

TIMELINE



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Tenskwautawau, The Prophet Shawnee by Charles Bird King. Oil on wood, 23 1/2 x 20 1/2 inches, 1829.

Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma

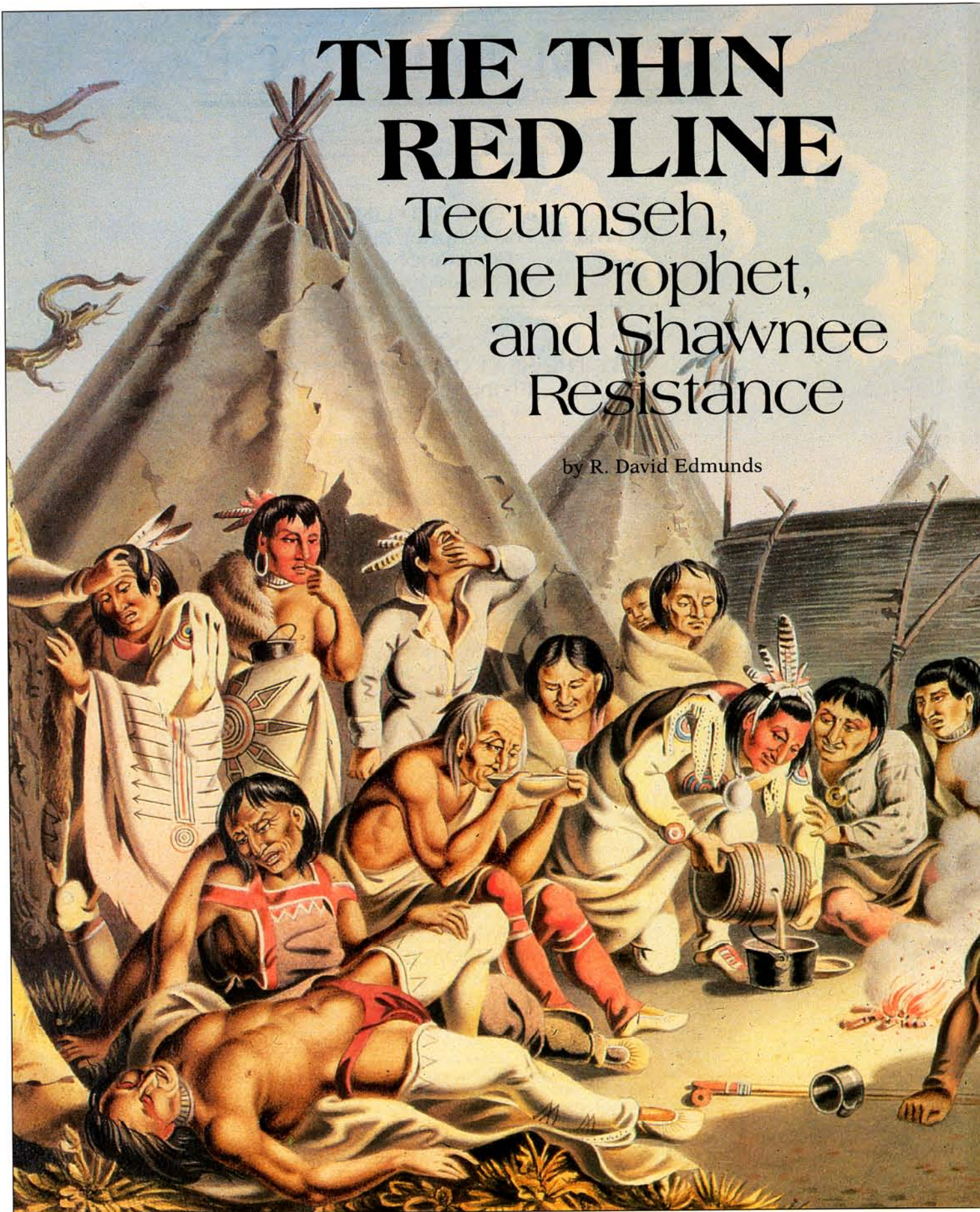
This portrait was copied from a painting made by James Otto Lewis in the early 1820s for Lewis Cass, governor of Michigan Territory. Cass, who knew the Prophet well, considered the now-lost Lewis portrait a "striking likeness."

See: "The Thin Red Line: Tecumseh, The Prophet, and Shawnee Resistance"

THE THIN RED LINE

Tecumseh, The Prophet, and Shawnee Resistance

by R. David Edmunds



THE SIGNING OF THE TREATY of Greene Ville in 1795 was an augury of calamity for the Shawnees and other Indians of the Old Northwest. Dictated by General Anthony Wayne on the heels of the Indian defeat at Fallen Timbers, the treaty opened southern and eastern Ohio to American settlement, but promised the tribes that their lands to the north and west would be free from encroachment. Yet, in the years that followed the treaty, American frontiersmen spilled over the border. Squatters' cabins appeared beneath the dying foliage of girdled trees, and white hunters ranged deep into Indian territory, killing and frightening game. These incursions depleted food sources and disrupted the trade in furs and skins that sustained the tribal economy.

Defending their homes and livelihood, the Shawnees struck back. Sporadic, often individual outbursts of resentment—thrift, arson, the occasional murder—brought swift retaliation. Offenders, whose tribal councils were pressured to deliver them up to white authorities, were dealt

Drunken Frolic Amongst the Chippewas by Peter Rindisbacher. Watercolor on paper, 9 x 16 inches, circa 1825. West Point Museum Collections, United States Military Academy

Alcohol had a devastating impact on the Indians in the Great Lakes region from almost the earliest European contacts. By Tecumseh's era alcoholism was common within every tribe, and his own brother, the Prophet, was known as a drunken loudmouth who gave up liquor only after experiencing a religious vision. Peter Rindisbacher, a youthful Swiss immigrant-artist, painted Indian scenes in the Red River Valley along the Canadian-American border between 1821 and 1826, and graphically recorded the dire effects of a keg of rum among members of another Woodland tribe, the Chippewas.



with harshly. Frontier justice was not blind, and trial by an American jury was tantamount to conviction. In contrast, crimes against the Indians rarely were punished—in 1801 William Henry Harrison, governor of the Indiana Territory, admitted that “a great many of the Inhabitants of the Frontiers consider the murdering of the Indians in the highest degree meritorious.”

Alcohol exacerbated the Indians’ problems. Although military and civil officials attempted to halt the liquor traffic, a flood of firewater poured into Indian villages. Once-peaceful communities became scenes of drunken violence. Debauched by alcohol, many tribesmen fell victim to a series of epidemics that swept down the Ohio Valley at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and populations declined. Dissipation, disease, and hopelessness ruptured clan and family ties, the very fabric of a social organization based upon respect for the elderly and obligations toward relatives.

The apparent failure of the old ways prompted many of the Shawnees to “walk the white man’s road.” Black Hoof, an aging village chief from Wapakoneta, led these so-called progressives. They built permanent cabins and grist mills, and fenced their fields. They planted and harvested their crops with the same tools as their white neighbors. Many acquired the white man’s clothes and attempted to acquire his religion from the Quaker and Baptist missionaries who proselytized among them. Varying only in degree of affinity for the alien ways, Black Hoof’s followers seemed genuinely committed to accepting a new way of life.

Other Shawnees sought a different solution to a world in disarray. These more traditional tribesmen realized the external sources of the problem, but they also turned inward, examining themselves. The Shawnees believed that the Ohio Valley was the center of the world, which they occupied through a special relationship with the Master of Life. Long ago when their forefathers had first moved to the region, they had fought the Great Water Serpent, the embodiment of evil powers in the universe. The Serpent had been defeated, but some of its evil power had survived down through the ages, promulgated by witches. Adherence to the precepts of the Master of Life would guarantee a happy existence and a world full of harmony. In contrast, if they abandoned these teachings, the Great Serpent would again prevail and the Shawnees would be plunged into chaos. By the first decade of the nineteenth century, many of the more traditional Shawnees believed that the Great Serpent and his power were in the ascendancy.

An additional element of Shawnee theology gave credence to this conviction. The Shawnees shared with neighboring tribes the belief that the Serpent traveled through water, and most agreed that the



The most reliable portrait of Tecumseh was prepared by nineteenth-century historian Benson Lossing for use in his pictorial military histories. The head was copied from a drawing of the Indian done in 1808 by Pierre LeDru, a French trader at Vincennes. The British officer’s coat was taken from another drawing Lossing had seen in Montreal in 1858, and the silver crosses hanging from Tecumseh’s nose and the George III medal were based on a British captain’s written description of the chief after a meeting in 1812. *Ohio Historical Society*

Serpent’s home was in the sea. Shawnee traditions had warned that light-skinned usurpers might emerge from the eastern ocean to threaten the Shawnee homeland, and tribal elders frequently had warned of their imminent arrival. If, as traditional Shawnees believed, the Children of the Serpent had invaded their homeland, only a special providence of the Master of Life might save them.

In the years preceding the War of 1812, two Shawnee brothers promised such deliverance. Born at the Pickaway settlements, on the Mad River west of present-day Springfield, Ohio, they grew up in a family torn asunder by the cataclysm swirling through the Shawnee homeland. Tecumseh was born in 1768, and Lalawethika (later called the Prophet), one of triplets, in 1775. Their father, Puckeshinwa, was killed in 1774 at the Battle of Point Pleasant. Their mother, a Creek woman widowed before her triplets were born, later either

returned to the Creek villages in Alabama or resettled in Missouri.

Although Shawnee culture would soon begin to lose its cohesiveness under the continual pounding of the whites, the fabric of village life was a safety net for orphans such as Tecumseh. The sense of communal obligation that bound family, clan, and tribe worked to fill the void left by Puckeshinwa’s death and his mother’s absence. Taken in by Tecumpease, a doting married sister, he excelled in the games and contests that were a rehearsal for manhood. Admired by his peers and praised by his elders, he was a natural leader who soon was perfecting his warrior skills under the tutelage of Chiksika, an older brother.

Tecumseh served his apprenticeship in war during the final struggles of the American Revolution,

Widely noted by travelers in the Ohio Valley as early as the 1750s, the prevalence of European-style log structures in Indian villages was yet another indication of the loss of traditional ways that was lamented by Shawnee nativist leaders like the Prophet and his brother, Tecumseh. This “Old Council House” was erected in the early 1830s on the Hog Creek Shawnee Reservation in southern Allen County, Ohio, for a chief known as Pe-aitch-ta (or “P-H-T”), and was typical of this borrowed architecture. *Allen County Historical Society*



and in the period between 1787 and 1790 joined with other young Shawnees to range across Kentucky, striking at American settlements. When Chiksika was killed in a 1788 attack on Buchanan’s Station in Tennessee, Tecumseh assumed the leadership of the war party. Absent during the defeat of Josiah Harmar’s punitive expedition by a multi-tribal force in 1790, Tecumseh led a party of warriors who shadowed Arthur St. Clair’s ill-fated column as it marched north from Fort Washington a year later. Instructed to follow in St. Clair’s wake and to report on any American reinforcements which might approach, they did not participate in the battle that shattered St. Clair’s force on November 4, 1791.

By the time Anthony Wayne took command of the American effort, Tecumseh was a seasoned captain of widening reputation. On June 30, 1794, he led part of the Indian forces that attacked the American pack train as it left Fort Recovery, on the site of St. Clair’s defeat, and seven weeks later he joined with other warriors to oppose Wayne’s march down the Maumee Valley toward Lake Erie. On August 20 Tecumseh led a small party of warriors who repulsed Wayne’s initial attack at Fallen Timbers, but when the tide of battle turned in the Long



Black Hoof, or Catahecassa, was a prominent Shawnee war chief whose exploits dated to the French and Indian War. Following the Treaty of Greene Ville in 1795, he became the acknowledged leader of those Shawnees who adopted much of the culture of the white man. Centered at the reservation at Wapakoneta, Ohio, this aging chief helped convince American officials in 1803 to supply farm implements and technical expertise (which came in the form of a Quaker missionary), so that his people could establish farms like their white neighbors. Black Hoof openly opposed the Prophet, Tecumseh, and their followers, and was characterized by these traditional Shawnees as a "servant of the Serpent." Although he maintained loose ties with the British at Amherstburg, some of Black Hoof's people served as scouts for the American army during the War of 1812. *Ohio Historical Society*

Knives' favor, Tecumseh and his followers were forced to retreat. Unreconciled to defeat, Tecumseh refused to participate in the subsequent Treaty of Greene Ville.

Lalawethika's rise to manhood was unmarked by any of the portents of distinction that attracted the tribesmen to his magnetic older brother. Only four years of age when his mother left Ohio, her departure obviously was more traumatic for him. Tecumpease raised him, but made no attempts to hide her preference for Tecumseh. Unlike Tecumseh, Lalawethika was awkward as a child and was ridiculed by his playmates. A heavysset, ungainly boy, Lalawethika inadvertently managed to gouge out his right eye with an arrow, a disfigurement that can only have served as an ineradicable badge of ineptitude. He compensated for his failures with boastfulness which further alienated his fellows, and his name, Lalawethika, "The Noisemaker" or "Rattle," was indicative of their contempt.

Chiksika avoided Lalawethika, and again unlike Tecumseh, the one-eyed youth made little effort to learn the ways of a warrior. He did acquire a destructive fondness for whiskey. Lalawethika joined Tecumseh at Fallen Timbers, but there is no evidence that he distinguished himself. Unlike Tecumseh he attended the post-battle at Greenville (While the *e* was subsequently dropped, in this article the contemporary spellings are maintained: Greenville and Treaty of Greene Ville.), and when the American officials poured out their whiskey, Lalawethika's cup was in his hand. In the next few years, he lived with the small village of Shawnees led by Tecumseh, existing in the shadow of his older brother, who often provided him with food and other necessities.

During the decade following the Treaty of Greene Ville, Tecumseh's band moved several times; in 1798 they established themselves on the White River, near modern Anderson, Indiana. The instability of Shawnee society during these troubled times was reflected in the lives of the two brothers. Tecumseh married twice: his first marriage in 1796 ended abruptly after only a few months; a second, two or three years later, seems to have been a union of convenience. His second wife, Mamete, was a woman considerably older than Tecumseh. Although a son, Pachetha, was born around 1800, this marriage also ended in separation.

Lalawethika spent his days drinking and did little to support his wife, whose name is unknown. Late in 1803 Lalawethika attached himself to Penegashea, a village shaman. His shortcomings as a warrior would be no handicap to becoming a medicine man. But in 1804 Penegashea died, and Lalawethika failed when he attempted to cure his kinsmen of the epidemics that swept through



Open Door, Known as the Prophet, Brother of the Great Chief by George Catlin. Oil on canvas, 29 x 24 inches, 1832. National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Gift of Mrs. Joseph Harrison, Jr.

Tenskwatawa, or the Prophet, was approaching sixty when George Catlin painted his portrait. The aging, corpulent, ex-holy man had grown quiescent and melancholy, and was living in isolation from his people. Still, the Prophet carefully prepared himself for the Catlin sitting, attempting to convey his earlier charisma and prominence by donning traditional garb and holding several sacred objects significant to his religious movement.

their village. Still the drunken loudmouth, Lalawethika was a bungler at medicine, just as in war and the hunt.

On an April evening in 1805, a series of events that changed both Tecumseh's and Lalawethika's lives began to unfold. While sitting at the fire in his lodge, Lalawethika suffered a seizure and fell into a trance so deep that his wife believed him dead. Relatives were called to prepare his body for burial, only to see Lalawethika stir, then recover consciousness. Shakily gaining his feet, he astonished the frightened onlookers by telling them he had died, gone to the spirit world, and had spoken with the Master of Life.

The Master of Life had led Lalawethika to a great mountain overlooking the Indian afterworld. On the one hand was heaven, a land filled with game and tall cornfields, on the other was hell, populated by tribesmen who had broken the Master of Life's precepts. Especially prominent were drunkards like himself who were subjected to fiery tortures. In his vision, Lalawethika had seen the spirits of unrepentant alcoholics with hot lead poured down their throats and flames gushing from their nostrils. Unless the Shawnees returned to the Master of Life's teachings, they would share in such sufferings. Obviously frightened, the reawakened Lalawethika renounced alcohol and vowed to lead his people down a new path to righteousness. He also announced to his stunned audience that he no longer would be known as Lalawethika, the "noisemaker." Henceforth, his new name would be Tenskwatawa, "the Open Door," signifying his new role as the Prophet to his people.

During the next several months, additional visions refined Tenskwatawa's new doctrines. He admonished the Shawnees to return to the ways of their fathers. Pork, beef, and mutton were condemned as unclean, and converts were instructed to eat only the meat that they killed in the forest. Stone or wooden implements should replace tools purchased from white men, and the tribesmen were to dress only in skin garments. In addition, traditional tribal ties should be strengthened, and all marriages should be monogamous. Interracial marriage was denounced, and the Indians were forbidden to accumulate wealth like white men.

Particularly, the new Shawnee Prophet expressed enmity for white Americans. He informed his followers that the Master of Life had created the Indians, British, Spanish, and French. But the Americans were the children of the Great Serpent and were not to be trusted. In his visions, Tenskwatawa had seen the Americans as great crabs who crawled forth onto the eastern seashore, and the Master of Life had warned him that "They grew from the scum of the great water when it was troubled by the Evil Spirit. And the froth was driven into the woods by a strong east wind. . . . They are unjust. They have taken away your lands which were not made for them." Tenskwatawa exhorted his listeners to avoid the Long Knives and to be wary of those Indians who had adopted American ways. Those tribesmen such as Black Hoof who had embraced American culture adhered to the Great Serpent and should be condemned for witchcraft. It was these witches, the Prophet proclaimed, who had fomented the unrest and the destruction of traditional values in the Indian villages.

The Prophet's teachings soon spread to neighboring tribes, and by 1806 large parties of Delawares, Wyandots, and other tribesmen had journeyed to

The sale of three million acres in Indiana to the whites through the Treaty of Fort Wayne in September 1809 galvanized Tecumseh into action, and he began to campaign for a union of separate tribes to fight the white encroachments. In November of 1810, he traveled to Amherstburg with more than a hundred Potawatomis, Ottawas, Winnebagoes, and Sacs to affirm their relationship with the British.

In the early nineteenth century, a ceremonial exchange of "belts" commonly accompanied conferences of Indians, and especially those between whites and Indians. These signified that the meeting was considered to be important and that the participants could expect statements made there to be sincere.

Tecumseh brought this 4 1/2-foot belt covered with a leaf design of glass beads to the Amherstburg council. It reportedly had been given to the Shawnees by the British following the victory over the French in 1763. Presenting it to the British at Fort Malden, he interpreted the darker beads at one end as representing "the Red People," the lighter colored beads at the opposite end as the British, and the design in the middle as "the hearts of both" joined together. The clear implication was that Tecumseh's confederacy was ready to assist the British in a war against the Americans. The problem for the British would be to restrain the Indians, while retaining their friendship, until they were actually needed.

Environment Canada-Parks: Fort Malden National Historic Park



David Barker, Photographer

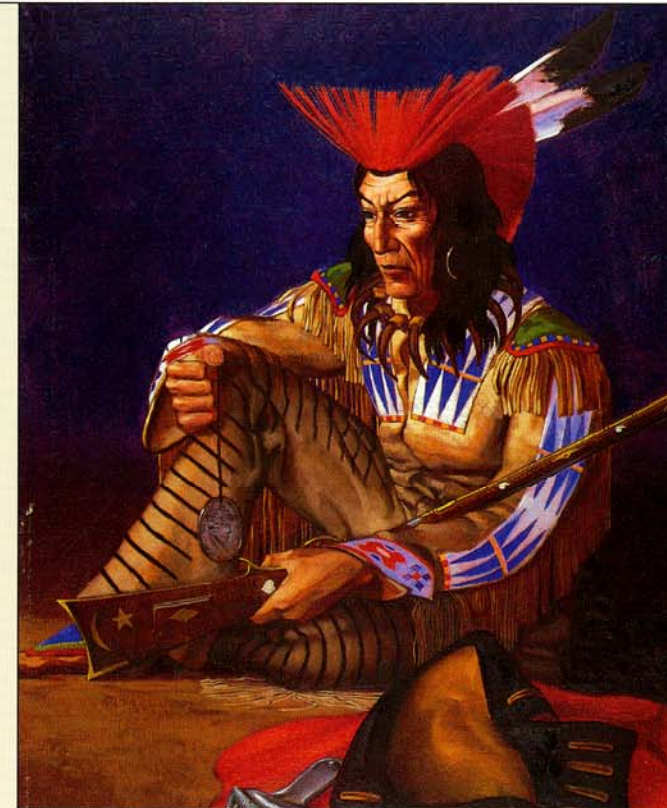
Numerous tomahawks survive that are supposed to have been used by Tecumseh. This silver-inlaid pipe tomahawk seems to have impeccable credentials. It was a gift to Thomas Worthington by Tecumseh, presented in the preliminaries to a formal council with state officials. The fine workmanship of the tomahawk is atypical and indicative of its preparation specifically for presentation purposes. The oval plate near the head is engraved with the words "Tecumseh 1807" and presumably was added by Worthington, in whose family it was retained. Ohio Historical Society



Since Tecumseh's death on October 5, 1813, the Shawnee war chief's history has merged with his legend. Most of the mythology which envelops the man has been added by white historians or folklorists willing to accept any apocrypha that explained Tecumseh in terms understandable to themselves. Many of these legends are obvious attempts to identify Tecumseh with white Americans, or to illustrate that much of his success was due to his supposed white ancestry or to his adherence to the values of nineteenth-century American society. For many Americans such an association made Tecumseh seem more "civilized" and therefore more acceptable. Other tales which stress his physical feats or superhuman qualities are typical of the folklore patterns and traditions that are nearly universal in human society.

Part of the mythology associated with Tecumseh focuses upon his ancestry: white blood flowing in his veins offered a suitable explanation for his failure to conform to Indian stereotypes. Some historians have claimed that Puckeshinwa, Tecumseh's father, was born to a Creek warrior and the daughter of a British official in Georgia. Others asserted that Tecumseh's mother was a white captive among the Shawnees who later was ransomed by her family in Kentucky. Although neither story offers substantiating evidence, both were mentioned by historians and readily accepted by part of the American public.

The circumstances surrounding Puckeshinwa's death also have added to the Tecumseh legend. Although scholars now know that he fell at the Battle of Point Pleasant (See TIMELINE, August-September 1987) in 1774, for many years most Americans believed otherwise. Prior to 1980 the most widely accepted biography of Tecumseh, Glenn Tucker's *Tecumseh: Vision of Glory*, argued that Puckeshinwa was treacherously murdered by a party of white hunters after he had refused to serve as their guide. Tucker even includes verbatim deathbed testimony by Puckeshinwa while Tecumseh and his mother knelt at the stricken warrior's side. Of course Puckeshinwa was killed by whites, but the assertion that he was *murdered* lends dramatic impact to Tecumseh's biography, draws him firmly within the matrix of Euro-American mythic, folk, and literary



Tecumseh, War Chief of the Shawnee by W. Langdon Kihn. Oil on canvas, 36 x 26 inches, 1937. National Geographic Society
Images of Plains Indians, indelibly etched in the public mind through popular literature and movies, have virtually submerged the very different and distinct culture of the Eastern Woodland peoples of which Tecumseh was a part. The enduring popularity of the Kihn painting of Tecumseh, especially among modern descendants of eastern Indian tribes, despite its historically inappropriate use of western-style buckskins, necklace, and headdress, helps to ensure that the real Tecumseh will continue to be obscured in a fog of myth.

tradition, and provides credence to his role as a righteous avenger.

Other facets of Tecumseh's family or personal life also have been clouded by legend. Some of his biographers argue that he was one of a set of twins or triplets and that his birth was marked by a series of natural phenomena, including a shower of meteorites. More famous is his fictitious love for Rebecca

Galloway, the daughter of James Galloway, a settler in Greene County, Ohio. According to Galloway family tradition, as portrayed in William A. Galloway's *Old Chillicothe* and in Alvin M. Josephy, Jr.'s, *The Patriot Chiefs*, Tecumseh fell in love with Rebecca and often visited the Galloway cabin where she read to him and taught him English. When he asked for her hand, Rebecca agreed, but only if Tecumseh would forsake his people and live like a white man. Of course Tecumseh was unwilling to make such a sacrifice and the couple parted. Today the myth of the Tecumseh-Galloway relationship forms part of the plot for a handsomely produced pageant that is staged each summer near Chillicothe, Ohio.

Almost all of Tecumseh's biographers believed that he originated the Indian movement which swept the Old Northwest prior to the War of 1812, and they portray his brother the Prophet as a religious fanatic who rode Tecumseh's coattails. Although Tecumseh did travel to many villages in the region, the extent of his travels has been exaggerated. Unquestionably he journeyed to villages in Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, Illinois, and perhaps even Wisconsin, but accounts of his visits to the Iowas, to Osage villages in southwestern Missouri, and to Iroquois towns in New York are false or at best unsubstantiated. Although Tecumseh did visit the Chickasaws, Choctaws, and Creeks during the fall of 1811, he did not visit the Cherokees or Seminoles. Moreover, historical evidence indicates that Tecumseh made only one journey (1811) to recruit southern warriors and that he spent the winter of 1812-1813 in northwestern Indiana.

Associated with Tecumseh's southern journey is the legend that he predicted the New Madrid earthquake which shook the Mississippi Valley in December 1811. Quoting unnamed Creek sources, in 1842 Thomas McKenney and James Hall reported in their *History of the Indian Tribes of North America* that Tecumseh had informed the Creeks that when he reached Detroit, he would stamp his foot and the earth would tremble. Of course such supernatural power enhanced the Tecumseh mystique; but if he predicted the earthquake, he misjudged its onset. In mid-December, when the earthquake devastated New Madrid, Missouri, and altered the flow of the



Major General Isaac Brock, the provisional commander of Upper Canada at the start of the War of 1812, was, for Tecumseh, a soldier of bold initiative and imagination. And Tecumseh struck Brock as a warrior of keen intellect and gallantry. Both were in their early forties when they first met in August 1812 during the campaign against Detroit, and they struck up an immediate friendship.

Supposedly, when Tecumseh mistook this brass compass for a watch, Brock good-naturedly offered it to his new friend as a gift. Sha-wa-wan-noo, one of Tecumseh's aides at the Battle of the Thames, had it engraved in Detroit following the chief's death. *Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto*

Mississippi River, Tecumseh was passing through southern Illinois en route to Prophetstown.

Other attributes are of a more worldly nature. Incorporating local traditions from Canada, Glenn Tucker suggests that Tecumseh's humane treatment of prisoners can be attributed "to his knowledge of Masonry" and asserts that the Shawnee may have been initiated into the Adoniram Lodge No. 18 at Amherstburg, Ontario. Other historians have argued that Tecumseh was appointed a brigadier general in the British army. Basing their claim on the most accurate portrait of Tecumseh, which pictures him wearing a British officer's coat, they also point out that Tecumseh's only child, a son named Pachetha, was supplied with a pension following the death of his father. Yet British military records do not mention the appointment, and Indian leaders often were furnished with military clothing. Moreover, it was not uncommon for the British Indian Department to provide financial assistance to the survivors of its allies.

The uncertainty surrounding Tecumseh's death also has added to his mythology. The American personally responsible for Tecumseh's death remains unknown, but most frontiersmen accorded the honor to Colonel Richard M. Johnson of Kentucky. Although Johnson never publicly claimed responsibility for the Shawnee's death, his later campaign for the vice-presidency of the United States included the slogan:

Rumpsey dumpsey, rumpsey dumpsey
Colonel Johnson killed Tecumseh.

The mystery associated with the fate of Tecumseh's body has also caused considerable speculation. Tecumseh's followers claimed that they carried the corpse from the battlefield and buried it secretly in the forest. As late as the 1850s, some Shawnees residing in Kansas claimed they still possessed Tecumseh's bones which provided the tribe with powerful medicine.

The aura of Tecumseh's fame has been felt on both sides of the St. Lawrence. In Canada, Tecumseh quickly became a publicly acclaimed folk-hero. John Richardson, who served in the British lines as a local volunteer, wrote a poem eulogizing the chief only a few years after his death. Funds

were solicited as early as 1841 for the erection of a monument to the Indian, and the official Canadian Board of Ordnance actually purchased a site for it in Montreal. As the centennial of the Battle of Moraviantown approached, the citizens of Thamesville erected their own granite boulder near the supposed site of his death and created a Tecumseh Memorial Association to gather monies for a permanent monument or museum. A grand celebration was held in October 1913 complete with all the military trappings, decoration, and speeches of the most patriotic event. Today Tecumseh's name is still applied to a host of places, roads, parks and buildings in the vicinity of the battle in southern Ontario.

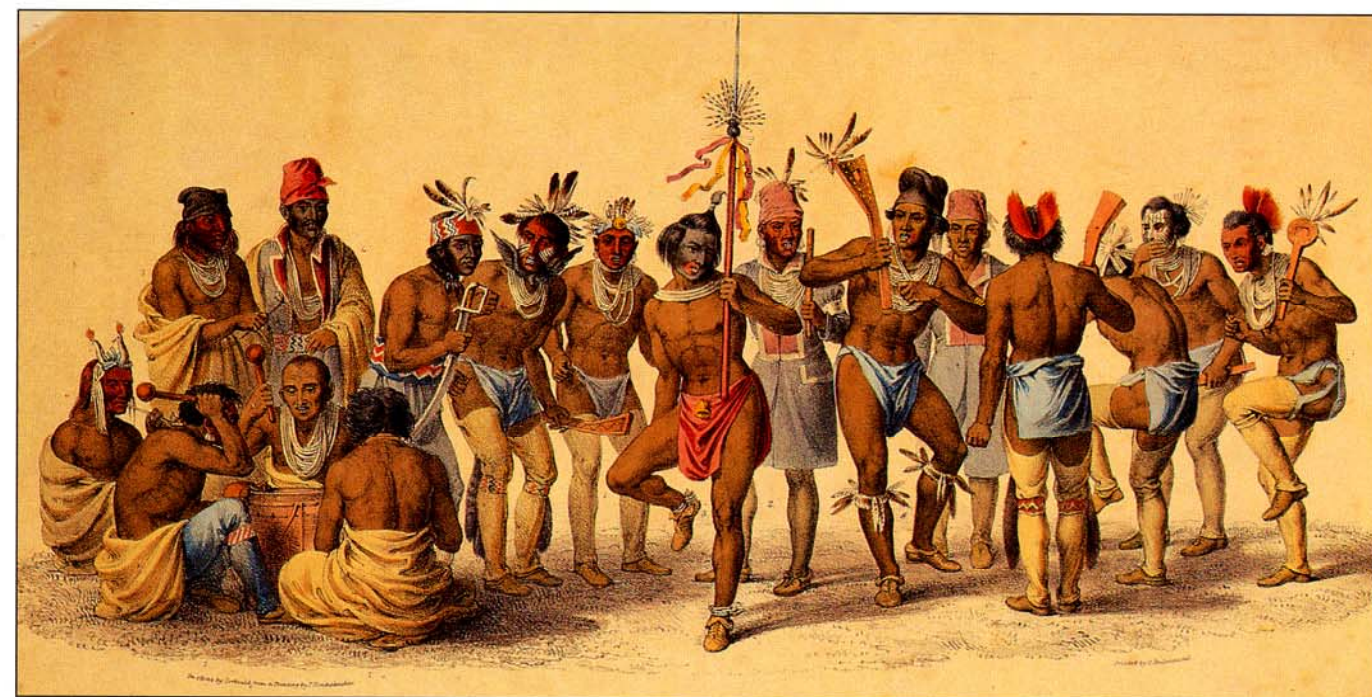
Finally, even Tecumseh's personal appearance has been molded by the mythmakers. Although he was of average height, walked with a slight limp, and had regular Shawnee features, most historians have described him as tall and aquiline, with relatively light skin, hazel eyes, and a genteel countenance. No record of Tecumseh sitting for a painter is known, but Benson Lossing published a contemporary composite portrait combining the sketches of an Indian trader at Vincennes, Indiana, with drawings of a British officer at Detroit. It presents the image of a handsome man with high cheekbones, dressed in a British officer's coat, his head wrapped in a cloth turban embellished with a feather. In the 1950s a portrait was found among the collections of the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago that had been acquired at the turn of the century from the family of an early nineteenth-century Indian agent in Missouri. Its claim for authenticity is based on circumstantial evidence, but the portrait shows some distinct facial similarities to the likeness published by Lossing. Although the LeDru-Lossing portrait is perhaps the most accurate, a more popular portrait by W. Langdon Kihn first appeared in the *National Geographic Magazine* in 1937. The Kihn portrait pictures a silent, pensive Tecumseh sitting alone before the Battle of the Thames. In the portrait the Shawnee has shed a British officer's coat and is bedecked in a beautifully beaded deerskin shirt and leggings. The Kihn portrait contains several inaccuracies (the shirt and leggings are of western Plains Indian design), but it captures the public's image of Tecumseh. The myth lives.

Tecumseh made sense. His reaction to American aggression seemed to be a logical, and potentially effective, response.

By 1811 Tecumseh already had contacted most of the tribes of the Old Northwest, and in August he passed through Vincennes, carrying his message to the southern tribes. Numerous accounts indicate Tecumseh was a convincing orator, able to captivate an audience. Although the Chickasaws and Choc-taws refused his overtures, Tecumseh found a receptive audience among the Upper Creeks of northern Alabama. There, among his mother's kinsmen, he found warriors who also were willing to stand against the Americans. Late in the fall, he left the Creek villages and returned to Indiana via the Shawnee settlements near Cape Girardeau, Missouri. He was back on the Tippecanoe in early January 1812.

To his dismay, Tecumseh found Prophetstown in ashes. On November 7, 1811, the Prophet had convinced his warriors to attack an American force led by Harrison that had approached the Indian village. The resulting Battle of the Tippecanoe was

Tecumseh's alliance of Indian tribes ranged as far as the west side of the Mississippi River, picking up warriors from the Sauk and Fox tribes, shown here in a lithograph based on a painting done by Peter Rindisbacher in the 1820s. These and Kickapoos, Winnebagoes, Menominees, Sioux, and Ojibwas from the western Great Lakes combined with eastern Wyandots, Shawnees, Delawares, Ottawas, Miamis, and Potawatomis to create a confederacy of unprecedented size and cultural mixture. But even a strong leader like Tecumseh had difficulty holding such a disparate army together. When the second British invasion into Ohio under Colonel Henry Proctor failed in August 1813, a disillusioned group of the western Indians headed for home, cutting the force in half. *Ohio Historical Society*



hardly the overwhelming tactical victory claimed by Harrison (casualties on both sides were about equal), but as the Indians retreated, Harrison's troops burned Prophetstown and destroyed large quantities of food and ammunition. The Indian withdrawal marked the end of Tenskwatawa's career as a prophet. Prior to the battle he had assured his followers that his medicine would make them invulnerable to the Americans' bullets, but some tribesmen, especially the Winnebagoes, suffered significant numbers of killed and wounded, and as the battle ended they threatened the Prophet's life. Tenskwatawa eventually was spared, but his influence was shattered.

Tecumseh spent much of the winter of 1811 and the following spring attempting to rebuild his confederacy. Riders were sent to tribes throughout Indiana and Illinois instructing the warriors to reassemble on the Tippecanoe. Biding his time, and anxious to head off another American military campaign, Tecumseh assured Harrison of his opposition to war. Referring to the Tippecanoe fight as an "unfortunate transaction," he added, "Had I been at home, there would have been no blood shed."

By the summer of 1812, the United States was on the brink of war with Great Britain: the last chance for the confederated tribes to end American expansion was at hand. Governor William Hull of the Michigan Territory led almost two thousand Ohio militia north to reinforce the garrison at Detroit. Meanwhile, Tecumseh was at Amherstburg, on the Canadian shore, conferring on joint operations against the Americans. Early in July 1812, news reached both sides that war had erupted, and a

Deputation of Indians from Chippewa Tribes to the Resident of Upper Canada Sir Frederic Robinson C.B. etc. in 1815 by Rudolf von Steiger. Watercolor on paper, 12 x 16 inches, 1815. Mrs. Lilian von Steiger Collection, Switzerland

The dance of a Chippewa delegation, painted in Canada by Rudolf von Steiger, illustrated the intermixture of white and Indian culture that both inspired the nativist movement of the Prophet and Tecumseh and also severely narrowed its chances of success. The feathered knee fringe and headdress of the dancer, for example, perhaps symbolize a personal guardian spirit, a common element in traditional Indian polytheism. But the drummer plays a rope-tensioned drum, like those of the European military; the drum was likely obtained as a war trophy or trade item. Even more telling than these material clues is the obvious racial mixture of the delegation itself, showing evidence of black and white ancestry as well as Indian.

Von Steiger was a Swiss mercenary who served in the British army in the Great Lakes region during the War of 1812. A veteran of the Napoleonic wars in Europe, the sometime artist must have been intrigued by the appearance of the Chippewas, who in the summer of 1815 paid their respects to Major General Frederic Robinson, then serving as provisional lieutenant governor in Upper Canada.



month later Tecumseh was wounded while leading war parties that attacked American forces traveling between Detroit and Ohio. On August 16 he commanded the Indian forces of a British-Indian army that crossed the river and captured Detroit.

For the next year the allies tried to expand on their initial success. The decisive victory that, from the Indian perspective, might repair the disaster of Tippecanoe, eluded them. A Potawatomi siege of Fort Wayne collapsed before it could be supported from Detroit. A May 1813 attack on Fort Meigs, on the Maumee River, continued for nine days before it was given up. By midsummer it was obvious that British and Indian prospects were waning.

Any stalemate between the British and Americans worked to the Indians' disadvantage. Only decisive action would enable Tecumseh to negotiate his demands for Indian autonomy from a position of strength. If the British and Indians did not take the offensive against the Americans, all Tecumseh's efforts to defend the remaining Indian land base would be thwarted. Consequently, throughout the summer of 1813, Tecumseh pleaded with Colonel Henry Procter, the cautious, plodding British commander, to launch another expedition against Ohio. The colonel finally agreed, and in late July British and Indian forces made another desultory



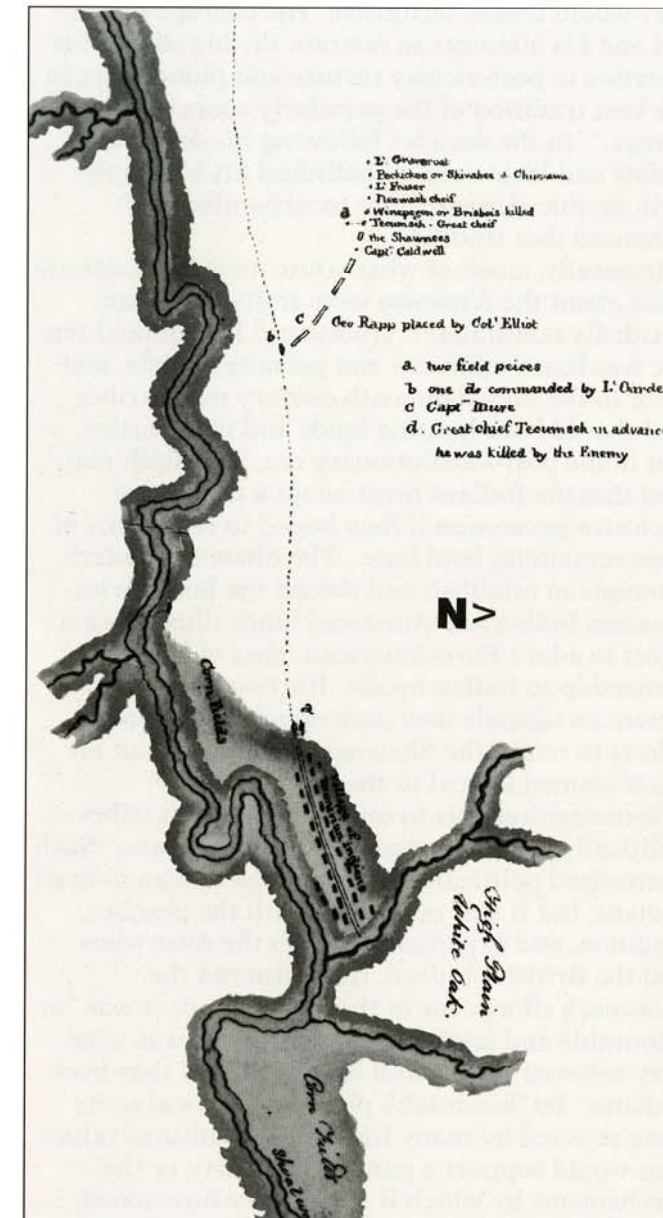
invasion of the Maumee country. Although Tecumseh attempted to lure the garrison from Fort Meigs through a ruse, the tactic failed, and like the earlier siege, the July assault was abandoned. The allies then attacked Fort Stephenson, a small American post on the Sandusky River, but the American garrison led by Major George Croghan defended the fort so courageously that Tecumseh and Procter were forced to withdraw. On August 2, 1813, the invaders again retreated to Canada.

Disheartened by failure, many of the western Indians now abandoned Tecumseh and returned to their villages in Illinois and Wisconsin. The British and Indian position further deteriorated when, in September, Captain Oliver Hazard Perry and an American fleet defeated a British squadron on Lake Erie. American control of the lake made the British positions at Detroit and Amherstburg untenable. Afraid that Perry would disrupt his supply lines and land American forces in Upper Canada, Procter made plans to abandon the Detroit frontier and retreat towards Niagara.

Tecumseh and his remaining followers were incensed at the British withdrawal. The Indian leader accused Procter of cowardice. Comparing the British commander to a dog "that carries its

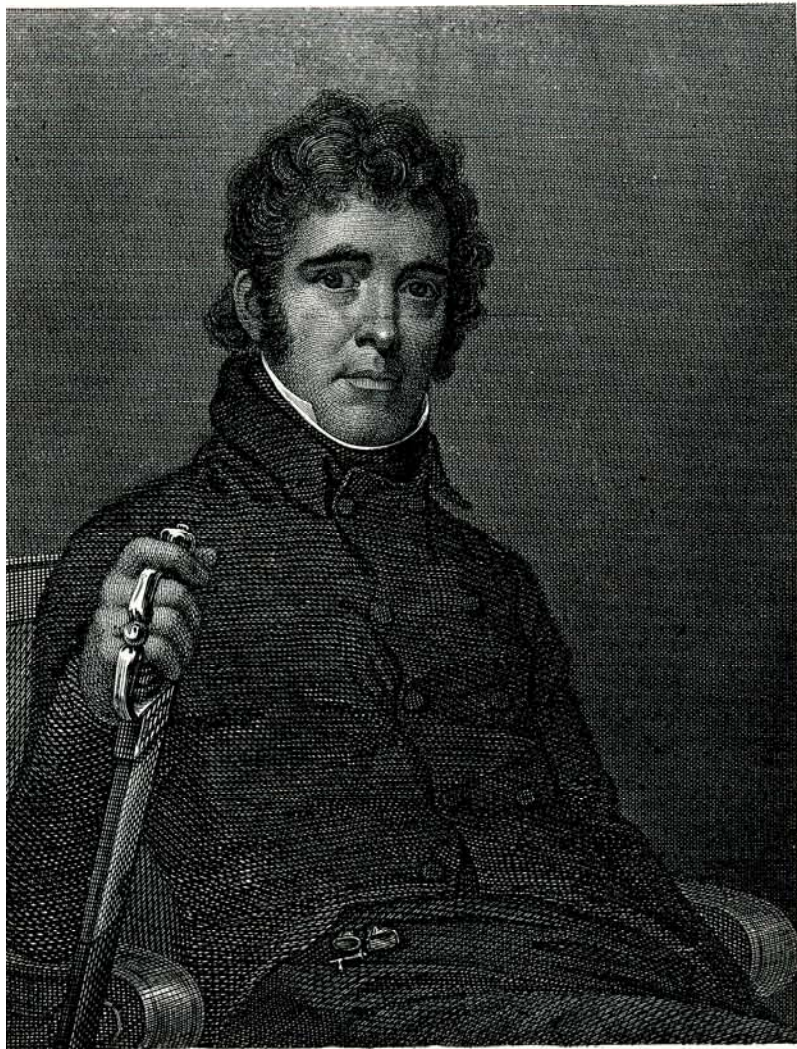
Amherstburg and Fort Malden 1813 by Margaret Reynolds. Watercolor on paper, 45 x 63 1/2 inches, 1813. Environment Canada-Parks: Fort Malden National Historic Park

After the British evacuated Detroit in 1796, Fort Malden was established on the Canadian side of the Detroit River. This fort, along with the adjacent village of Amherstburg, became the western base of British operations in the early stages of the War of 1812. Tecumseh was, therefore, a frequent visitor here and according to tradition is the tallest figure among the group of Indians in the right foreground. This same tradition identifies the British officer in the left center foreground as Henry Procter (the only known image of him), the ineffectual commander whose relationship with Tecumseh and his warriors can only be characterized as disastrous. The artist's brother, Robert Reynolds, who served as commissary at Fort Malden, is said to be the figure to the right of Procter.



The year following the Battle of the Thames, British Royal Engineers oversaw the preparation of a map of a portion of the River Thames which included a detail of the battlefield. Apparently prepared with the assistance of members of the Indian Department who were present at the battle, it showed the arc formed by the British regulars and their Indian allies next to the road west of Moraviantown. The Indians held the right wing of this curved line of battle, and Tecumseh's position is marked by the letter "d."

National Map Collection, Public Archives of Canada (NMC-21814)



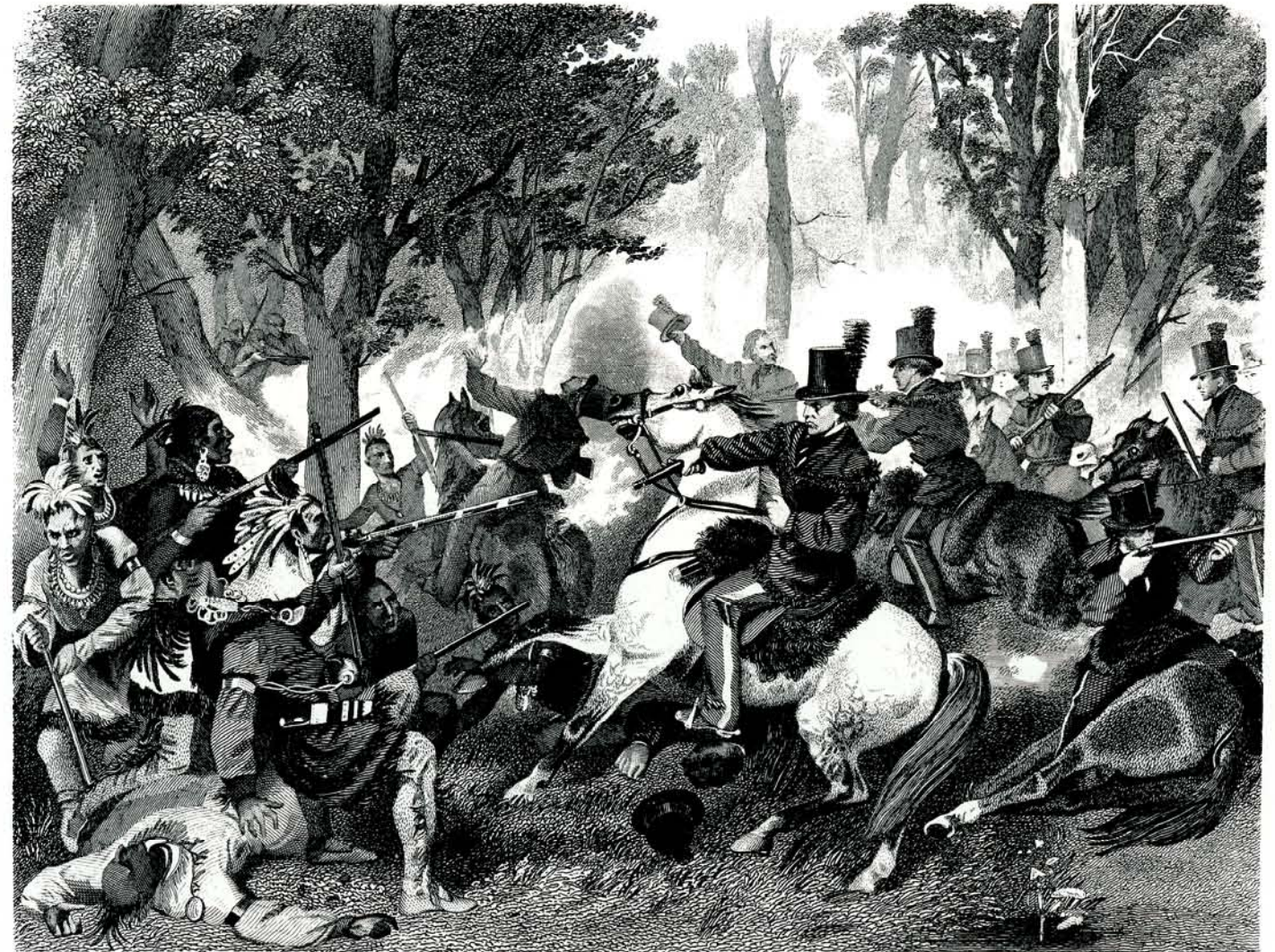
A recent in-depth analysis of eyewitness descriptions of the Battle of the Thames does not offer conclusive evidence as to who killed Tecumseh, but both white and Indian accounts make the case for the Kentuckian, Colonel Richard M. Johnson, strongest of any. Even Johnson himself was not clear on the events of that day in October 1813, acknowledging only that he killed an Indian and never claiming that it was Tecumseh. There were good reasons for his memory to be clouded, since he left the field with five gunshot wounds in his leg, thigh, arm, and hand, the effects of which he suffered the remainder of his life. Regardless of the veracity of the claim, Johnson never denied it, and it clearly helped him in a distinguished political career as a U.S. senator for Kentucky and as vice-president under Martin Van Buren. *Ohio Historical Society*

they would create Tecumseh. His courage in combat and his attempts to restrain the impulse of his warriors to post-victory torture and plunder are in the best tradition of the popularly conceived "noble savage." In the decades following his death, folklorists and historians embellished his biography with mythic elements that incorporated and enhanced that tradition.

Ironically, much of what white Americans admire most about the Shawnee were traits that were decidedly non-Indian. Traditional Indian land tenure was based upon use, not permanent title, and prior to the mid-eighteenth century many tribes had shared both hunting lands and village sites. But in the post-Revolutionary era, Tecumseh realized that the Indians must adopt a concept of exclusive possession if they hoped to retain any of their remaining land base. The Shawnee leader's attempts to establish and defend the boundaries between Indian and American lands illustrate his effort to adapt Euro-American ideas of land ownership to Indian needs. Harrison and other American officials may have opposed Tecumseh's efforts to retain the Shawnee's homeland, but his goals seemed logical to them.

Tecumseh's efforts to unite the different tribes politically also made sense to the Americans. Such centralized political leadership was foreign to most Indians, but it was consistent with the practice, tradition, and experience of both the Americans and the British. Indeed, they admired the Shawnee's efforts, for in their own words it was "an admirable and farsighted endeavor": it was what they believed they would have done had they been Indians. Yet Tecumseh's pleas for political unity were rejected by many Indians; the cultural values that would support a pan-Indian polity, or the mechanisms by which it might have functioned, simply did not exist.

The Prophet's reaction to American aggression was more typically Indian. The number of tribesmen who journeyed to Prophetstown after Tecumseh assumed control of the Indian movement never matched the throngs that previously had flocked first to the village at Greenville, then to Prophetstown, to meet with Tenskwatawa. During periods of considerable duress, Indian people have frequently sought a religious deliverance. Tenskwatawa's response was just one of many revivalistic movements encompassing holy men as diverse as Neolin of the Delawares, Handsome Lake of the Senecas, Kennekuk of the Kickapoos, and Wovoka among the Paiutes. The Shawnee Prophet's promises seemed bizarre to both his white contemporaries and to later historians, but both groups had little understanding of traditional Shawnee culture and failed to comprehend that Tenskwatawa's teachings seemed quite logical to the Indians.



Tenskwatawa was not—as he has repeatedly been represented—a religious charlatan riding his brother's coattails. Indian resistance first coalesced around the Shawnee holy man, and Tecumseh's attempt at a political-military confederacy was based on the Prophet's religious movement.

Tecumseh's plan transcended rather than embodied traditional tribal culture. He defined the confrontation over land not in tribal terms, but as "Indian versus white" (as did most nineteenth-century white Americans), and his answer was to centralize the divergent tribal governments under his control. Such a process is often found in the initial stages of the formation of nation-states, a process through which the United States and most western European nations already had passed. Of course he failed, but even Harrison and other Americans who opposed him respected his efforts. Their admiration for the Shawnee leader prepared the way for other white Americans to accept the apocrypha that accrued to him. By the twentieth century, Tecumseh had emerged as an American folk hero. Understandable to modern Americans, he has become the "ideal" Indian. □

Few events in frontier history have produced more controversy or engendered as much interest as the death of Tecumseh at the Battle of the Thames. The dispute still rages today, since there is no irrefutable evidence as to who killed the chief, how it was done, or what was done to and with his body.

Many of the engravings of the battle were done to benefit R.M. Johnson's political career and leave much to be desired from the point of historical accuracy. The view done in 1857 by historical and landscape artist Alonzo Chappel seems far less romanticized than most, and correctly represents both Indian dress and the uniforms of the Kentucky mounted militia with their top hats, known as "round-hats" in the military parlance of the day.

In reality, all these issues are mere footnotes to the fact that with Tecumseh's death, the Indian-British alliance was effectively destroyed, a fact of enormous importance to the American war effort in 1812. *Library of Congress*

The Authors

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Vincent P. DeSantis ("TIMELINE PROFILE: Belva Ann Lockwood") received his Ph.D. from Johns Hopkins University and is a member of the history faculty and former department chairman at the University of Notre Dame. Dr. DeSantis is a former Guggenheim Fellow and was honored with Fulbright Professorships in Italy and Australia. He is the author or coauthor of more than a dozen books.

R. David Edmunds ("The Thin Red Line: Tecumseh, The Prophet, and Shawnee Resistance"), a professor of history at Texas Christian University, is the author of numerous books and articles, including *The Shawnee Prophet*, *Tecumseh and the Quest for Indian Leadership*, and *The Potawatomis: Keepers of the Fire*. He currently serves as a consultant to the Newberry Library's McNickle Center for the History of the American Indian, to the Smithsonian Institution, and to several Indian tribes.

Carolyn V. Platt ("Against the Odds: Birds in Winter") crisscrosses Ohio in search of new perspectives on the fragile relationship between the state's natural patrimony and its human inheritors. Dr. Platt spent her childhood in Bowling Green and was educated at Carleton College and the University of Illinois. She is a Contributing Editor of *The Explorer* and *TIMELINE*.

Acknowledgments

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toriches Museum, Bern, Switzerland; and Mike Harsh, John Barsotti, and Leslie Floyd of the Ohio Historical Society.

Illustrations for "Belva Ann Lockwood" were made available by G. Dinkins of the National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution; John Burke of the U.S. Postal Service; Norma Wollenberg of the Roy-alton Historical Society, Gasport, New York; and Shiela Atkins of Bell & Howell Corporation.

The Link Stamp Company of Columbus generously supplied the airmail stamps, minus one, that appear in "By the Seat of Their Pants," and we also appreciate the assistance of Carl Albrecht and Amos Press in providing philatelic expertise.

Correspondence

TIMELINE welcomes correspondence from its readers. Some editing of letters may be necessary for brevity or to enhance clarity.

Penman of Independence: Januarius MacGahan (June • July 1987)

Thank you for the issue of *TIMELINE* containing Mr. Ostrander's article on J.A. MacGahan. The work is outstanding from every point of view.

However, we noted the absence of a picture of the last tribute to MacGahan—the monument we erected and that the readers of *TIMELINE* may never have seen—and wonder at the reason.

George A. Tabakov, M.D.
Vice Chairman and Executive Secretary
MacGahan American-Bulgarian Foundation

The Editor Replies:

Dr. Tabakov's question brings to light a problem that we continually face: with limited space, what illustrations should we publish? In this instance we elected to include as many actual photographs of MacGahan as possible, and we still left out a few. Most of these images had not been widely published previously, and few of our readers will ever again have the opportunity to see them. We did note that sculptor Lubomir Dalchev had produced a life-size statue of MacGahan, and we hope that many will take the opportunity to visit New Lexington and enjoy this lasting tribute.

TIMELINE ALBUM: A Wrong or Two Wrights? (August • September 1987)

I was surprised and shocked that *TIMELINE* would print the six pages of pure trash, entitled

Additional Reading

The Thin Red Line: Tecumseh, The Prophet, and Shawnee Resistance

Tecumseh and the Quest for Indian Leadership by R. David Edmunds, Little, Brown and Company, 1984.

The Shawnee Prophet by R. David Edmunds, University of Nebraska Press, 1983.

"Shawnee" by Charles Callendar, *Handbook of North American Indians: Northeast* edited by Bruce G. Trigger, Smithsonian Institution, 1978.

Tecumseh: Fact and Fiction in Early Records, edited by Carl F. Klinck, Prentice-Hall, 1961.

By the Seat of Their Pants: Flying the Mail

Aerial Pioneers, The U.S. Air Mail Service, 1918-1927 by William M. Leary, Smithsonian Institution Press, 1985.

Air Mail, An Illustrated History 1793-1981 by Donald B. Holmes, Clarkson N. Potter, Inc., 1981.

Airmails 1870-1970 by James Mackay, B.T. Batsford, Ltd., 1971.

Jenny: The Exciting Story of the Worlds Best Known Stamp Error by George Amich, Amos Press, Inc., 1986.

Flying the Mail by Donald Dale Jackson, Time-Life Books, 1982.

Against the Odds: Birds in Winter

"Annotated List of the Birds of Ohio" by Milton B. and Mary A. Trautman, *The Ohio Journal of Science*, September 1968.

A Guide to Bird Behavior, Vols. I and II by Donald W. and Lillian Q. Stokes, Little, Brown and Company, 1979, 1983.

Birds of North America: A Guide to Field Identification by Chandler S. Robbins, Bertel Bruun, and Herbert S. Zim, Golden Press, 1983.

Wings, Sun, and Stars: The Story of Bird Migration by John Kaufmann, William Morrow & Company, Inc., 1969.

TIMELINE PROFILE: Belva Ann Lockwood

"Belva A. Lockwood—That Extraordinary Woman" by Julia Hull Winner, *New York History*, October 1958.

The Girl Who Ran for President by Laura Kerr, T. Nelson Company, 1947.

"Belva Ann Lockwood" by Allen C. Clark, *Records of the Columbia Historical Society*, 1935.

"A Feisty Schoolmarm Made the Lawyers Sit Up and Take Notice" by Julia Davis, *Smithsonian*, March 1981.

"How I Ran for the Presidency" by Belva Ann Lockwood, *National Magazine*, March 1903.

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by Stephen E. Ambrose

THE DAY ALICE CAME TO TOWN
by Betsy Greiner

THE GREAT BLACK SWAMP
by Carolyn V. Platt

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Pictorialist of the Upper Ohio
by William C. Gates, Jr.

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Akron's North Hill Viaduct
by Priscilla M. Harding

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by Donald T. Critchlow

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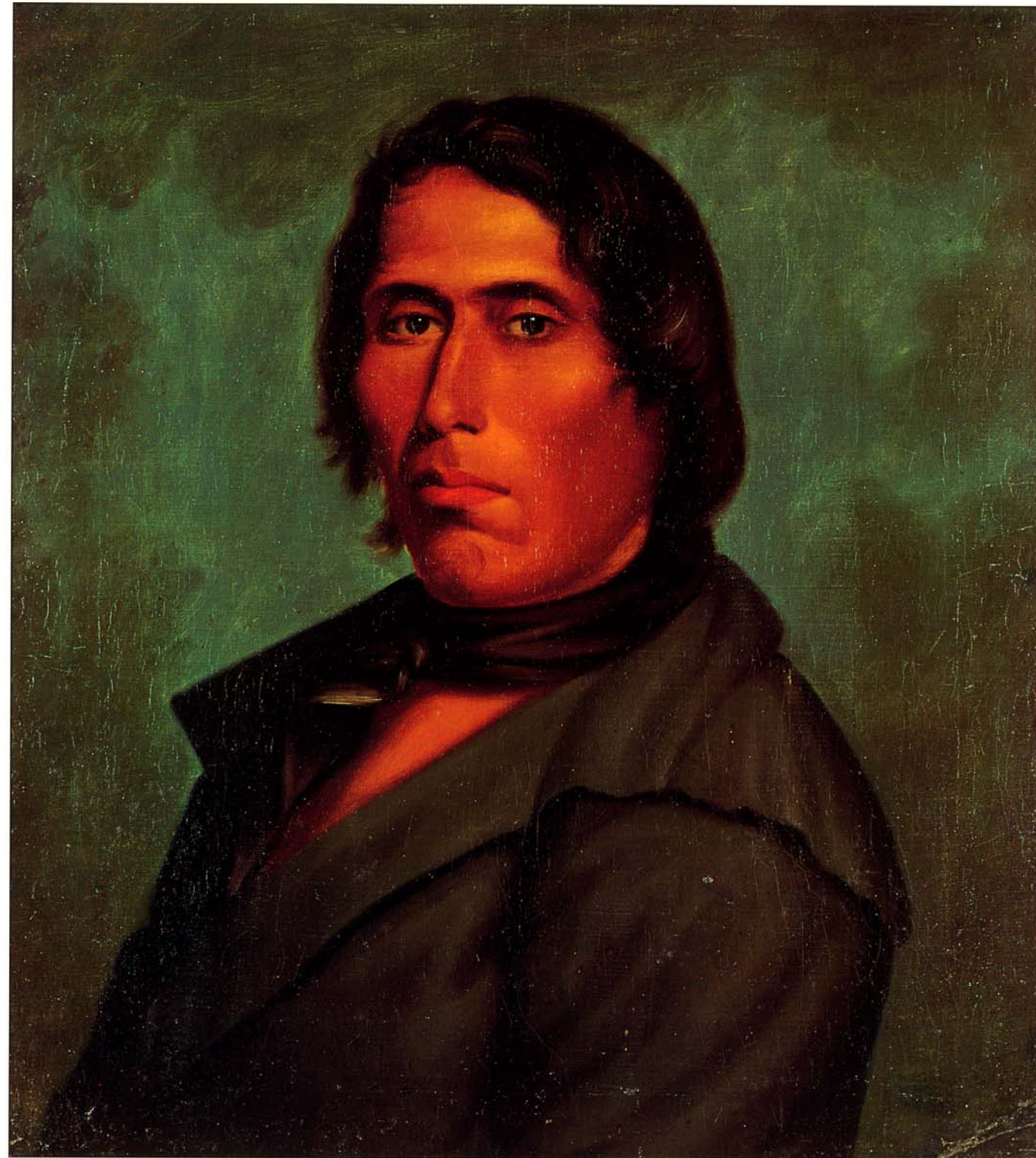
THE THIN RED LINE
Tecumseh, The Prophet, and Shawnee Resistance
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TIMELINE REVIEW
Thomas Paine's *The Rights of Man*
by Philip S. Foner



Untitled by unknown artist. Oil on canvas, 28 x 23 inches, date unknown.
Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago

This portrait, purportedly of Shawnee leader Tecumseh, was purchased from the family of Major Benjamin O'Fallon in 1894. O'Fallon was raised in the St. Louis home of William Clark, his uncle and superintendent of western Indian affairs from 1813 until 1838. Clark was a patron and collector of Indian portraiture, and the painting may have come from his collection, or it may have been acquired by O'Fallon during his own career as an Indian agent and fur trader in the 1820s. In either case, its authenticity as a portrait of Tecumseh is not fully established.

See: "The Thin Red Line: Tecumseh, The Prophet, and Shawnee Resistance"