

Six Nations Legacy Consortium

War of 1812

Tuscarora Heroes

On July 5, 1813 a delegation of Tuscarora leaders crossed the Niagara River to meet with the Grand River Chiefs at the Indian Council House at Fort George to ask for consideration if war crossed the border. Katwerota, an Onondaga chief asked if they would come to the aid of the Americans. The Tuscarora Chief responded with his own question: *“These times have been very hard and we labor under great difficulties, being so near the lines, and we wish to know whether your sentiments are still friendly towards us and if you cross the river whether you will hurt us?”*

Katwerota answered: *“This will depend on yourselves. If you take no part with the Americans, we shall meet you with the same friendship as we ever did, and we look for the day when you shall see our forces on your side of the water. We have no contention with you. It is the King and the Americans, and we have taken part with the King. We will contend for his rights.”*

Thus the Tuscaroras were warned. However, changing circumstances brought tragic results. On December 18, 1813 the British retaliated and captured Fort George before embarking on the burning of Lewiston, Tuscarora, Black Rock and reached Buffalo on December 30, 1813. As the British were chasing the surviving residents out of Lewiston, a small force of Tuscarora warriors intervened and stopped the pursuit, buying enough time for the locals to escape to safer ground.

Records indicate that as many as 900 warriors crossed the river. This would be more than Grand River could provide, so we can assume that the majority of them were from the Western Nations. British officers pleaded with them not to harm the civilians, however reports show that both soldiers and warriors found liquor in Lewiston homes and there was much partying the night before the fight with Tuscarora warriors took place.

About a dozen Tuscarora warriors, under the leadership of Chief John Mount Pleasant, held off a British advance that allowed the white residents to flee, as well as gave the Tuscarora women and children time to escape. As a result every structure in the Tuscarora settlement was set fire. The entire Tuscarora Nation sought sanctuary among their Oneida relatives in central New York where they stayed until the end of the war.