

# The Battle of Piqua: A Turning Point on the Ohio Frontier



On August 8, 1780, a pivotal clash unfolded along the Mad River in the western Ohio Country. Known variously as the Battle of Piqua, Peckowee, Pekowi, Peckuwe, or Pickaway, this engagement brought Kentucky County militia under General George Rogers Clark into conflict with Shawnee warriors led by Chief Black Hoof.

The confrontation was part of the western theater of the American Revolutionary War, a conflict often associated with battles in the East but fiercely contested on the frontier as well. Clark's expedition was launched in response to an earlier summer raid—known as Bird's invasion—when a combined force of Shawnee, Lenape, and Miami warriors attacked Kentucky settlements, killing and capturing hundreds.

## The Campaign Begins

In early August 1780, Clark led approximately 970 men across the Ohio River near present-day Cincinnati. Marching north along the Little Miami and Mad Rivers, the force reached the Shawnee village of Old Chillicothe (known to the Shawnee as Chalawgatha). Finding it deserted, Clark ordered it burned.

The militia then advanced to Piqua, a principal Shawnee village and home to an estimated 3,000 residents. Arriving on August 8, they encountered a settlement protected by a small stockade.

## The Battle Unfolds

Fighting raged for several hours, with both sides sustaining heavy losses. The turning point came when Clark positioned artillery on river cliffs overlooking the village, bombarding the stockade below. The Shawnee ultimately withdrew under pressure.

Clark officially reported 27 casualties—14 killed and 13 wounded—though later historical accounts suggest the true number may have been significantly higher. Shawnee losses remain uncertain, though at least five deaths were recorded. After the battle, Clark's men spent two days destroying the village and burning approximately 500 acres of surrounding cornfields.

## Aftermath and Legacy

The destruction was so severe that the Shawnee chose not to rebuild Piqua. Instead, they relocated to the Great Miami River, establishing a new settlement north of present-day Piqua, Ohio, which they named Peckuwe (later anglicized to "Piqua").

The Battle of Piqua stands as the largest Revolutionary War engagement west of the Allegheny Mountains and one of the few major battles fought in the Ohio Country during the war.

