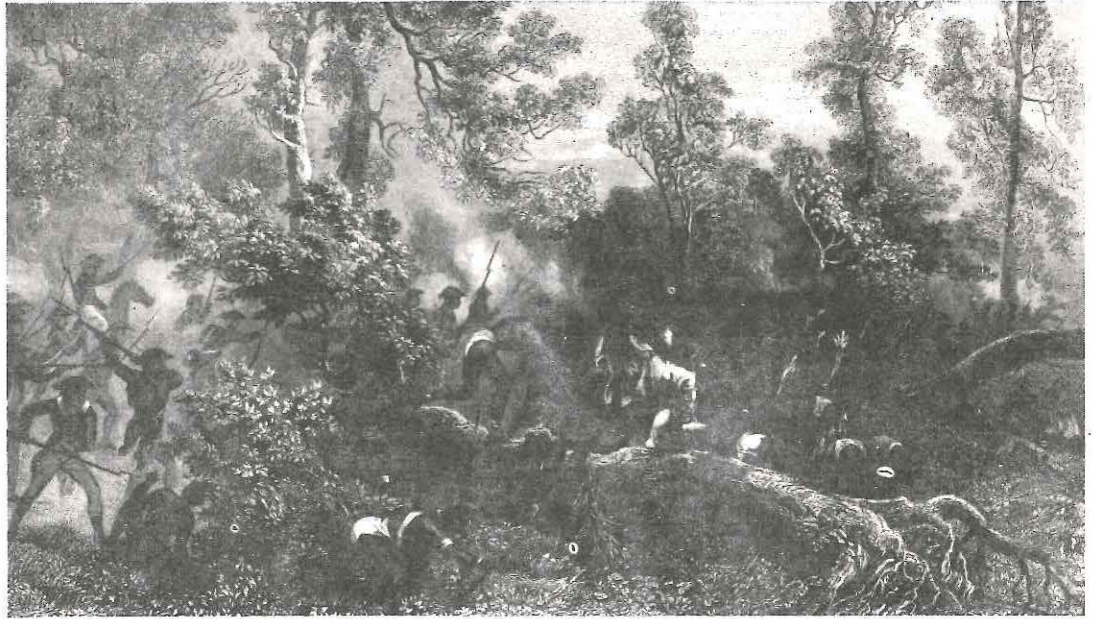


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INDIANA HEROES FOR YOUNG HOOSIERS, No. 2



Little Turtle fought Anthony Wayne's troops at the Battle of Fallen Timbers in 1794 on the Maumee River.

CHIEF LITTLE TURTLE

When Little Turtle was born, about 1752, the Miami Indians had been living in Indiana for more than 75 years. They were first seen by French explorers on the west side of Lake Michigan. Drifting southward and around the tip of Lake Michigan, they established themselves in the St. Joseph River valley (South Bend and northward) in the 1670's. Feeling crowded by their friends, the Potawatomi, the Miami moved over to Eel River and the headwaters of the Maumee after 1700. At the latter place, where Fort Wayne now stands, the Miami built a village called Kekionga. The French constructed a trading post and fort there before 1720.

The Miami sold all their furs to the French and in exchange got muskets, powder, knives, axes, blankets, shirts, kettles, mirrors, paint, and brandy. Later the English wanted to cross the Allegheny Mountains and trade with them. Some Miami chiefs were invited to Lancaster, Pennsylvania, in 1748 for a treaty. The Pennsylvania government gave them presents, offered them more goods for their furs, and asked to send traders to the Miami. The chiefs were pleased and promised to protect the traders from the French, who would be hostile to them. This agreement is

called the Treaty of Lancaster, and one of the signers was Aque-nack-que, or The Turtle.

His village was on Eel River, five miles east of what is now Columbia City, in Whitley County. The Miami called the river the Ken-a-po-co-mo-co, or snake fish, because of its curves. Aque-nack-que had several daughters, and his son Me-she-kin-no-quah, or Little Turtle, was born about 1752. That is the same year in which George Rogers Clark was born, and almost 25 years before the American Revolution.

Little is known of the boyhood of Little Turtle. Probably he fished in the river, practiced with a bow and arrow, played games with other boys, and learned the legends of his tribe. In summer he wore a breechcloth, and in winter added buckskin leggings and moccasins, a calico or buckskin shirt, and on very cold days wrapped a blanket or buffalo robe around himself. In the spring his mother and sisters planted a garden and took care of corn, beans, squash, pumpkins, and melons. They also made clothing, and pottery dishes. The men fished, hunted, repaired weapons and canoes, danced, gambled, and occasionally went to war against a southern tribe. In the

fall the crops were harvested and dried before the families moved down toward the Ohio River to hunt buffalo and deer and to trap beaver, muskrat and other fur-bearing animals. The fur pelts were stretched and softened and prepared for sale. With the first breath of spring, the families returned home, tapped the maple trees for sugar water, and made maple sugar. The French traders came and bargained for their furs. Then it was time to plant a new garden, and another year began.

As Little Turtle grew older, he learned to hunt with a musket and took part in raids on enemy Indians to prove his courage to become a warrior. The French had to surrender their Fort of the Miami to the English at the end of 1760, when Little Turtle was only eight years old. In 1763, the Miami, at the urging of Chief Pontiac in Detroit, captured the British fort and killed the commander. Although the Indian uprising was put down, the fort was not garrisoned again.

During the American Revolution the Miami became the allies of the British because they disliked to see the Americans pouring into Kentucky to settle. The conquest of Kaskaskia and Vincennes by George Rogers Clark frightened them, for they could see that the Americans might settle on their hunting grounds north of the Ohio and scare off the game. Little Turtle probably took part in some of the Indian raids on the Kentucky settlements. In 1780 he led a band of warriors into battle near his own village.

In that year a Frenchman named La Balme, who had come to America with Lafayette to help the Americans, was active in the West. He decided to do what Clark felt unable to do—to attack Detroit. Enlisting a troop of Frenchmen at Kaskaskia and Vincennes, he marched northward along the Wabash River. The Miami at Kekionga fled at his approach, and so did the few traders there. La Balme took possession of the village. Then he started for Little Turtle's town on Eel River, leaving 20 men at Kekionga. While he was gone, the Miami returned to the village and killed the guard of 20 men. Little Turtle gathered his warriors to stop La Balme. After a furious fight, all the white men were killed. So ended the ill-fated expedition. Little Turtle's father must have been dead by this time, and after this date Little Turtle was recognized as a great war chief.



Portrait of Little Turtle by Gilbert Stuart.

On one raid into Kentucky he captured a boy named William Wells and took him back to Eel River as his adopted son. There William learned the Miami language and grew up as an Indian. He became very attached to his foster father and later took an important part in the struggle between the Indians and the American settlers.

DEFEAT OF HARMAR AND ST. CLAIR

The end of the Revolution brought American pioneers down the Ohio River. Congress organized the Northwest Territory. Clark's veterans were granted land in southern Indiana. Other settlements were made in what is now southern Ohio. The Miami and other Indians raided the outlying cabins in an effort to stop the flow of immigrants. Finally in 1790, Gen. Josiah Harmar, commanding a single regiment at Fort Washington (Cincinnati) was ordered to march northward to Kekionga and punish the Miami. He enlisted several hundred Kentucky militia and with 1450 men began his expedition in October.

Little Turtle ordered the Indians to leave Kekionga rather than face so great an army. General Harmar found an empty village. He



Little Turtle addressing Gen. Wayne at the Treaty of Greenville, 1795. Wells is in the center interpreting.

burned the huts and 20,000 bushels of harvested corn. Disappointed in not finding any Indians, he sent a detachment of 210 men under Col. John Hardin out along the trail to Eel River. Where the trail crossed the river, Little Turtle was waiting in ambush. The Miami opened fire and shot down many officers and men. Col. Hardin ordered a retreat, but was pursued several miles along the trail before he escaped. He lost 23 men. The battle took place near the present-day Baptist Church at Heller's Corner, three miles south of Churubusco.

Little Turtle now advanced to Kekionga and watched General Harmar break camp for his return journey. Col. Hardin was smarting under his defeat and the poor showing of the Kentucky militia. Two days out on the return march, he begged General Harmar to allow him to go back to Kekionga and surprise any Miami who might have returned to the ruined village. This time Hardin took 320 men. As he was fording the Maumee River within present-day Fort Wayne, he was surprised a second time by Little Turtle. The

American force lost 180 men killed and wounded. General Harmar retreated hurriedly to Fort Washington, and the Miami were encouraged by their successes.

President George Washington ordered another expedition the next year, to be commanded by Gen. Arthur St. Clair, Governor of the Northwest Territory. He enlisted Kentucky militia again and with about 1300 men started north late in 1791. On November 3 they camped on a small stream 11 miles east of present-day Portland. Little Turtle brought a thousand warriors southward to meet this new threat. Before dawn on the 4th, he ordered an attack on the camp. His adopted son, William Wells, commanded some marksmen who were to shoot officers.

The army camp was taken by surprise. Some of the men rallied and fought back; others fled. St. Clair had three horses killed under him. The Indians attacked with savage fury and killed without mercy. In panic the soldiers ran off. St. Clair lost 632 killed and about 300 wounded. It was the greatest defeat ever suffered by American arms.

BATTLE OF FALLEN TIMBERS

Now the Indians would have to be conquered, or the Americans would have to stay south of the Ohio River. Congress voted to increase the size of the regular army, and President Washington appointed Gen. Anthony Wayne, a hero of the Revolution, to command it. Wayne spent the next two years training his recruits before trying to battle the Indians.

Despite his successes, Little Turtle was not optimistic. More Americans were coming into Ohio and Kentucky. He watched the troops drilling and saw General Wayne build a series of forts north of Fort Washington. He cautioned the younger war chiefs.

"Now the Americans have a general who never sleeps," he said.

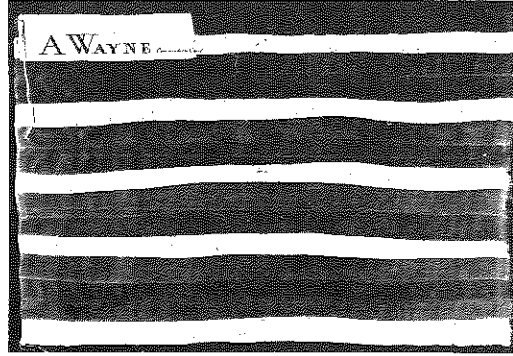
William Wells began to have his doubts, too. He had participated in two battles against Kentucky soldiers; perhaps he had killed some of his relatives. He talked to Little Turtle, and the chief advised him to go back to Kentucky for a visit. There he was greeted as one returned from captivity and received an invitation to join General Wayne as a scout. But Wells first returned to Little Turtle and talked over the offer with him. He was now married to the chief's youngest sister. Little Turtle agreed that Wells should go with his own people. The father and foster son parted, knowing that if they met again in battle they would be on opposite sides.

Early in 1794 General Wayne built Fort Recovery on the site of St. Clair's defeat. Little Turtle led the Indians in an attack on the new fort, but after three days he gave up and withdrew. Wayne advanced to the middle of the long Maumee River, built Fort Defiance, and sent out word to the Indian chiefs that he would talk peace with them.

The chiefs of the Miami, Shawnee, Delaware, and Wyandot held a council. Little Turtle advised them to accept the invitation.

"We have beaten the enemy twice under separate commanders. We cannot expect the same good fortune always to attend us. There is something whispers to me it would be prudent to listen to his offers of peace."

The other chiefs would not listen, and they were encouraged by the British in Detroit to resist. They accused Little Turtle of cowardice, and he lost his place of leadership. He agreed to fight with his tribe, but the com-



Flag given by Wayne to the chief.

manding chief was to be Blue Jacket, of the Shawnee.

Wayne turned down stream, and the Indians waited for him in a woods where a hard storm had toppled many trees. It was known as the place of fallen timbers. Farther down stream the British had brazenly erected a fort. William Wells was with Wayne, and so was Lieut. William Henry Harrison, a young officer whom Little Turtle was to meet later.

The Indians and their British allies hid themselves in the fallen timbers and opened fire on the advancing troops. But the soldiers didn't run off in a panic this time. They returned the fire. More troops moved up. Little Turtle saw a detachment swing northward to come around behind the Indians. Blue Jacket did not risk a charge. Instead, the Americans began to advance with bayonets. The Indians fell back, some of them began to run, and soon they were in flight toward the British fort. The British soldiers took cover in the fort, then the gates were closed against their Indian allies. Little Turtle's face darkened at this treachery on top of defeat. With his warriors he fled on down the river.

THE TREATY OF GREENVILLE

General Wayne did not attack the British fort. Instead he turned back up the river and marched to its source at the village of Kekionga. There he ordered a new fort built that was named in his honor—Fort Wayne. He again invited the Indians to make peace by meeting him at Fort Greenville the next summer. Little Turtle urged them to attend, and 92 chiefs, their best warriors, and their families—1100 Indians in all—appeared at



Fort Wayne as it looked in 1812, from an old drawing.

Fort Greenville in June and July, 1795. Little Turtle brought a party of 95. He met Wells, who was serving Wayne as an interpreter.

After Wayne opened the council he demanded that the Indians sell the land lying south of a line running east from Fort Recovery. The western boundary was to be a line from Fort Recovery down to the junction of the Kentucky River with the Ohio, taking in the Whitewater Valley of Indiana. Little Turtle objected to such a big grant, and some of the other chiefs were reluctant to sell, but after a month of negotiating they signed the treaty on August 3. Altogether they sold 25,000 square miles of land, for which the eleven tribes received \$20,000 worth of goods and an annual allowance of \$9,500 worth of goods. Little Turtle and the other chiefs also received a silver medal.

Wayne also passed out some American flags that were probably made by his quartermaster. They have 15 stripes, red, white, and blue, for the 15 states in the Union. Instead of stars, there is a small white patch on which is stamped "A. Wayne commander in chief." The flag from Little Turtle's family is now in the office of the Indiana Historical Bureau. (See picture.)

In bidding goodbye to General Wayne, Little Turtle said:

"We children all well understand the sense of this treaty which is now concluded. We have experienced daily proofs of your increasing kindness. I hope we may all have sense enough to enjoy our dawning happiness

and to this end may we all abide in everlasting peace.

"I have been the last to sign this treaty; I will be the last to break it."

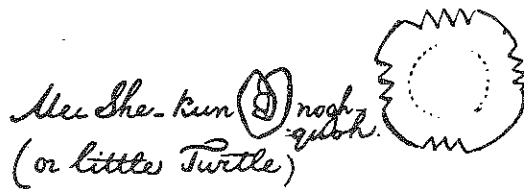
He kept his word. Wells returned home with him and took up residence near Fort Wayne, since the Miami tribe was at peace with the United States. He joined

his family and opened a trading post.

Wayne had suggested that Little Turtle should visit the "great white father," President Washington. In 1797 Little Turtle and Wells made the journey to Philadelphia and were received by the President. Little Turtle said he was advising his people to take up farming, but they needed instruction and help. Washington presented him with a sword and hired Gilbert Stuart to paint the chief's portrait. Little Turtle was interested in the idea of being vaccinated against smallpox and was so treated.

The next year he returned to Philadelphia and visited President John Adams. He urged that the Indians be protected from traders who sold them whisky, because his people liked it too well. Apparently little was done to curb liquor sales beyond appointing Wells as Indian agent to supervise the traders. Late in 1801 the chief went to Washington to speak to President Thomas Jefferson. On the way he visited the Baltimore Yearly Meeting of Friends (Quakers). He found them concerned about the Indians. They appointed a committee to accompany Little Turtle to the President. Jefferson promptly sent a message to Congress, and a law was passed stopping liquor traffic with the Indians. For some reason, Little Turtle had himself vaccinated again.

On these trips Little Turtle dressed partly like an Indian and partly like a white man. He wore leggings, moccasins, and gold earrings; also a blue coat, ruffled shirt, a red sash around his waist, and a cocked hat with a red feather in it. He was entertained in the homes of prominent people.



 Me-shi-kun (or Little Turtle)

Little Turtle's "signature" was a looped circle; someone else wrote his name in Miami and in English.

Young William Henry Harrison, who had fought with Wayne, was appointed Governor of Indiana Territory in 1800. He traveled to Fort Wayne in 1803 and made a treaty with the Miami, Potawatomi, and Delaware for purchase of a large tract of land around Vincennes. Little Turtle was one of the signers of the treaty.

The following spring three Quakers from Baltimore came to visit Little Turtle. The chief said his principal need was for someone to teach agriculture to the warriors. Formerly, the women did all the garden work. Phillip Dennis, one of the party, stayed in Indiana and started a farm school on the Wabash River, below present-day Huntington. Indian men came to watch him work, but few of them helped and learned. Little Turtle himself operated a good farm. Dennis gave up at the end of the year and returned east.

Little Turtle went down to Vincennes in 1805 to talk with Governor Harrison again. This time he sold the land between the Vincennes tract and the Greenville Treaty line over in the Whitewater Valley. In 1807 he made his fourth and last trip east. He visited his Quaker friends in Baltimore and President Jefferson. This time he sought to get a flour mill built at Fort Wayne.

HIS LAST YEARS

Tecumseh and his brother, The Prophet, had established a Shawnee village on the Tippecanoe River. They tried to persuade the Indians to give up the white man's customs and go back to their old ways of living. They also wanted to stop the sale of any more land to the American government by uniting the tribes in one big confederation. Little Turtle was not impressed by their arguments.

In 1809 Governor Harrison came again to Fort Wayne to secure more land north of Vincennes. Chiefs from the Miami, Pota-

watomi, and Delaware tribes sat in council with him, although the Miami considered that the land actually belonged to them alone. Little Turtle finally agreed to sell and the other chiefs complied. Tecumseh denounced the treaty, and the Miami refused to support his plans for a confederation. They did not take part in the attack on Harrison's troops at the Battle of Tippecanoe in 1811.

Little Turtle was no longer in good health. He suffered from rheumatism and the gout. He lived on Eel River about two miles from his village in a house built for him by the United States government. He had four children by his first wife, and by his second wife a daughter named Wah-man-go-path, or Sweet Breeze. His sister, Mrs. Wells, had died, and Wells then married Sweet Breeze. Little Turtle visited them frequently in Fort Wayne.

The War of 1812 between the United States and England broke out in June, while Little Turtle lay ill at the Wells' house. News of the war did not reach the West for another month. Little Turtle died on July 14, 1812, and was given a military funeral by the troops. His medals, ornaments, watch, and the sword Washington gave him were buried with him. The grave was discovered a hundred years later, in 1912, and the relics removed and put in the Allen County-Fort Wayne Historical Society Museum. William Wells was sent to Fort Dearborn (Chicago) to help with the evacuation of that post. He died in the massacre of the garrison on August 15, 1812, as the troops and their families marched out.

Little Turtle resisted the coming of American settlers as long as he could, then he signed a treaty of peace in 1795 and kept his word. From leading his people in war, he turned to leading them in peace. He urged them to take up farming, give up liquor, and live like American families. He shunned Tecumseh and remained a friend of the Americans. He died highly respected by his own people and by his former enemies. (H.H.P.)

Published by the Indiana Historical Bureau, Indianapolis 4, with the advice of teacher consultants, Indianapolis Public Schools. Students who wish to read a longer story about Little Turtle are referred to *Little Turtle*, by Otho Winger, or *Little Turtle*, by Calvin M. Young.