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From the President's Desk

Central Ohio in February 1776:

A Frontier Poised For Thaw and Trouble

by Mike Wise

In February 1776, central Ohio remained gripped by winter, but beneath the snow and ice, the pressures of revolution were intensifying. The Ohio Country remained far from the main theaters of war, yet the struggle between Great Britain and the American colonies increasingly shaped daily life along the frontier. What had been a season of quiet waiting in January became one of cautious preparation as both sides anticipated the changes warmer weather would bring.

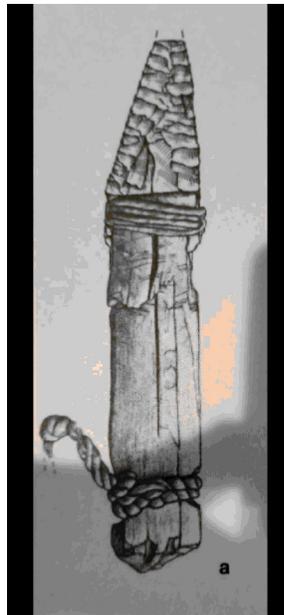
British officials based in Detroit used the winter months not merely to maintain alliances but also to prepare Native partners for possible spring action. Messengers traveled snowbound trails to reach the villages of the Shawnee, Wyandot, and Delaware, where councils emphasized the growing threat posed by American expansion. Trade goods and ammunition continued to circulate, reinforcing the Crown's claim that an alliance offered protection. At the same time, doubts persisted. Distance, limited supplies, and the uncertain outcome of the war led some Native leaders to question whether British power could truly safeguard their homelands.

At Fort Pitt, American authorities also shifted from passive watchfulness toward readiness. Though large troop movements remained difficult, the post became increasingly focused on intelligence gathering and contingency planning. Scouts tracked British activity and Native diplomacy, while militia officers quietly prepared defensive measures for the spring. Along the frontier, settlers strengthened cabins and organized local watches. Rumors still circulated, but they now prompted preparation rather than panic.

For Native communities in central Ohio, February brought heightened urgency. Winter scarcity (Goto 2)

Originally Scheduled for Oct. 14 now March 10 . . .

Orndorf Shares Native Tools



Brad Orndorf will present local Native American Tools and Stone Implements at the March 10th meeting of the Big Walnut Area Historical Society in the Myers Inn Museum beginning at 7:30 p.m.

Brad was born in Columbus to Heidi and Dave Orndorf, graduated in Big Walnut Class of '96. He is the father of 4 and has one grandson. He is the owner of Orndorf Construction.

Brad was introduced to collecting local Native American Stone Tools by his father when he was very young and continues to collect and study them.

During his program, you will learn about the process of manufacturing these artifacts, along with the materials used. Brad will be sharing items from his collection for discussion. Artifact types he will cover are Flint Tools and projectiles, Stone Tools, Slate Artifacts, and Exotics.

Roberts Retires as Program Chair

Roger Roberts became a Trustee in 2009 (We opened in 2010). Then the Program Committee was Ken Crawl and Carol Wirick. Roger chaired the Volunteer Committee in 2009. He said he would trade someone. Alice Chapan joined him the Volunteers. In 2010, Carol Wirick, Ken Crawl. Suzanne Allen and Roger became the Program Committee. Slowly the others drifted to other things and Roger continued with the Program Committee securing interesting speakers or topics for an average of 10 programs a year for 16 years. President Mike Wise presented him a plaque at the recent February meeting.



From the President's Desk

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forced hunting parties to range farther from home,

increasing the risks of encounter. The Delaware continued to advocate neutrality, hoping to avoid entanglement in another devastating war. The Shawnee, recalling recent defeats and broken treaties, debated whether restraint or preemptive action offered the better path to survival. These discussions reflected the growing realization that neutrality might not hold once the frontier reopened.

As the month progressed, subtle environmental changes signaled transition. Daylight lengthened, snow softened, and river ice weakened. With the coming thaw, movement would become easier for traders, diplomats, and warriors alike. Both British and American leaders understood that the balance of power along the Ohio frontier could shift quickly once spring arrived.

February 1776 closed without open fighting, but unlike the frozen uncertainty of January, it ended with both sides quietly positioning themselves for action. Central Ohio stood on the threshold of change, its forests and river valleys poised to become active corridors of war rather than silent winter barriers.

Remember the Blizzard of 1978?

By Polly Horn from The Sunbury News Feb. 2, 1978

I remember Wednesday, January 30, as a balmy day heralding Spring was coming. That evening it began to rain and we woke up to howling wind at 2 a.m. By daybreak Thursday, the full force of the 1978 Blizzard was upon us. By daybreak Thursday, local firemen, and law enforcement authorities were manning their battle stations. John Whitney, editor of "The Sunbury News" wrote the following account of the happenings.

"As 70 mph winds raced across frozen ice covered lines, electricity falter. Many local areas were without electricity as early as 6 a.m. Sunbury went off at 7:30. BST&G Firechief Chuck Nettlehorst was eating breakfast at 6:30 when he heard of the extent of storm problems elsewhere and set off the plectron radio to alert the firemen. By 7:30 he had 10 to 12 men and vehicles ready to start answering the never-ending

calls for help. Firemen here also called on two snowmobilers, Keith Kintner and Charlie Bergandine to get to places inaccessible to the other heavy equipment.

"Throughout Thursday, Friday and Saturday, four wheelers belonging to and driven by Bob Reppart, Dan Brenner, Dick Diehl, Dick Fisher, Chris Caito, Ted Edwards, Dave Potts, Brian Lawless, Jim McKenzie, Dan McKenzie, and Ernie Schoenberger ran one emergency run after another, taking food, fuel and medicine to residents in Berkshire and Trenton Townships as well as Sunbury and Galena.

"The firemen, dispatched by calls to the firehouse and Sunbury Police Department, as well as some coming from the sheriff's office used convoy techniques to reach stranded residents. They sent at least two four-wheelers on each run, one to break the path and the second to pull him out as he bogged down in the drifting snow.

"When the four-wheelers became mired, Dave DeBolt's International tractor was used to pull them on through.

"The firemen used CB radios to communicate, and in many instances relied on home base units to relay their messages. One of those home-based CB'ers, Dale Ashbrook, after relaying messages all day Thursday from his home, took his equipment to the firehouse Friday to run the base throughout the rest of the weekend.

"Where the heavier equipment couldn't go, the two snowmobiles could. One of their runs involved taking medicine and food to a family stranded on N. Galena Road, in Kingston Twp., Thursday evening. The two snowmobiles had to go about 6 miles to get the necessities to the residents.

"As the power came on in areas, four wheelers and snowmobiles were used to shuttle those without heat to homes around the area where heat was on again. Power in Sunbury was restored about 2:15 Thursday but many areas reported power didn't come on until Friday evening.

"In Sunbury, firemen hooked Chief Nettlehorst's camper up to the furnace at the Sunbury Greenhouse

on Thursday, and then took the camper to the Sunbury Nursing Home later as Bill Fisher's generator was taken to Breece's. Firemen also used Jack Winebrenner's portable generator to help restore heat and electricity during the outage.

"The power coming back on came just in time for the Sunbury water plant. The village's water supply in the tower was all but exhausted, and employees there were able to keep the pumps from freezing to maintain the local water supply.

"In Galena, water officials weren't so lucky. News heard both pumps froze, necessitating the fire department's hauling water to village residents until early Saturday evening. John Bland, Willie York and Walter Morton worked to replace one of the broken down pumps while thawing the other.

"One of the tragic aspects of the volunteers' battle with the elements was Saturday morning when a call for help on Murphy Rd. came through. When the National Guard's 4-wheel ambulance couldn't get through to the Hodapp residence, where Mrs. Hodapp was dying, local firemen fought their way out Hartford Rd, and down Ross Rd. to get to her home. Those on call recalled they were just a few 100 yards from the home when Gladys's husband, John radioed them it was to late.

"Besides their emergency runs to homes throughout the area, BST&G fireman, along with Sunbury IGA employees, made milk and bread runs over the weekend. Friday a convoy of four-wheelers went to Westerville to get milk, and Saturday, made another run to Columbus. Then, Sunday, another convoy headed for Springfield to bring bread back to the community.

"The bread was taken to Condit Store, Taylor's in Center Village, and the Johnstown IGA. Louise Cook at Taylor's told the News her staff made bread runs Saturday and Sunday as well to Westerville.

"While many of the volunteers ran four-wheel drive vehicles, other firemen manned township snow removal equipment in the area, helping out the regular township forces. By Sunday evening, the men had "busted holes through" on every road in the surrounding area.

Other Departments Work, Too

While BST&G firemen and local officials worked against almost unsurmountable odds during the storm, so did Harlem, Porter and Genoa.

Harlem Township

"In Harlem Twp., fireman had to take four persons to the Hospital from Lake Estates Mobile Home Park and had to move several persons from froze-up trailers. However they did not have to evacuate the entire park, they reported.

"Harlem firemen did have to evacuate the burg of Harlem itself taking residents to nearby homes which had electricity and heat. Firemen pointed to individual efforts such as Dr. Mel Wurm's walking from his home on Adam's Road to Center Village to pump gas for emergency vehicles and Don Pierce's efforts with his loaderkeeping Miller-Paul Road passable throughout the storm.

"Two of the most outstanding runs were to get insulin to a diabetic on Green Cook Rd., using Noel Morrison's four-wheel truck, four wheelers and snowmobiles from Plain Twp. Fire department. The firemen also had to transport an epileptic from her home to Grant Otterbein Clinic during the height of the storm.

Harlem firemen told of Bob Cain on his tractor and Ken Pierson digging out a snowbound electric company truck on Harlem Road. And they told of digging out by hand, Miller-Paul Rd. from Fancher to Gorsuch Rd. to rescue a family of seven stranded in a car.

Firemen there had four-wheel vehicles, owned and operated by Tony DiPasquale, Richard McElwee, Tony Arthur, Wayne Bachman, Don and Vicki Tieche, Al Schoelkopf, and Condit Landmark, as well as a CB'er known only as 'Ramcharger' working for them. Noel Morrison's tractor, and Chuck and Rick Bachman's payloader, as well as help from Jim Weisenflue, Joe Curmode, Earl Loeffler, Gary, Allen and Dwight Piper, and Jamie, John and Gail Jacobus.

Firemen said Shelby Garee supplied them with milk. short of dumping it, and many township residents supplied food to them while they were on (Goto Pg.4)

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call. Harlem firemen's wives kept a steady pot of coffee brewing and plenty of food ready throughout the ordeal, too.

"We even had one man give us a \$100 check in appreciation for all we were doing," firemen Dean Hoppe told the News.

Up Porter-Kingston Way

In the two townships to the north, Porter firemen and township officials fought through the storm without as much manpower or equipment. But they, too, were able to keep things going, despite the death of one of their men.

Marshall Pittman was clearing Wilson Rd for the fire department's van with food Friday about 2:30 when his heart gave way. Firemen said they had just made it to the home with a family of eight Pittman collapsed over the steering wheel of a grader.

Porter firemen rushed Pittman towards Delaware, meeting the county squad at Sweeney Rd. Along S.R. 37. He was pronounced dead shortly after arrival at Grady Memorial.

Porter firemen said they had six 4-wheelers, 3 bulldozers and a couple of front-end loaders fighting the storm as well as help from local CB's. In one instance, Friday night, firemen backpacked coal and food to three homes still without power on Kenney Rd.

Porter Firemen shuttled food from Crowl's store in Olive Green, and then from Sunbury to stranded residents in the area. They made one milk run to Westerville, as well.

"We had about 50 people here at the firehouse Thursday night," firemen told the News, as a lot of homes in the area were still without electricity Friday. Most power was back on in the two townships by Friday evening.

Ohio Bell Telephone employees Thursday when the power outage knocked out their microwave tower on Plantation Rd. "We gave them food and blankets, and dug out their snowbound vehicle, and the two men stayed right at the tower with almost all the comforts of home," they said.

The Firemen ran the township snow removal equipment, and called in the county grader to help out when Kingston grader broke down. But by Sunday evening, they too had most of the roads, both county and township, at least passable to emergency equipment

Women in Olive Green kept food coming for the firemen and evacuees, and firemen hooked up a portable generator to keep their emergency center operating.

In Genoa Township

Police Chief Dave Morris estimated the township handled 3500 calls Thursday through Sunday. One of the most notable was getting needed heart medication to a man at Victory Camp via snowmobile., Thursday night.

Chief Morris said they had to contact his doctor in Mt. Vernon who in surgery at the time, to get the prescription then get a prescription filled and then get it to him using Ed Pauley's snowmobile.

Morris said besides the township equipment and the fire equipment, Genoa residents were served by four 4-wheelers owned by Herb Mason, Jerry Kirkpatrick, Keith Rose, a Mr. Schockly, Bob Downs, Jim Wahlen and Warren Carter. He noted that Don Duffy offered the use of his dog sled, but it was not needed.

Don Fisher, Dick Herritt and Jesse Rice worked on moving snow with their heavy equipment, while Ray Brown, Myron Brown, Harold Priest, Joe Tipton and Jim Barnhard helped keep the townships equipment going around the clock.

* * *

"A News Photo showing Ken Metzger pushing snow wherever it would go was cleaning Kenney Rd in Porter to make it passable at least to emergency vehicles then he would move on to the next blocked road. "This was repeated in every township," said Whitney.

Efforts of local volunteers and road crews were recognized somewhat backhandedly Tuesday as a county road worker noted, "We haven't had near the calls for assists helping to clear roads over there as we did last winter. **"The local boys pretty much did it themselves."**