their forts were distant, their supply lines thin, (Goto Page 2)

End of Year Giving

As the year comes to a close, the Big Walnut Area Historical Society invites you to support the preservation of our local history. Your tax-deductible gift helps maintain our historic buildings, care for the museum's collections, and support educational programs that keep the Big Walnut story alive.

As an IRS 509(a)(2) public charity (a subset of IRS 501(c)(3) public charity) the Society depends on charitable contributions to continue our work. Gifts made by December 31 may be eligible for a tax deduction (please consult your tax advisor).

Donations postmarked by December 31 may be made to the Society at P.O. Box 362, Sunbury, Ohio 43074. Thank you for helping preserve our shared heritage.

Best regards, Terry Michael Wise, BWAHS President

Christmas on the Square

A record crowd of 650 people came into the Myers Inn Museum between 4 and 8 p.m. on December 6th for Christmas on the Square. Mike Wise dressed as General Rosecrans greeted visitors on the side walk. OSU Brass Alumni band members played on the Myers Inn porch. Docents in each room answered questions and shared tidbits of the Myers Inn and local history. Rick Helwig, portraying Nast's Civil War Era Santa, passed out candy canes to children. Trustees and Friends provided homemade cookies and our signature punch.

A Trunk of Nathan Marble

Patricia Garcia of Williamsburg, VA, is a descendent of Nathan Marble who was born in Belmont, Pa. in 1829, moved to Knox Co., Ohio, then Sunbury in 1845. Patricia placed the stage coach era trunk in BWAHS Trustee Chris Killea's car to come to Sunbury to be displayed in the Myers Inn Museum with the teacher's desk and table in the 1816 room which he made and his tool box in the Civil War room on the 2nd floor.



From the President's Desk

Continued from Page 1

and many Native leaders remembered past disappointments.

On the American side, confusion and anxiety reigned. Continental officers in Pennsylvania and Virginia feared that British influence in Ohio might trigger coordinated attacks on frontier settlements. Scouts and small bands of “Long Knives/Long Hunters” (see last month’s article) slipped through the forests, watching nervously for signs that the tribes were preparing for war. Rumors alone—an intercepted message, a trader’s warning—could send families fleeing back across the mountains to the East.

For the Native nations themselves, the choices were agonizing. The Delaware counseled neutrality, wary of being drawn into yet another conflict not of their making. The Shawnee, still recovering from Lord Dunmore’s War a year earlier, distrusted both sides. American envoys promised peace and fair trade; British agents promised support against colonial encroachment. Each offered gifts and veiled threats, and each promise invited skepticism.

Thus, the closing weeks of 1775 became a time of tense waiting. Apart from scattered raids and counter-raids, outright warfare held off, but the die was cast. The Revolution had transformed central Ohio into a diplomatic battleground, its quiet woods pulsing with rumors, shifting alliances, and the uneasy energy of a border on the brink. The fate of the future Midwest was already in motion—even if only a handful of people realized it. The Revolution, it turned out, would find its own path through the forest.

Who Was Nathan Marble?

By Polly Horn

In Spring of 1978 during a photo shoot to advertize the Arts and Crafts Fair sponsored by Community Library to be held on Sunbury Square, I noticed the trees were loosing their leaves. I contacted the Forestry Department and the U.S. Department of Agriculture to determine what could be done to save the trees. We took a plan to Sunbury Council to save the trees and they agreed to allow it. We would open an account in Sunbury Savings and Loan and invited anyone to add to it. I had a Letter to the Editor written by N. Marble saying she or he had been asked to plant trees on the

Square. The wording in the letter led me to believe it was written by a woman and I thought this was unique.

Lawrence and William Myers had platted their village like a typical New England village with a village square in the center, commercial areas surrounding it and residential area surrounding that. A fence surrounded the square so live stock could graze there. Each farmer had an earmark cut into an ear on each of his animals. These were recorded in the original Berkshire Township Record book. The families took turns watching the animals while the other families cleared the land and built homes. Eventually people missed the trees on the square and the city fathers asked N. Marble to plant new trees in **1858**. Nathan Marble was often called Sunbury’s Johnny Appleseed.

One day while walking in the Sunbury Cemetery, I saw a large monument with a sphere on it. Around it were tombstones for Nathan Marble’s wives. Dan Daugherty, who fed the trees for the Marble Tree Fund discovered Nathan planted native trees in a circle of 8 in each quadrant of the square, **8 from 1858**. On the advice of the Forestry Division, we ordered 10 Ash trees who had no known pests, grew quickly and make a pretty shade trees.

The Marble Tree Fund existed for many years. Feeding the trees one year and pruning them another. Leaves were raked up and taken to the village storage where they would turn into mulch to put around the trees by over a hundred Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts each spring.

One year some of the Sunbury Council members felt the care of the trees should be done through council and the Marble Tree Fund was disbanded and the village hired tree care.

As many of you know, the ash trees borer hit the ash trees on Sunbury square killing all but one, probably one of Marble’s original trees. It too was dying when Les Mohlner got permission to have a wood sculpture made like Johnny Appleseed.

Johnny became a photo op for residents and those passing thru town. In the last few years the old tree was shifting as the roots were rotting out under it. The statue was sent away to be treated and now stands at the entrance to an old apple orchard near the bike path on Granville Street. Some suspect Johnny planted it.

-More about Nathan Marble in future Newsletters.