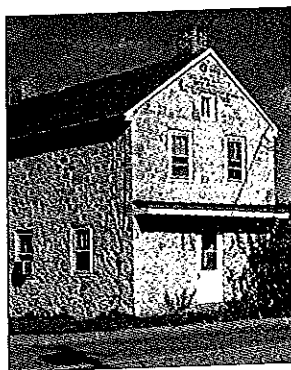


The Tuscarora Reader



Editors

Nancy Heefner, Joan McCulloh, Betty Stenger

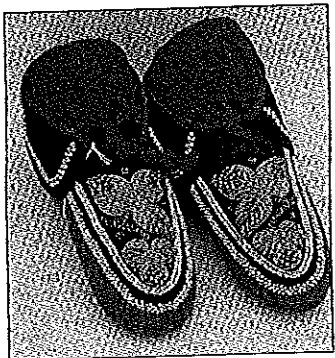
Published by

Mercersburg Historical Society
Mercersburg, Pennsylvania 17236

The Tuscarora Reader



Mercersburg
Historical
Society



Embroidered and beaded Iroquois moccasins from the 1880s are probably more decorative than the ones the Indians gave John McCullough.



A Pawnee Chief shows the hair style typical of that of a chief. John McCullough describes having seen this hair style. He was subjected to the removal of his hair by his captors. This was one of the things done to John to make him a member of the tribe.

John McCullough

Captive of the Indians

by Joan McCulloh

One day in July 1756, John McCullough and his younger brother, James, were on their way to warn their parents of the approach of Indians toward their home on a farm near Upton. Five Indians and one Frenchman suddenly jumped out of a thicket of bushes and grabbed the boys. With three men behind them and three in front of them they had no chance of escape. John, who was eight years old, and James, who was five, must have struggled hard. The Indians in trying to subdue them dropped a gun which had been made in France. Even though their parents were nearby harvesting flax, they could not hear the boys' cries for help. In those days a lot of farmers in this area raised flax, a plant used to make linen cloth and linseed oil. Although the boys' family knew about Indian raids in the neighborhood, the flax had to be harvested in July.

As soon as the Indians and the Frenchman had captured John and James, they gave the boys moccasins so that no

one could trace the boys' tracks. Then they began a long journey westward. All day the five Indians and the Frenchman forced John to walk toward the setting sun, but one of the Indians carried James on his back. The first day after they had reached the mountain, the Indians made a bed for the boys under a tree. By now the boys were hungry so one of the Indians found some apples for them. That night when John wanted to run away, one of the Indians said, "Come, sleep," and John obeyed.

The next day the Indians and their new captives started to walk across the mountains to Fort Duquesne which had been built by the French. During this whole journey John walked, and an Indian carried James. Before they arrived at Fort Duquesne, the Indians painted the boys' faces red and plucked out their hair so that they had only a little bit standing in the middle of their heads. The Indians often did this when they were going to adopt their captives. Unfortunately, at this time the

boys were parted, and John never saw his brother, James, again.

John was then taken across the Allegheny River in a canoe and was plunged into the river several times. He, of course, thought that he was going to drown and was frightened. The Indians then told him that he had become one of them.

From Fort Duquesne the Indians took John into the northwestern part of Pennsylvania and gave him to an Indian family, which was to remain his family for eight years. Now he was named *Istinggowehhing*. Although he sometimes got into mischief and was punished, he learned to like the Indians' way of life. Sometimes, when he thought his punishment was too harsh, his oldest brother in his new family protected him.

As his new family frequently moved, John had a lot of adventures.

One day a Frenchman wanted to buy him and offered his Indian family a spade, a garden tool. Another day a man who lived near Shippensburg and traded goods with the Indians recognized John and told the boy's father where he was. His father then made the long trip from the Conococheague settlement, as this area was then called, to the Indian camp in

order to bring John home. By now John had forgotten English and had learned to like his new family and did not want to go home. But his father insisted, and John began the journey home. At night to keep him from going back to the Indians, John's father tied the boy's legs under a horse. John, however, got away, ran as fast as he could, and climbed a tree so that his father could not find him. Several days later he returned to the Indian village.

Although John did not like some of the Indian ways, because they could be cruel, he said that they had good manners. For instance, no one spoke while another person was speaking.

Later, when John was 16 years old, he went back to his family in the Conococheague settlement. He said that he was grateful that he had been captured. He said that, if he had not been taken by the

*"John and James McCollough
was taken Captive by ye
indins from Conagogigue
July 26th 1756."*

This quotation is taken from the diary of James McCullough, the father of the boys, and is his only written mention of the incident.

Indians, he would have been at school with his classmates and his teacher, Enoch Brown, in July 1764 when the Indians attacked the school.

His second wife was Elizabeth Cunningham, daughter of Susan King Cunningham. What interesting stories their children must have heard. Of course, John never forgot his eight years with the Indians.

Sources:

Hunter, William A. *Archibald Loudon*, 1962.

McCullough, John. "Life with the Aborigines." *Genealogy of the McCullough Family and Other Sketches*. Harrisburg: The Telegraph Printing Company, 1912.

Wallace, Paul A.W. *Indians in Pennsylvania*. Harrisburg: Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, 1964.

The Assumed Route of John McCullough's Travels with the Indians

by Calvin Bricker Jr.

John and James McCullough, after learning of Indian attacks in the area, set off to warn their parents. They followed well-traveled trails from the safe house where they were staying to the junction of the east and west branches of the Conococheague Creek and to the mouth of a **ravine** that led to their father's plantation. They were ambushed by the Indians shortly after sighting their father's house.

The Indians led the boys away, traveling north through thick brushy areas along the east branch of the Conococheague Creek and Back Creek to avoid being detected. When they came to a high hill, one of the Indians would climb a tree and point to the direction for their travel.

Mount Parnell was their reference point. They had to circle around large barren lands, prairies, which were located near Church Hill and St. Thomas. They reached the mountain behind Mount Parnell on the afternoon of the second day. They traveled over the mountain and descended into a hidden valley. It was called McCasslin Valley. Here they built a fire beside the stream and roasted a fowl for the boys. After their meal they continued over the mountains through Bear

Valley. They crossed the mountains behind Jordan's Knob and descended into Path Valley at dark.

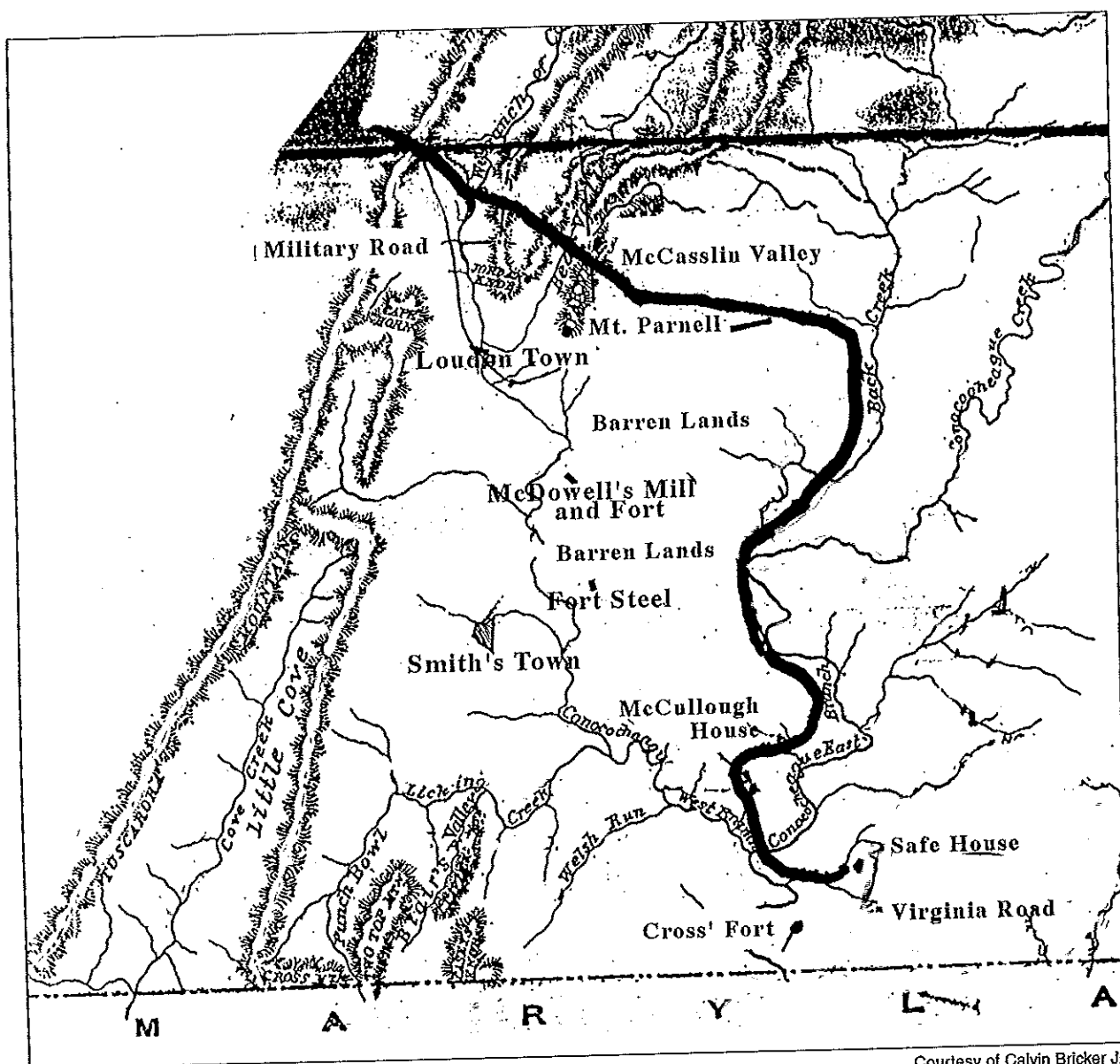
They passed by the Great Military Road that had been built a year earlier in 1755 and camped on the west branch of the Conococheague Creek near Richmond Furnace. John was prevented from sneaking away that night and following the new road home. The next day they rested in camp until noon when an alarm was raised, and they hurriedly crossed the mountains at Cowans Gap.

From there they walked at a leisurely pace west to Fort Duquesne. It was here that James was given to a Frenchman, and John was adopted into the Delaware tribe. The following day John traveled on horseback for several days to the Indian village, Shenango, located in western Pennsylvania.

John stayed at this village until 1759 when the tribe moved to an area of present day Ohio. Eventually he was led into north central Ohio where he was turned over to Colonel Henry Bouquet in the fall of 1764 at the end of Pontiac's War. John returned home to the Cumberland Valley in December of that year.

Source:

McCullough, John. "Life with the Aborigines." *Genealogy of the McCullough Family and Other Sketches*. Harrisburg: The Telegraph Printing Company, 1912.



Courtesy of Calvin Bricker Jr.

Safe House..Barren Lands.. Mount Parnell..Jordan's Knob

This map shows the assumed route John and James McCullough followed through the area after they had been captured in 1756. This map is based upon the narrative written by John McCullough.