
The Massacre at Deer Lick Creek, Madison County, Indiana, 1824*

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The land drained by Fall Creek and Deer Lick Creek in central Indiana had begun to see considerable change by the spring of 1824. White settlers, no longer fearful of Indian conflict, penetrated this wild country ever more frequently in search of land to farm. Their cabins, "rude and unfinished, with a slab for a door, split puncheons for floors, and sticks daubed with mud for chimneys," became a more common sight in these deep Indiana woods.¹ Although there were no roads or bridges for miles, enough men and women had come to this part of the state to warrant the establishment of a county government. Therefore, in November of 1823, in a small settlement called "the falls on Fall Creek," a group of men gathered to organize Madison County in accordance with an act passed by the Indiana General Assembly in May. The population of this young county in 1824 could scarcely have been more than two hundred families; that is, if you did not count the Indians.²

Although there remained a substantial population of Indians in the state, the Indian wars in Indiana had come to an end by 1824. The American pioneer and the retreating Indian coexisted somewhat peacefully following the War of 1812. Even in the village at the falls, a county merchant stocked a number of items such as beads, brooches, tinware, and other trinkets that were used in the fur and hide trade with the local Indians. In addition, a number of early pioneers and Indians enjoyed a considerable friendship.³

In the fall of 1823 three Seneca Indian men, known to white settlers as Logan, Ludlow, and M'Doal, brought their families (three women, two ten-year-old boys, and two younger girls) to the "Big

*The murders that occurred at Deer Lick Creek in Madison County, Indiana, in 1824 have often been mistakenly referred to as the Fall Creek massacre. Jessamyn West's best-selling fictional account, *The Fall Creek Massacre* (1974), is one of the most recent works to employ this title.

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¹ Thomas B. Helm, *History of Madison County, Indiana* (Chicago, 1880), 96.

² Richmond *Public Leger*, June 5, 1824; Indiana, *Laws* (1823), 94-97.

³ Helm, *History of Madison County*, 100; Anderson *Democrat*, May 1, 1874.



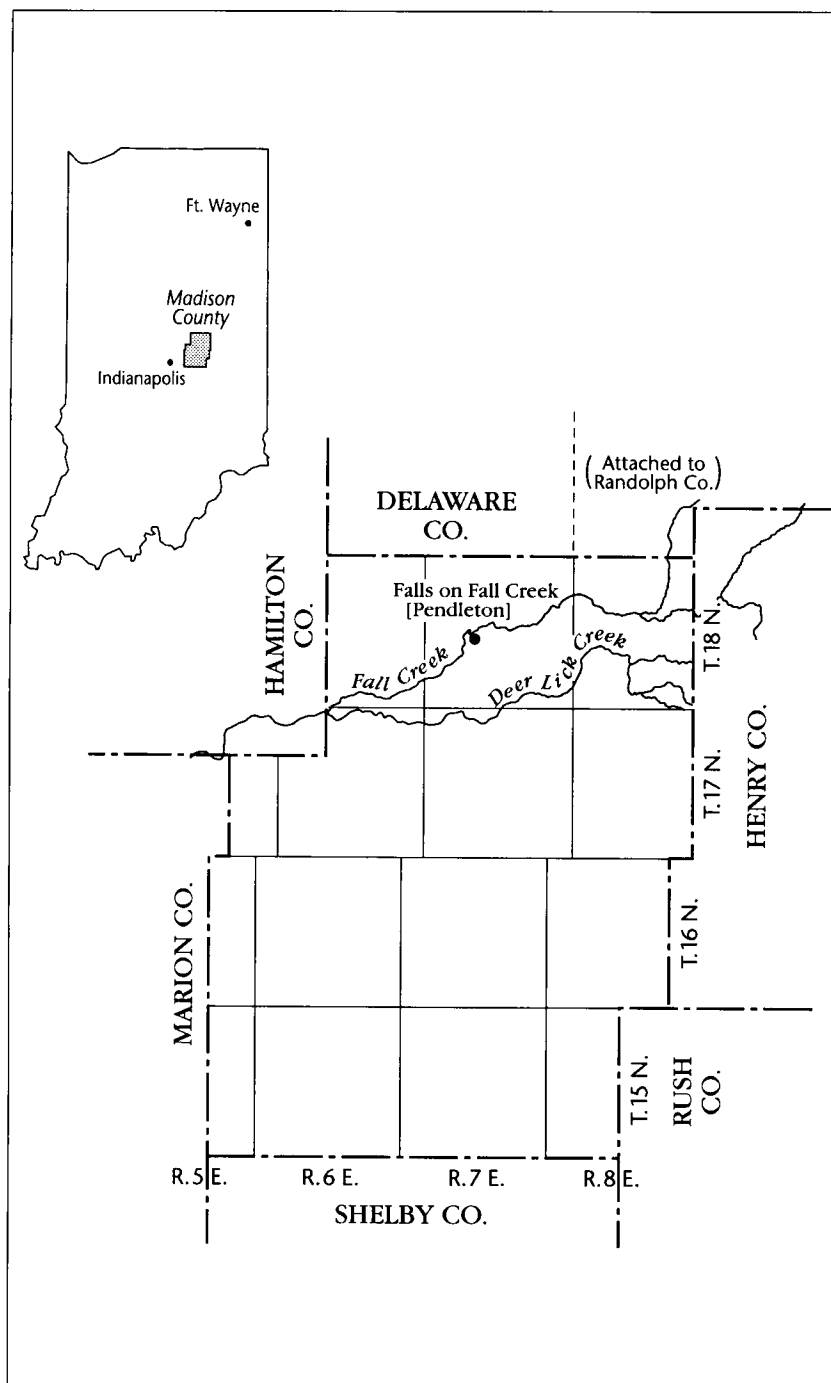
THE FALLS ON FALL CREEK

FORMERLY EIGHT FEET IN HEIGHT, THE FALLS ARE PICTURED HERE SOMETIME AFTER 1864 WHEN A MILL DAM WAS MADE ON THE ROCK LEDGE IMMEDIATELY ABOVE THE FALLS. BEFORE 1909 THE DAM WAS REMOVED AND THE LEDGE PARTIALLY CUT BACK, LEAVING THE FALLS LESS SPECTACULAR IN APPEARANCE.

Reproduced from Jacob Piatt Dunn, *True Indian Stories* . . . (Indianapolis, 1909), 207.

Lick," about nine miles east of the falls on Fall Creek, to pass the winter hunting and trapping. The camp was situated within a stone's throw of the south bank of Deer Lick Creek, a small gently flowing stream that was formed by a series of mineral springs and meandered through the southern region of the newly formed Madison County. The land called the Big Lick by both Indians and settlers encompassed most of the swamps and forests that were drained by the headwaters of this creek. Because the rocks in Deer Lick Creek were constantly washed by the mineral-rich water, animals frequented the site, and the resultant abundance of game in the area was undoubtedly the reason these three Indian men and their families decided to make camp there.

Not much is known about the Seneca people who came to the Big Lick in November, 1823, although wintering in that location was apparently an accepted family tradition. Every fall these Indians left their home village of Lewis Town in the northwest region of Ohio and established their base camp at the Big Lick. Here, the families spent the winter while the men hunted and trapped in the surrounding



MADISON COUNTY, INDIANA, 1824-1827

Map prepared by Graphics Services, Indiana University, Bloomington, based on map in George Pence and Nellie C. Armstrong, *Indiana Boundaries: Territory, State, and County* (Indiana Historical Collections, Vol. XIX; Indianapolis, 1933), 573.

area. With the close of winter the Senecas returned to the Ohio country and spent the spring and summer months supplementing their existence by farming as they had done since the middle of the eighteenth century.⁴

Logan, a subordinate chief of the Seneca Indians, and his clan were friendly, worked hard, and, since encamping at the Big Lick the previous fall, had enjoyed good relations with their white neighbors, who were sensible of the Indians' amiable disposition and orderly conduct. The men had had a productive winter running their traps, and as soon as the women finished making their maple sugar, they planned quietly to depart from this area.⁵ Little did they expect that death would intervene.

Not far from Logan's camp recent settlers from the state of Ohio set about clearing their newly claimed farmland. Most notable among them was John T. Bridge who was born in Boston, Massachusetts, around 1778 and was the son of a distinguished Revolutionary War soldier. When old enough to seek his fortune, Bridge emigrated to Hamilton County, Ohio, and soon thereafter married Mary Harper. Their marriage produced nine children. Stability, however, did not seem to be a part of their lives, and the Bridge family moved several times to and from Ohio, Kentucky, and Indiana. In the fall of 1819 Bridge took his family to the wilderness of Indiana where two years later his wife suddenly died. The possibility exists that John T. Bridge then married Andrew Sawyer's sister, but that fact, to date, cannot be proven. Bridge was a tall, slender man, his age made somewhat apparent by his balding head and bending posture. He usually wore a brown coat and tow linen pantaloons. He lived as a decent citizen and even contributed to the organization of the county.⁶

Bridge's neighbors included his brother-in-law, Andrew Sawyer, and James Hudson. Little is known about Sawyer and his family. Sawyer himself was said to have had a "rather dark complexion," to have spoken Dutch, and to have been somewhat hard of hearing. He was usually seen in his blue linsey coat, blue linsey hunting shirt, and linen pantaloons.⁷ James Hudson was born in Baltimore County,

⁴ *Handbook of North American Indians*; Vol. XV, *Northeast* (Washington, D.C., 1978), 537, 539; John Johnston to Lewis Cass, May 13, 1824, Records of the Michigan Superintendency, 1814-1851, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Record Group 75, National Archives Microfilm Publication M1, roll 14 (hereafter cited as Michigan Superintendency, M1, roll 14); Bloomington *Indiana Gazette*, November 13, 1824.

⁵ John Johnston, "Recollections of Sixty Years," in *John Johnston and the Indians in the Land of the Three Miamis*, ed. Leonard U. Hill (Piqua, Ohio, 1957), 162.

⁶ Family records in the possession of Marilyn Bridge Brown; *History of Carroll County, Indiana* (Chicago, 1882), 247; John L. Forkner and Byron H. Dyson, *Historical Sketches and Reminiscences of Madison County, Indiana . . .* (Anderson, Ind., 1897), 27; *Richmond Public Leger*, July 10, 1824; Sandford C. Cox, *Recollections of the Early Settlement of the Wabash Valley . . .* (Lafayette, Ind., 1860), 9; Oliver H. Smith, *Early Indiana Trials and Sketches: Reminiscences* (Cincinnati, 1858), 51.

⁷ *Richmond Public Leger*, July 10, 1824; Cox, *Recollections of the Early Settlement of the Wabash Valley*, 9; Helen Thurman, "The Fall Creek Tragedy," *Indiana Magazine of History*, XXVII (September, 1931), 231-32.

Maryland, in April of 1796. Shortly thereafter, his father and mother moved their family to Kentucky. When Hudson reached the age of fifteen, he migrated to Champaign County, Ohio. He was married at the age of twenty-four to Phebe Croom, began a family, and moved them to Indiana sometime after 1820. He was of average height for a man of his era and had a full red face, crooked nose, blue eyes, and bushy hair. As was true of many of the settlers in the area, Hudson's constant companion was his rifle.⁸

There is very little to indicate how these pioneer men felt about the Indian population in general or how they felt about the proximity of the Seneca camp on Deer Lick Creek. There are indications that the two groups were acquainted with each other. Hudson seemed to harbor reservations about Ludlow and would later accuse him of threatening his wife. He also insisted that Ludlow had angrily complained that the whites in the vicinity had been disturbing his traps. These accusations, however, remain unsubstantiated.⁹

The scene is set, then, during the rainy month of March, 1824, for the untimely visit of a man named Thomas Harper. No one in the Madison County area had much good to say about Harper. He was described as a roving character who had spent much of his life on the frontier. Some claimed that he once boasted "it was no worse to kill an Indian than to kill a deer."¹⁰ Whether he said it or not is unknown. Harper did seem to hate his Indian neighbor. Many suggestions have been offered as explanations for this anger, but none can be adequately proven. Even the most likely, that Harper's brother had been tortured and killed by Indians in the War of 1812, has not as yet been confirmed.¹¹ Harper was John T. Bridge's brother-in-law and had come to Madison County to visit his deceased sister's family.

On Friday, March 19, 1824, Harper, Bridge, Sawyer, Hudson, and other neighborhood men gathered for a house raising at the farm of their neighbor, Peter Jones. During a break in their labor, some of the men who were engaged in a friendly conversation began discussing the Indians encamped at the Big Lick. Hudson made his report that Ludlow had threatened his wife. This statement seemed to trigger the resentment of the company. Harper quickly replied that "all the Indians ought to be killed." Then Sawyer allegedly added that "if an Indian would steal a horse from him, he would shoot him if possible."¹² The conversation, unfavorable toward their Indian

⁸ Samuel Woodworth, *The Life and Confession of James Hudson* (Indianapolis, 1825), 3-4; Smith, *Early Indiana Trials and Sketches*, 52.

⁹ Woodworth, *Life and Confession of James Hudson*, 4-6.

¹⁰ J. J. Netterville, ed., *Centennial History of Madison County, Indiana: An Account of One Hundred Years of Progress* (2 vols., Anderson, Ind., 1925), I, 70; Jacob Piatt Dunn, *True Indian Stories . . .* (Indianapolis, 1908), 199.

¹¹ Thurman, "The Fall Creek Tragedy," 230-39; Woodworth, *Life and Confession of James Hudson*, 9.

¹² Woodworth, *Life and Confession of James Hudson*, 6.

neighbors, continued until the party eventually separated. The seed had been planted.

The following Sunday, late in the morning, Sawyer appeared at the Hudson farm. He had, it seemed, lost some horses and was recruiting a number of his neighbors to assist him in their recapture. Sawyer even indicated that he believed the Indians might have stolen them. By late that afternoon Sawyer's party included his son Stephen, Harper, John Bridge, Jr., and James Bridge (John T. Bridge's sons), and a local boy named Andrew Jones. Thus organized, their search was soon underway. The men had not gone far before two conspicuous piles of corn were found in the woods near Sawyer's farm. Sawyer insisted that the Indians must have used the corn to catch his horses. Hudson would later assert that someone had planted the corn in order to make him believe the Indians had, in fact, stolen the horses. The search continued until darkness settled, when it was agreed that all would take up the hunt in the morning. During the night considerable rain fell in the area.¹³

The next morning, March 22, as the company began to reassemble at Sawyer's farm to share their breakfast, Harper told his companions the moving story of his brother who had been killed by the Indians during the War of 1812. Sawyer reiterated that if the Indians had his horses he would surely kill them. Continuing their charade, the party decided to investigate the Indian camp first. If the sight were vacated, they reasoned, it could be assumed that the horses had, indeed, been stolen. Harper, accompanied by Andrew Sawyer and his son Stephen; the brothers John Bridge, Jr., and James Bridge; Hudson; and Andrew Jones, set off in the direction of the Indian encampment. The elderly Peter Jones and John T. Bridge remained behind because of the rain. As the men approached the swamps near the creek, they "found" several horse tracks in the mud. Again, Hudson would later maintain that Harper had planted the evidence and that Sawyer himself had hidden his horses.¹⁴ The search continued as they drew closer to the unsuspecting Indians.

Following a trail through the woods, the men eventually came to Logan's camp. As the group approached, the Indians became visibly alarmed at the sight of so many armed white men. Hudson noted M'Doal's absence and assumed that he had already departed with Sawyer's horses. The men dried their clothes around the camp's fire and talked freely with the Indians. Eventually, for fifty cents apiece, Harper was able to enlist Logan and Ludlow, the latter of whom at least harbored reservations, in the search for Sawyer's "missing" horses.¹⁵ The party then headed deeper into the territory of the Big Lick.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 9-10.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 10-11.

While making their way through the woods, Hudson and John Bridge, Jr., fell back from the group and urgently whispered to one another. Bridge revealed that his uncle (Harper) had insisted that the “Indians must be killed.” The search led to an old abandoned cabin; and when everyone but John Bridge, Jr., Hudson, Logan, and Ludlow entered, Hudson assumed they were plotting the murders of Logan and Ludlow. The conference concluded, and the men, with the exception of Logan, casually drank whiskey and tested their skill shooting their rifles at some ducks and other targets. Harper then divided the party. He led Sawyer and his son, Stephen, James Bridge, and Ludlow in one direction and sent the second party, Jones, John Bridge, Jr., Hudson, and Logan, in another. Everyone in the party, with the exception of the unsuspecting Indians, was well aware of Harper’s insidious plans.¹⁶

When Hudson’s party had walked about a half mile, John Bridge, Jr., is said to have repeated his uncle’s order. After a quick consultation, Hudson, John Bridge, Jr., and Jones all expressed their determination to follow Harper’s plan. Hudson would later confess:

Logan was about thirty steps ahead of us—being then in his rear, each of us manifested a desire to have the first shot—I raised up my rifle—John Bridge stepped up by my side—the guns of Jones and Bridge missed fire—mine went off and shot Logan through the body! He screamed frightfully, and the blood spouted out from both sides, to a considerable distance.—He turned and cried, “You kill me.” As he did not fall, Bridge ran up immediately, put his gun against him and pushed him over. Logan was now on the ground in a sitting posture—Jones raised his rifle—Logan covered his face with his hands, and said “if you shoot me, shoot me through the head.” Jones held his gun within a foot of Logan—it flashed—John Bridge then struck him across the head with his gun—he fell backwards—I ran twenty or thirty yards back and commenced reloading—Bridge done the same—Jones in the mean time was endeavoring to discharge his rifle. I then told Bridge to put him out of his misery—he ran up to Logan and stuck him twice [in the chest] with his [nine-inch-long] butcher knife.¹⁷

Logan was dead, his body sprawled on the forest floor. The murderers wasted little time. They dragged Logan’s blood-soaked frame to a nearby depression, which was created by the toppling of an old tree, and rolled it into the hole. Next, they shook the roots of the dead tree and gathered duff from the forest floor to cover the body. Making their way home, Hudson, John Bridge, Jr., and Jones began to realize the gravity of the crime they had just committed. They feared the members of the other party might not have done their part by killing Ludlow. They feared that they might have been noticed by other Indians in the area. Most of all, they feared that they would be punished for the “enormity” of their offense.¹⁸

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 11.

¹⁷ Trial transcript of *State of Indiana v. John Bridge and James Hudson* in the Fifth Judicial Circuit, October Session, 1824, enclosed in Appeal of Attorneys Martin M. Ray and Calvin Fletcher to Indiana Supreme Court, November Term, 1824 (Archives Division, Indiana Commission on Public Records, Indiana State Library and Historical Building, Indianapolis); Woodworth, *Life and Confession of James Hudson*, 12-13.

¹⁸ Woodworth, *Life and Confession of James Hudson*, 13.

Hudson, John Bridge, Jr., and Jones did not learn of Ludlow's fate until the entire group reconvened a short distance from Sawyer's farm. James Bridge was now absent. Either the seventeen-year-old boy did not have the stomach for killing and had retreated to his home, or Sawyer had appointed him to watch the "missing" horses. At any rate, his father, John T. Bridge, had taken his son's place in the party. Ludlow had, indeed, been killed. Harper's party, too, had apparently traveled a short distance from the camp when Harper and Sawyer fell back, took aim, and shot Ludlow through the back. The Indian was dead before his body hit the forest floor.¹⁹

Their thirst for blood not quenched, the company once again moved toward Logan's camp. With the exception of John Bridge, Jr., who had evidently begun to listen to his conscience, the men showed no regret and had no misgivings about what they had just done—or what they were prepared to do. The tall, boyish, eighteen-year-old, however, stopped in the path, turned back, and expressed his desire not to accompany the others any farther. His reluctance drew sharp rebukes from his father who called him a coward and reminded him that "God commanded them to kill their enemies, and that the Holy Scriptures required it." Harper again reminded the boy of his "brave uncle" who had been killed by the "damned Indians." With a little more encouragement, John Bridge, Jr., once more consented to go along. Hudson then began to have reservations about the deed they were about to commit. He refused to have any part in killing women and children. Sitting on a log, he put his head in his hands and began to think, but the others would wait no longer.²⁰

When the white men calmly walked into the Indian camp, the women knew something was wrong. They approached the white strangers nervously. One of the women, who was herself half white and could speak some English, apprehensively asked the men about her husband. They told her that he would return shortly and that she should go back into her house. As the woman turned to obey, one of the men, probably John T. Bridge, raised his rifle and shot her in the back. She sank to her knees, pleading for her life, imploring the name of Jesus, and recalling to the killers that she was half white. They did not listen, and while she knelt on the ground, one of the men crushed her skull with a blow from a hominy pounder. Sawyer quickly turned and fired his rifle, hitting a second woman in the head and killing her instantly. A third woman simultaneously fell to the ground with a gunshot wound. The children, watching in horror, were unable to escape. The men immediately turned to them and continued their savage work until all four were dead. Observing what they had done, Sawyer noticed that one of the boys was still alive. He

¹⁹ *Ibid.*; Smith, *Early Indiana Trials and Sketches*, 51.

²⁰ Indianapolis *Indiana Journal*, May 17, 1825; Woodworth, *Life and Confession of James Hudson*, 13-14.

moved toward him, quickly seized his legs, and cruelly smashed his head against the end of a log.²¹

Off in the distance, the third Seneca man, M'Doal, upon hearing the gunshots, bolted toward the Indian camp, fearing the worst. Breaking through the underbrush and charging onto the scene, he was met with an explosion of gunfire. A bullet pierced his body but did not prevent him from wheeling around and escaping into the woods.²²

Using tomahawks, knives, and clubs, Harper's party mutilated the bodies of the victims in order to give the appearance that, perhaps, the Indian men had gotten drunk and murdered their own families. The ground was soaked in blood, littered with pieces of human brain, and strewn with human flesh. The white men's final act was to strip the bodies of the women and children and throw them into a nearby muddy pond. Their gruesome work finished, they plundered the camp of anything of value, met up with Hudson, and started for home.²³

Fifteen-year-old John Adams awoke when John T. Bridge and his sons entered the Bridge cabin. The boy feigned sleep as he listened to the men shuffling about. Earlier in the day, Abraham Adams, John's father, had sent young John to the Bridge farm to purchase a sack of corn. John Adams and two of Bridge's children had sat inside the cabin and shelled the corn by the warmth of the fire. When their chore was finished, John had reclined in front of the fire and, using his sack of corn as a pillow, had soon fallen asleep. That night, having heard enough of the men's muffled conversation, he was convinced that they had been killing Indians. Stretched out in front of the fire, he did not stir; and after watching John T. Bridge bar the door of the cabin, he quietly fell back to sleep.²⁴

The next morning John Bridge, Sr., woke John Adams and sent him home with an urgent message. Bridge told the boy to tell his father that the Indians had probably stolen Andrew Sawyer's horses. Adams should therefore bring his rifle and come to the Sawyer farm right away. John immediately ran home and relayed the message to his father but added his own opinion that the Bridges had been out the previous day and might have killed a number of Indians. When Abraham Adams and his son arrived at Sawyer's farm with Harper, John T. Bridge and his two sons, and Hudson, Sawyer reported that his horses had "come home the previous evening" and that his boys had heard some "heavy firing in the direction of the Big Lick." Sawyer

²¹ Johnston, "Recollections of Sixty Years," 163; Smith, *Early Indiana Trials and Sketches*, 52.

²² John Gamerry to Johnston, undated, Michigan Superintendency, M1, roll 14; Woodworth, *Life and Confession of James Hudson*, 14.

²³ Smith, *Early Indiana Trials and Sketches*, 52; Woodworth, *Life and Confession of James Hudson*, 15; *Anderson Democrat*, May 1, 1874.

²⁴ *Anderson Democrat*, May 1, 1874.

indicated that he had reason to believe the Indians had been killing one another. Everyone set out for the encampment.²⁵

As the party approached the area, young John Adams was once again suspicious. On many occasions in the past he and his father had come to Logan's camp to visit with the Indians. John recalled that when this close to the camp on previous visits he could hear children playing and dogs barking and smell smoke from the fires. This time all was silent.²⁶ The evidence would soon speak for itself. Blood and other signs left the clear impression that the Indians might indeed have killed each other, a not unprecedented occurrence on the frontier.

Following a trail through the brush, the party soon discovered the small pond in which they found the bodies of the women and children. To the horror of the murderers, one of the women, wounded and exposed, was yet alive. She had dragged herself out of the water and collapsed on the ground. Seeing the men, she struggled to speak in her native tongue but also mumbled a few words in English which nobody could understand. An alarmed John T. Bridge, trying to prevent her from revealing the identity of the murderers, suggested that she be "killed out of her misery." This heartless comment did not go unnoticed by Abraham Adams who was beginning to reach some frightening conclusions about his neighbors. Many in the party turned away, not wanting to view the blood, mangled bodies, and horror of death.²⁷

What happened next is baffling. The men departed the camp for their homes, and Abraham Adams and his son immediately spread the news of the murders throughout the county. Yet, according to James Hudson, nobody bothered to assist the dying Indian woman. She would lay exposed and helpless until the following day when she was found by Charles Tharp, the county coroner, and the local militia. The men took the poor woman to the home of Peter Jones who coldly refused to allow her to be brought into his house. Leaving Jones's farm, they took her next to the home of John T. Bridge. In the late afternoon she lay muttering indistinguishable words in both the English and Seneca languages until she died in the evening of the same day. Hudson admitted that he suspected those "who had murdered the women and children, also put a period to her existence, fearing that if she did recover, that she might become informer."²⁸

On this gloomy March day of 1824 then—ten years after the close of the War of 1812—Harper finally savored the taste of his long-awaited revenge; however, what Harper did not know about his murdered victims is disturbing. Logan and his companions belonged

²⁵ Anderson *Democrat*, May 1, 1874; Woodworth, *Life and Confession of James Hudson*, 15.

²⁶ Anderson *Democrat*, May 1, 1874.

²⁷ *Ibid.*; Woodworth, *Life and Confession of James Hudson*, 16.

²⁸ Woodworth, *Life and Confession of James Hudson*, 16; *Indianapolis Gazette*, March 30, 1824.

to a branch of the Indian nation that had settled in the Ohio country in the mid-eighteenth century. Although these Indians did fight with the British during the War for Independence, the same Indians either fought *with* the United States or, in the face of great pressure from their fellow Indians, did *not* fight *against* the United States during the War of 1812.²⁹ Logan was known to whites as “a person of great distinction and [one] greatly esteemed among the Senecas”;³⁰ as a “venerable old chief, whose name ought to have been his passport and protection from Maine to Georgia, and from the Mississippi to the Atlantic”; and finally as a “friend of the white men.”³¹ Harper had wreaked his vengeance on the wrong man, and Logan, along with his family and friends, became victims in a cruel twist of fate.

Needless to say, as the news of the massacre spread, the residents of central Indiana panicked. Indiana newspapers labeled the incident “Outrageous!” One called the massacre “a murder scarcely excelled in atrocity”; yet another called it “one of the most outrageous transactions that has occurred since the settlement of the state.” In fact, the massacre grabbed national attention, the story even appearing in the Hillsborough, North Carolina, *Recorder*.³²

Everyone in central Indiana feared retaliation from the Indians, especially from the Senecas. Whether or not M'Doal had been able to report the massacre to his fellows could not be determined; nevertheless, emergency measures were taken. Sheriff Samuel Corey sought assistance from the local militia, and Major John Montgomery called out the twenty-two men under his command. Montgomery also sent a detail to bury the dead Indians and to collect their possessions so that they might be handed over to their relatives. The men of the settlement moved their own families to the village at the falls on Fall Creek for safety, using the mill as a makeshift fortress.³³ Others, wanting to take no risks, sent their loved ones entirely out of the state.³⁴

Suspicion rested on the Bridges, the Sawyers, Hudson, Andrew Jones, and Harper; and by the morning of Thursday, March 23, 1824, a growing number of men were watching Bridge's house. Harper, wasting no time, had his horse saddled with the goods that he had stolen from the Indians. When the men watching the farm began to close in and it looked as if it might be too late for escape, Harper and John T. Bridge lost their composure, abandoned their stolen goods and

²⁹ Trigger, *Handbook of North American Indians*, XV, 537.

³⁰ Johnston to Cass, April 28, 1824, Piqua Agency, Letters Received, 1824–1830, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Record Group 75, National Archives Microfilm Publication M234, roll 669 (hereafter cited as Piqua Agency, M234, roll 669).

³¹ Bloomington *Indiana Gazette*, November 13, 1824.

³² Richmond *Public Leger*, April 17, 1824; Indianapolis *Gazette*, March 30, 1824; Hillsborough, North Carolina, *Recorder*, April 28, 1824.

³³ Indianapolis *Gazette*, March 30, 1824.

³⁴ Ruth K. Dane, interview with author, Markleville, Indiana, August 11, 1988.

horses, and attempted to escape on foot. The older Bridge, falling to the ground, was easily captured. Harper, better adapted to life in the woods, had more success. Using the momentum gained from running down a hill, he escaped despite the gunfire of Moses Cox, who was, incidentally, the clerk of the county court.³⁵ A posse tracked Harper to Butler County, Ohio, before the men gave up the chase.³⁶

Harper was next seen in the area of Rossville, Ohio, and later in Hamilton, Ohio. When the circumstances of the murders were relayed to the residents of Hamilton, the outraged men of that town continued pursuit of the fugitive. They chased him for "some distance" before giving up and returning to their homes.³⁷ From Ohio, it was surmised that Harper went to Virginia, Kentucky, or even Texas. He was never apprehended.

Harper's companions did not fare as well. They were quickly taken into custody, a fact that, ironically, presented the settlement's next problem. Since the county was newly established, it lacked a county jail and a courthouse. As a matter of fact, Madison County did not even have a magistrate, and the prisoners had to be taken to neighboring Hamilton County to appear before Andrew W. Ingraham. In this initial hearing Andrew Jones and Stephen Sawyer asserted their innocence and, along with John Adams, became state's witnesses.³⁸

In the meantime someone had the good sense to contact the Office of Indian Affairs, then a division of the War Department of the United States. Captain John Berry volunteered to ride express and carry the message of the unfortunate event to Colonel John Johnston, the Indian agent at Piqua, Ohio, in whose jurisdiction the Seneca Indians fell. Johnston, realizing the urgency of the situation, wasted no time in getting to Indiana. He went directly to the small village at the falls on Fall Creek, which was about nine miles west of the scene of the Indian massacre.³⁹

Known to many as an agent who ensured fair treatment for the Indian while also loyally guarding the interests of the United States government, Johnston had begun his extensive involvement in Indian affairs on the Indiana frontier in 1802.⁴⁰ In the aftermath of the Deer Lick massacre in Madison County, his experience was to prove invaluable. Upon his arrival in Indiana, Johnston's first concern was to secure the prisoners for trial, a difficult feat in a village that had

³⁵ Cox, *Recollections of the Early Settlement of the Wabash Valley*, 10; Woodworth, *Life and Confession of James Hudson*, 17.

³⁶ *Richmond Public Leger*, April 17, 1824.

³⁷ Hamilton, Ohio, *Intelligencer and Advertiser*, April 13, 1824.

³⁸ *Richmond Public Leger*, April 17, 1824; Woodworth, *Life and Confession of James Hudson*, 17.

³⁹ Johnston, "Recollections of Sixty Years," 163.

⁴⁰ Kenneth W. Duckett, "John Johnston," *Museum Echoes*, LXXXIII (January, 1960), 3.

no jail and plenty of residents who sympathized with the killers. Second, Johnston would have to spend considerable time convincing the Indians that retaliation would not be an acceptable response to the tragedy; the United States government must be given time to effect justice. Finally, the Indian agent wanted cooperation from the state on behalf of the murdered Senecas.

Johnston immediately authorized the building of a log jail and ordered the prisoners to be bound. Most citizens agreed that it would be best to keep the accused within the boundaries of Madison County; otherwise “the Indians might . . . suppose they had been removed for the purpose of evading or escaping punishment.”⁴¹ The jail, “built of logs hewed square, so that each timber fitted close to the one upon which it rested,” had “but one door and no windows.”⁴² In addition, it was “enclosed with pickets—logs placed on end in the ground, about sixteen feet high, forming an area around the prison of about eight rods square . . .” Included, too, was a “guard house, wherein four sentinels [were] stationed.”⁴³ Adam Winchell, one of the county’s associate judges, was also the only blacksmith in the area, and the prisoners had been taken to his farm to be “ironed” with cuffs and chains.⁴⁴ The strange-looking jail, as well as its inhabitants, became the object of great curiosity.

Accompanied by his friend William Conner, a trader, scout, and interpreter who lived in nearby Hamilton County and enjoyed the esteem of the Indian population, Johnston covered miles visiting many of the Indian villages and camps. He wrote on May 19, 1824: “I have been almost constantly in motion ever since [the massacre] in a season unusually wet, lying out, crossing high waters, my health not good before, I have suffered greatly.”⁴⁵ The message to the Indian population was simple—wait. Although Johnston assured the Indians that justice would be served by the white man’s government, he later expressed his anxiety about his message in a letter to his superior, Lewis Cass, the governor of Michigan Territory: “We who are among the Indians daily are unanimously of the opinion that should the murderers escape [punishment], the Indians will glut their revenge on the exposed settlements on White River.” Cass had already charged Johnston with the very difficult task of preventing such retaliation: “The first object is to quiet any alarms of the frontier settlers or of the Indians, which might lead to mutual aggression and depredations. For this purpose I think it important, that

⁴¹ William Hendricks to Johnston, June 24, 1824, copy enclosed in Johnston to Thomas L. McKenney, July 14, 1824, Piqua Agency, M234, roll 669.

⁴² Forkner and Dyson, *Historical Sketches of Madison County*, 28.

⁴³ Cox, *Recollections of the Early Settlement of the Wabash Valley*, 10.

⁴⁴ Forkner and Dyson, *Historical Sketches of Madison County*, 722.

⁴⁵ Johnston to John C. Calhoun, May 19, 1824, Piqua Agency, M234, roll 669; Charles N. Thompson, *Sons of the Wilderness: John and William Conner (Indiana Historical Society Publications, Vol. XII, 1937; 2nd ed., Noblesville, Ind., 1988)*, 144.



JOHN JOHNSTON AT AGE FORTY-FIVE
1820

Reproduced from Leonard U. Hill, *John Johnston and the Indians in the Land of the Three Miamis* (Piqua, Ohio, 1957), following p. 37. Original in Ohio Historical Society, Columbus.

you should . . . explain to both parties how groundless would be any apprehensions. . . . I trust confidence can be easily restored.”⁴⁶

Johnston also contacted the governor of Indiana, William Hendricks, to ask for his assistance in the prosecution of the prisoners. Hendricks did not reply for four months, leaving Johnston to conclude that he was not interested in the matter.⁴⁷

Meanwhile, on April 8, the circuit court for Madison County commenced its spring session in the home of Thomas McCartney. A grand jury indicted the four men in custody, John Bridge, Sr., John Bridge, Jr., Sawyer, and Hudson, for the murder of the Indians. In the course of the opening session, William W. Wick, the president judge, fell ill; and it became necessary to postpone the trial until the October, 1824, term of the court.⁴⁸ Before adjournment, however, Thomas McCartney was allowed “the sum of five dollars for furnishing whiskey and corn for the use of the guards.” Curiously, Johnston paid for these supplies with federal funds.⁴⁹

Returning to Piqua after the spring session, an irritated Johnston wrote to Secretary of War John C. Calhoun to inform him of the incident. “A most shocking murder was committed on the bodies of nine Indians belonging to this agency on the 22 [of March],” he wrote. “The affairs for cold blooded cruelty baffles all description, and in point of atrocity surpasses anything that has ever disgraced the settlement of this country.” He then informed the secretary of his progress and requested the department’s guarantee for the expenditures that he had been making. He concluded, “The murdered persons were among our best friends during the late war [and] one was a man of great distinction, they have left many relatives who depend on them for a living.”⁵⁰

Johnston counseled with the relatives of Logan and his family at Lewis Town. The agent carefully described the incident and explained the way that the white man’s system of justice, slow though it was, would work. At the end of his visit he presented gifts to Logan’s survivors, a “common practice on such occasions.” Cass reassured Johnston that his actions were appropriate. “It is necessary,” he wrote, that “the Indians should be fully satisfied.” The governor further instructed Johnston to inform the Indians that “this atrocious act” had been committed by “bad men” who were not countenanced

⁴⁶ Johnston to Cass, May 29, 1824, Michigan Superintendency, M1, roll 14; Cass to Johnston, May 3, 1824, Michigan Superintendency, 1824–1827, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Record Group 75, National Archives Microfilm Publication M234, roll 419 (hereafter cited as Michigan Superintendency, M234, roll 419).

⁴⁷ Hendricks to Johnston, June 24, 1824, copy enclosed in Johnston to McKenney, July 14, 1824, Piqua Agency, M234, roll 669.

⁴⁸ *Indianapolis Gazette*, April 13, 1824. According to Indiana law, the circuit court was allowed only three days for its session, and this limitation forced the adjournment in the extended absence of the president judge. Indiana, *Laws* (1823), 86-87.

⁴⁹ Forkner and Dyson, *Historical Sketches of Madison County*, 28.

⁵⁰ Johnston to Calhoun, April 28, 1824, Piqua Agency, M234, roll 669.

by the government nor by any respectable citizen and that everything proper would be done “to bring them to punishment.” As Johnston left Lewis Town, he was confident he had “pacified their [the Indians’] minds and procured their unanimous consent to submit the case to the decision of the County.” He was also aware of the great pressure under which he must work. Writing again to Governor Cass he reported: “In all my communications with the persons in Indiana, I have urged the necessity of an example being made of the murderers; thus far it appears that the officers charged with the execution of the Laws are determined to do their duty, the people from their fear of the retaliatory vengeance of the Indians are affording them all the support of their power.”⁵¹ In another letter to Secretary Calhoun, Johnston gave a frank assessment of the conditions on the Indiana frontier and the government’s responsibilities:

The character of the Government is deeply implicated in rendering justice to the Indians on this occasion. The affair has thrown the whole frontier for 200 miles into the greatest confusion. Many of the people have moved away and those who remain are under continual dread [that] nothing will satisfy the Indians but the execution of some or all of the murderers. We are now in hopes that this will take place, and confidence be again restored.⁵²

In a letter dated May 11, 1824, Johnston received the support he had been seeking. Responding to the Indian agent’s letters, Calhoun indicated that “the foul murder of the Indians by the white men” had been heard “with deep regret.” He further expressed his hope that “proper examples” would be made of such “monsters” in order to deter others from similar horrible deeds.⁵³

Taking advantage of the conceivably short-term peace, Johnston turned his attention to establishing a prosecution team during the summer months before the trial. He had discovered that the “friends of the prisoners had engaged the ablest counsel at and near Indianapolis,” about “seven Attorneys in all,”⁵⁴ including such highly competent men as James Rariden, Calvin Fletcher, Martin M. Ray, William R. Morris, Lot Bloomfield, Charles H. Test, and Bethuel F. Morris.⁵⁵ Johnston employed thirty-nine-year-old General James Noble, who was serving his second term as United States senator from Indiana, to direct the prosecution. Although he later admitted that Noble’s experience at the bar and his “weight of character” were primary considerations, Johnston stated that the senator’s “connec-

⁵¹ Cass to Johnston, May 3, 1824, Michigan Superintendency, M234, roll 419; Johnston to Cass, May 13, 1824, *ibid.*, M1, roll 14.

⁵² Johnston to Calhoun, May 19, 1824, Piqua Agency, M234, roll 669.

⁵³ McKenney to Johnston, May 11, 1824, Letters Sent, 1824–1881, vol. 1, p. 69, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Record Group 75, National Archives Microfilm Publication, M21, roll 1 (hereafter Indian Affairs, Letters Sent, M21, roll 1).

⁵⁴ Johnston to McKenney, February 1, 1826, Piqua Agency, M234, roll 669.

⁵⁵ Woodworth, *Life and Confession of James Hudson*, 19; Indianapolis *Indiana Journal*, May 17, 1825; Smith, *Early Indiana Trials and Sketches*, 177.

tion with the general government and his long and high standing as a public man in Indiana were the only inducements” for his selection. More importantly, perhaps, Johnston was relying on Noble’s “known zeal, industry and talents in working upon the feelings of a jury.”⁵⁶

Meanwhile, on a number of occasions the prisoners had broken out of the newly constructed jail at the falls on Fall Creek. Their attempted escapes resulted largely from “the negligence of the guard” who were “principally youths and not attending to good order at all.”⁵⁷ Johnston again took the matter upon himself:

I ascertained to my satisfaction that the murderers would effect their escape if a guard was not maintained over them night and day. The county in which they are confined is too poor to bear the expense of one, and the Governor of the State thus far has taken no notice of the transaction nor has he replied to any of the communications made to him on the subject in this state of things. I was compelled [therefore] to authorize the employment of four men as a guard at \$12 per month each for pay and subsistence.⁵⁸

These precautions, too, proved to be inadequate, for shortly after Johnston wrote this letter to Cass, all the prisoners escaped once again. Owing to their own folly, they were soon recaptured. Other than these occasional happenings, all was quiet at the falls on Fall Creek, and everyone awaited the October session of the Madison County Circuit Court.

William W. Wick, the president judge at the upcoming trial, was young to be sitting on the bench, but his youthfulness was tempered with “much experience in criminal trials.”⁵⁹ Greatly esteemed by his fellow Hoosiers, Wick later became quite prominent in the state. Sitting to his left and right would be associate judges Adam Winchell and Samuel Holliday. Holliday had come to Madison County in 1822 and was so respected by his neighbors that he was elected an associate judge soon after his arrival. Winchell, the village blacksmith, was, surprisingly, almost illiterate. In spite of this liability he enjoyed a reputation as a man of honesty and integrity. Winchell had directed the burying of Logan and his family. Both associate judges were considered “pioneers of excellent character.”⁶⁰

Any capital trial would have occasioned much interest among the people in nineteenth-century pioneer America. One pertaining to the murder of Indians by white settlers was especially exciting. Thus it was amid much commotion that the Fifth Judicial Circuit of

⁵⁶ *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress, 1774–1989* (Bicentennial edition, Washington, D.C., 1989), 1572; Johnston to McKenney, February 1, 1826, Piqua Agency, M234, roll 669.

⁵⁷ Woodworth, *Life and Confession of James Hudson*, 17; Henry Sybert to Johnston, July 6, 1825, Piqua Agency, M234, roll 669; *Richmond Public Leger*, July 17, 1824; *Indianapolis Gazette*, November 23, 1824.

⁵⁸ Johnston to Cass, May 29, 1824, Michigan Superintendency, M1, roll 14.

⁵⁹ Smith, *Early Indiana Trials and Sketches*, 53.

⁶⁰ Dunn, *True Indian Stories*, 203; Samuel Harden, *History of Madison County, Indiana* (Markleville, Ind., 1874), 247, 284.

Indiana opened its fall session on Thursday, October 7, 1824. In spite of the vast crowds that had gathered to witness the affair, one observer later recalled that “the greatest order and decorum prevailed during the whole session.”⁶¹ According to Indiana law, the court would have but three days to transact its business before adjournment, a task which would prove impossible in light of the four accused men awaiting trial. The indictment in the first case read in part:

not having the fear of God before their eyes but being moved and induced by the instigation of the Devil . . . with force of arms . . . feloniously willfully and of their malice . . . [James Hudson and his accomplice, John Bridge, Jr.] did make an assault . . . and kill and murder contrary to law and against the peace and dignity of the State of Indiana [one Logan an Indian man in the peace of God and the State of Indiana].⁶²

After conducting opening business, the court turned its attention to seating a petit jury of “twelve lawful men and householders and freeholders” of Madison County. This process consumed more valuable time because of what Johnston called, “the usual exceptions in challenging” the jurors.⁶³ The court continued in session late into the night before finally selecting the jury and adjourning.

Hudson was escorted into the courtroom by the deputy sheriff and two guards at six o'clock Friday morning. After months of confinement in a one-room jail without windows, Hudson appeared “pale, haggard and downcast” and “with a faltering voice, answered upon his arraignment, ‘Not guilty.’”⁶⁴ The state then produced its only witness, Andrew Jones, the young man who had accompanied John Bridge, Jr., and Hudson into the Big Lick to kill Logan. The examination of the witness did not take long, and by late morning the prosecution's arguments, which were restricted, had been presented.⁶⁵ Then followed the arguments of the defense. “In able, eloquent, and powerful speeches, appealing to the prejudice of the jury against the Indians,” the defense counsel recalled the “early massacres of white men, women and children, by the Indians . . .” Hudson's attorneys also read accounts of various tragic events that had occurred on the frontier of the Northwest Territory, stressing catastrophes such as Braddock's, St. Clair's, and Harmar's military defeats as well as the struggles of frontier legends like Daniel Boone and Simon Kenton. General Noble then closed the arguments for the state. “In one of his forcible speeches,” the general held up the bloody clothes of the Indians for the jury to see as he appealed to their sense of justice, patriotism, and love of the law. He concluded by pointing out that “the safety of the settlers might depend upon the conviction of the pris-

⁶¹ Woodworth, *Life and Confession of James Hudson*, 19.

⁶² Trial transcript of *State of Indiana v. John Bridge and James Hudson*.

⁶³ *Ibid.*; Johnston to McKenney, October 19, 1824, Piqua Agency, M234, roll 669.

⁶⁴ Smith, *Early Indiana Trials and Sketches*, 56.

⁶⁵ Woodworth, *Life and Confession of James Hudson*, 18.

oners . . .” Noble’s argument was said to have had “a marked effect upon the crowd, as well as the jury.”⁶⁶

After only one hour of deliberation, the jurors returned a verdict that was read aloud to the prisoner: “guilty in manner and form as he stands charged.” The defendant was given until the next morning “to show why judgment of death should not pass against him.” The court then quickly moved to the case against John Bridge, Jr. The trial ran well into the night before the suit finally had to be postponed. An angry Johnston, who was carefully observing the proceedings, wrote: “It was all in vain, twelve men could not be found who had not disqualified themselves in having expressed opinions unfavorable to the case of the prisoners.” When the court reassembled the next morning, Judge Wick offered to hear reasons for “an arrest of the judgment of the court” in the case against Hudson. The condemned man’s attorneys presented various errors that they claimed were made during the trial. Considering each of the objections, Wick methodically overruled every one.⁶⁷

The court was now prepared to sentence the prisoner. Hudson stood before his peers as Judge Wick, in a solemn and eloquent manner, made keen observations in an impressive *obiter dictum*. He slowly and clearly reviewed the actions of the court, even praising Hudson’s defense team, which he thought exhibited “much ability and ingenuity” during the trial. Nevertheless, Hudson’s jury, “having found no grounds of a rational doubt in his favor,” was compelled to “assent” to the grand jury’s charges. Wick looked into Hudson’s face and exclaimed, “O my God, how could you do it? How could you deprive your brother man (for Indian Logan was your brother) of that life which was as dear to him as is yours to you?” The judge continued:

Logan, although an Indian, is a son of Adam, our common father. Then surely he was not the natural enemy of white men. He was bone of your bone, flesh of your flesh. Besides, by what authority do we hauntingly boast of our being white? What principle of philosophy or of religion establishes the doctrine that a white skin is preferable in nature or in the sight of God to a red or black one? Who has ordained that men of the white skin shall be at liberty to shoot and hunt down men of the red skin, or exercise rule and dominion over those of the black? The Indians of America have been more “sinned against than sinning.” Our fore fathers came across the broad Atlantic, and taking advantage of their fears and their simplicity obtained a resting place among the Indians, then the “lords of the soil,” and since that time by a series of aggressions, have taken from them their homes and firesides—have pressed them westwardly until they are nearly extinct. We have introduced among them diseases and vice; we have done to them wrongs which cry to heaven for vengeance, and which have, in many instances, brought down on us severe retribution.⁶⁸

The judge continued by recalling the outrages, including the crime Hudson had committed against Logan, that both white and Indian

⁶⁶ Smith, *Early Indiana Trials and Sketches*, 56-57.

⁶⁷ Trial transcript of *State of Indiana v. John Bridge and James Hudson*; Johnston to McKenney, October 19, 1824, Piqua Agency, M234, roll 669.

⁶⁸ Bloomington *Indiana Gazette*, November 13, 1824.

had committed against one another. He then called on Hudson to "humble yourself before . . . God, whom you must shortly meet either as an angry Judge, or kind Redeemer." Wick, who had stated, "it has, for the first time in my life, become my duty to pronounce upon a fellow mortal the most awful sentence of the law," leveled his gaze at Hudson. He lowered his voice and sentenced the murderer to be hanged by the neck until dead. Amid the emotions of the crowded courtroom, the judge uttered his last word, "And a God of mercy have compassion on your soul."⁶⁹

Johnston was relieved. He had made considerable promises to the Indians and had spent an ever-growing sum of federal money to have the murderers prosecuted. It was the verdict he needed to hear. Although he was "in the woods with little or no accommodations," he quickly penned the news to Calhoun's Indian Office head, Thomas L. McKenney, and included a word about his frustration with the Indiana court system. Johnston had previously made an unanswered appeal to Governor William Hendricks regarding the need for a special session. Because no action had been taken, he contacted John Conner, a newly elected member of the Indiana House of Representatives and a man familiar with the frontier. Johnston hoped that Conner might secure passage of legislation that would grant a two-week spring term for the court. Three weeks later McKenney sent Johnston very welcome news: "The Secretary of War directs me to convey to you his approval of your proceeding in relation to the murderers."⁷⁰

Nerves must have been raw in the small log jail at the falls by the end of October, 1824. John Bridge, Jr., broke his silence and insisted that his participation in the Indian murders was at the instigation of his own father and his uncle, Andrew Sawyer. Tension obviously high, on October 24 John Bridge, Sr., and Sawyer tried to kill young John Bridge by choking him to death. The guards claimed that only their intervention prevented the crime. Sheriff Corey allowed visitors, sightseers, and the curious into the jail from time to time. One young boy, having missed his chance to enter the jail with his father, scaled the pickets and dropped to the ground inside the compound. A sentinel who had watched the "dexterous feat," raised his rifle and barked, "Out with you!" The boy, alarmed and frightened, "obeyed orders" and "as nimbly as a squirrel, mounted to the top of the picket, grinned defiance at the sentinel, and descended outside."⁷¹

Meanwhile, Hudson's attorneys had not given up. On November 9, 1824, they appealed the case to the Indiana Supreme Court. Hudson's best hope rested on the third of the five writs of error that

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ Johnston to McKenney, October 9, 1824, Piqua Agency, M234, roll 669; Johnston to Noble, December 21, 1824, *ibid.*; Thompson, *Sons of the Wilderness*, 145; McKenney to Johnston, November 2, 1824, Indian Affairs, Letters Sent, M21, roll 1.

⁷¹ Cox, *Recollections of the Early Settlement of the Wabash Valley*, 10.

Calvin Fletcher and Martin Ray had filed on his behalf. Ray insisted that he had not been permitted to question a juror, "Do you not believe that the conviction and punishment of Hudson is necessary to secure yourself, your family, and the country, from the retaliatory vengeance, and depredations of the Indians?" The justices admitted that this aspect of the case presented "a point of some difficulty to decide," and they further admitted that "the belief mentioned was good cause of challenge . . ." They concluded, however, that such a belief was "pretty conclusive evidence not only of a prejudiced mind, but of a corrupt heart" and held that if such an inquiry were permitted of a juror, he would be compelled to "testify to his own depravity." Thus, the supreme court upheld the circuit court's decision not to allow the question, considering it "contrary to established law, that he [the juror] should himself be subject to such an inquiry tending so directly to his own infamy." To the attorney's disappointment, the other four writs of error were also systematically upheld in the court's announcement of November 13, 1824.⁷²

After word of the court's decision, Hudson quickly made his escape. By this time he had learned to slip his handcuffs from his wrists at will and had had a friend smuggle him a small portion of dried beef that would "subsist him until he could get beyond the reach of search." He kept his provisions in his hunting shirt tucked under his belt and spent most of his time reading the Bible. The guards admitted that they were aware of Hudson's preparations but assumed that the prisoner had reached the point of insanity and was therefore harmless.⁷³

On the evening of Saturday, November 15, the guard checked the prisoners and found all present. He noticed Hudson reading his Bible. Less than five minutes later, with the assistance of a fellow prisoner, Hudson scaled the pickets that surrounded the jail and headed north toward Fall Creek. Wading the creek, he found the water colder than he had anticipated, and with the onset of light rain, he began to shiver in the dark. Continuing north, he crawled into a hollow log for shelter. On Monday evening he traveled up the riverbank about six or seven miles until he came to an old abandoned cabin. Cold, hungry, and exhausted, Hudson crept under the floor of the cabin and remained there until Tuesday, November 25.⁷⁴

In the meantime Sheriff Corey had posted a one hundred dollar reward for Hudson's return "on or before the first day of December," the day Hudson was to be hanged. In addition, Governor Hendricks granted a delay, and the day of execution was moved from

⁷² Indiana Supreme Court, November term, 1824, Order Book No. 2, May 1823–May 1828, copy (Indiana State Archives).

⁷³ Indianapolis *Gazette*, November 23, 1824; Woodworth, *Life and Confession of James Hudson*, 19.

⁷⁴ Woodworth, *Life and Confession of James Hudson*, 19-20.

December 1, 1824, to January 12, 1825.⁷⁵ Hudson seemed to have disappeared, and he had many people worried.

By Tuesday, Hudson had developed a fever and felt “unusually sick.” He was compelled to leave his hiding place in search of water. As he came out from beneath the cabin floor, he found that he was unable to walk. Determined, he crawled to a nearby spring and drank deeply; the intake of water induced vomiting. In the course of his sickness, a Mr. Penn, a local man, found him, took him to his home, and cared for him. When Penn unstrapped and removed Hudson’s moccasins, he discovered that his feet were frozen. Oddly enough, Hudson was unaware of his condition.⁷⁶

Once again Hudson was returned to prison to await execution. He would spend his remaining days visiting with relatives, praying, reading his Bible, and relating his “life and confession” to an Indianapolis editor. A local minister, Benjamin Miller, conversed regularly with him about his “prospects of future happiness.” In the meantime, Hudson’s friends were making one last effort for clemency by appealing to the governor. Hudson’s wife, Phebe, had already returned to Ohio. On January 7, 1825, she wrote her husband a letter in which she professed her faithfulness: “If we never meet on earth, I trust to meet you in Heaven, where parting will be no more.” She closed, “With a broken heart and streaming eyes, I am your unfortunate widow.” Hudson’s farewell letter to his wife, written the day before his execution, was much the same and expressed his “unutterable grief.”⁷⁷

On the morning of January 12, 1825, large crowds gathered around the falls at Fall Creek to witness Hudson’s execution. Included were several Seneca Indians, relatives of those who had been murdered. Rev. Miller had visited Hudson during the morning, reassuring him, singing to him. Hudson’s coffin, which had been stored in the loft of the jail since the postponement of the execution, was brought down and placed in a wagon. Hudson himself, unable to walk, had to be carried to the wagon where he sat, downcast, on his coffin. With military escort, the wagon moved through the crowds toward the gallows.⁷⁸

When they arrived at the scaffold, Hudson requested Rev. Miller to preach a sermon on “being prepared to meet your Maker,” a text based on Matthew 25:3-4. Thomas H. Pendleton then offered a prayer. A penitent Hudson one last time insisted that he had been deceived and led into his murderous act by his associates. His last request

⁷⁵ *Indianapolis Gazette*, November 23, 1824.

⁷⁶ Woodworth, *Life and Confession of James Hudson*, 20.

⁷⁷ Woodworth, *Life and Confession of James Hudson*, 20-21, appendix; Johnston to Noble, December 21, 1824, Piqua Agency, M234, roll 669.

⁷⁸ Smith, *Early Indiana Trials and Sketches*, 57; Woodworth, *Life and Confession of James Hudson*, 20.

was “that Capt. Berry would take care of his body and deliver it over to his friends.”⁷⁹

James Hudson was then hanged by the neck. His body hung motionless for thirty-five minutes when it was taken down and placed in a coffin. The next day he was buried in the village burial ground north of the falls.

Little of interest happened during the winter of 1825 with regard to the remaining murderers. In his annual message to the Indiana General Assembly a day before Hudson’s execution, Governor Hendricks reported the “melancholy occurrence of the murder of some Indians on the frontier settlements of the state,” as well as the “arrest and imprisonment . . . of several persons charged with such crime.” He recommended that the expenses incurred by the county be paid from the state treasury and that the assembly give strong consideration to legislation authorizing special sessions of the courts. Before the governor’s recommendation Johnston had paid all expenses from federal funds, including compensation for the prosecuting attorneys, the sheriff, the county clerk, and even the associate judges; construction of the jail; boarding the guard; and supplying whiskey, firewood, chains, and locks to secure the prisoners.⁸⁰

The drama began again on Monday, May 9, 1825, when the Third Judicial Circuit Court opened its session. The judges, including the newly appointed president judge, Miles C. Eggleston, were seated, court personnel were present, and the courtroom was packed with excited spectators. The court no longer worked under a severe time limitation, since the General Assembly had lengthened the number of days circuit courts could remain in session. The first order of business was to call the grand jury and charge the prisoners, a task that required most of the first day. On the second day it was decided to try Andrew Sawyer, first for the murder of an Indian woman and a small child. The trial was swift, and after the jury was charged as to the law by Judge Eggleston, the court adjourned for dinner.⁸¹

The jury deliberated for fifteen hours. At ten o’clock Wednesday morning, with all assembled, the foreman read the verdict. “We the jury do find that the defendant, Andrew Sawyer, is guilty of manslaughter in the second count of the indictment.” Sawyer was to be confined at hard labor in the state prison for two full years and fined one hun-

⁷⁹ See note 78.

⁸⁰ Logan Esarey, ed., *Governors Messages and Letters*; Vol. III, *Messages and Papers of Jonathon Jennings, Ratliff Boon, William Hendricks (Indiana Historical Collections, Vol. XII; Indianapolis, 1924)*, 512, 513; Johnston to McKenney, July 16, 1825, Piqua Agency, M234, roll 669.

⁸¹ Smith, *Early Indiana Trials and Sketches*, 177; *Brookville Inquirer and Franklin Republican*, May 25, 1825; *Indiana, Laws (1825)*, 20.

dred dollars. The jury based their decision on the fact that Sawyer had “acted under mental excitement and rage in the horrid tragedy.”⁸²

Wednesday morning opened with the trial of John Bridge, Jr. He was arraigned by the grand jury and pleaded not guilty to two indictments. The first charged him with murdering Logan by stabbing him with a nine-inch hunting knife and the second with aiding and abetting Hudson in the murder of the same Indian man. After arguments were heard, the judge charged the jury once again, and they retired. After three short hours of deliberation, the jurors returned their verdict. “We the jury find the defendant guilty of murder in the first degree as he stands indicted. And further that we recommend the said defendant to the Governor of the State as a fit subject of Executive Mercy and seriously urge his pardon.” Because of Bridge’s youth, his penitent attitude, and the fact that his father and uncle had seduced him into committing the crime, the jury recommended that the governor pardon the boy.⁸³

On the fourth day, Thursday, the court heard the case of John T. Bridge, Sr. He was tried for murdering and assisting to murder the women and children at Logan’s camp. The jury, consulting only a short time, found the defendant guilty. Finally, on Friday, Sawyer was brought up on his final charge, the murder of the Indian Ludlow. The court was fighting fatigue as it listened to “laborious investigation” by the counsel and testimony from the witnesses; nevertheless, the jury found Sawyer guilty of murder in the first degree. Unmoved by his fate, Sawyer produced a smile and had even laughed several times during the proceedings. With that, the trials were over.⁸⁴

When the morning for sentencing arrived, the prisoners, “with downcast eyes and tottering steps,” were escorted into the courtroom under heavy guard. The sheriff commanded silence and the prisoners rose. Standing with tears steaming down his face, John Bridge, Jr., nineteen years old, was the only one of the three who showed any emotion. When Judge Eggleston asked the prisoners why the sentence of death should not pass against them, John T. Bridge, Sr., and Sawyer trivialized their crimes and exhibited no hint of remorse. Young John Bridge, however, burst forward, and, in the presence of his father, stated that “he had nothing to say why the sentence of death should not pass against him; that he . . . [was] led into this present distressed situation by his father and Uncle Harper—that he did not wish to murder the Indians, but that his father told him that

⁸² Brookville *Inquirer and Franklin Republican*, May 25, 1825.

⁸³ Indianapolis *Indiana Journal*, May 17, 1825; Brookville *Inquirer and Franklin Republican*, May 25, 1825; Secretary of State, Petitions, 1825–1857, Box 9, Folder 6, LI 562 (Indiana State Archives).

⁸⁴ Indianapolis *Indiana Journal*, May 17, 1825; Brookville *Inquirer and Franklin Republican*, May 25, 1825.

they were his enemies, and that God commanded him to kill them, and the Holy Scriptures required it.”⁸⁵

A father, a son, and a brother-in-law all stood before Judge Eggleston on the day of sentencing. “A more distressing scene could scarcely be presented,” declared an Indiana newspaper. In a “solemn, impressive, and dignified manner,” the judge announced to each of the three convicted men the sentence of death by hanging on the third day of June, 1825.⁸⁶

The defense had lost. For Sawyer and John T. Bridge, Sr., there would be no hope. For John Bridge, Jr., there was one final chance. Bridge seemed to have won the hearts of the people with his dramatic monologue in the courtroom, and he had also secured the recommendation of the court to the governor for clemency. Members of the community soon began circulating a petition that would be presented to the Indiana governor, James B. Ray. Ninety-four petitioners requested that John Bridge, Jr., because of “his youth, ignorance, and the manner which he was led into the transaction” receive a complete pardon.⁸⁷

The document with the ninety-four signatures is a remarkable “who’s who” of early central Indiana. Included were the signatures of many of the jurymen who had served during the trials; Thomas H. Pendleton, who would later establish a town at the falls and give the town his name; William Conner, who had assisted Johnston in his discussions with the Indians; Moses Cox, county clerk; Colonel Conrad Crosely, a prison guard; Charles Tharp, county coroner; Samuel Woodworth, Indianapolis journalist; Dr. Henry Hiday, whom Hudson accused of providing poison to Thomas Harper in an earlier attempt to murder the Senecas; Nineveh Berry, prison guard; Peter Jones, the scoundrel who would not allow the dying Indian woman into his home; Martin M. Ray and William R. Morris, defense attorneys from Indianapolis; the Reverend Benjamin Miller, Methodist minister; and some of the earliest settlers in Madison County.⁸⁸

On the day that Sawyer and the two Bridges were to be executed, large crowds, perhaps “thousands,” congregated at the falls on Fall Creek. A Seneca chief could be seen overlooking the affair from a nearby hill with about twenty of his warriors. Johnston had ensured their presence at this event “much against their will.”⁸⁹ The “gallows” had been built about two hundred feet above the falls on the north side of the creek and were anything but conventional. An observer tells that “a wagon was drawn up on the side of the hill with

⁸⁵ See note 84; Smith, *Early Indiana Trials and Sketches*, 179.

⁸⁶ See note 85; Secretary of State, Petitions, 1825–1857, Box 9, Folder 6, LI 562.

⁸⁷ Secretary of State, Petitions, 1825–1857, Box 9, Folder 6, LI 562.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ Charlotte Conover, *Concerning the Forefathers; Being a Memoir, with Personal Narrative and Letters of Two Pioneers, Col. Robert Patterson and Col. John Johnston* (New York, 1902), 9.

the wheels on planks, so they would move easy and quickly, a post was placed on the side of the hill just above the wagon; to this post the wagon was fastened by a rope, so that when the rope was cut the wagon would run down the hill without aid.⁹⁰ As the prisoners would be standing in the rear of the wagon with ropes around their necks, this action would leave them hanging in the air.

Ten o'clock had come and gone, and John Bridge, Jr., had not received word of pardon from the governor. Losing all hope, he prepared to die. The Reverend John Strange delivered a sermon before the crowds. The sheriff then told the men that "they had but a few minutes to live, and if they had any confessions to make they then had an opportunity." Sawyer declined. John T. Bridge, Sr., arose and told those assembled that he had written his confession, which would be soon published, and that he was partly guilty for the crime that he had committed. He closed by admonishing the spectators, "especially the youth," to "take warning from his untimely end."⁹¹

Sawyer and John Bridge, Sr., were positioned in the back of the wagon, ropes were affixed around their necks, and white caps were pulled over their heads. John Bridge, Jr., watched with the crowd because Sheriff Corey wanted to allow as much time as possible for the young man to receive his pardon from the governor. At the signal of the sheriff, the rope holding the wagon was cut, and the wagon barreled down the hill, leaving the two men suffocating with the ropes tight around their necks. Sawyer then demonstrated his unwillingness to die. By sheer strength he liberated his arms, which were tied behind his back, "caught the rope by which he was hanging and raised himself about eighteen inches" in order to fill his lungs with air and "utter several heart rendering groans." The sheriff rushed toward Sawyer, "quickly caught him by his ankles, gave a sudden jerk, which brought the body down, and he died without another struggle. The two bodies hung about thirty minutes while the crowd, the Indians, and young John Bridge, Jr., stood visibly moved by the drama. Afterward, the bodies were taken down and placed in open coffins.⁹²

The wagon was repositioned on the hillside, and the sheriff escorted John Bridge, Jr., to the rear of the wagon. He was "feeble" and required assistance as he climbed onto his gallows. The young man "threw his eyes around upon the audience, and then down upon the coffins, where lay exposed the bodies of his father and uncle." It was said by those who were present that the scene was "one of the most solemn scenes they had ever witnessed." The Reverend Strange

⁹⁰ John H. B. Nowland, *Early Reminiscences of Indianapolis . . .* (Indianapolis, 1870), 166.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*; *Brookville Inquirer and Franklin Republican*, June 21, 1825; Smith, *Early Indiana Trials and Sketches*, 179.

⁹² See note 91.

preached once again. When he concluded, John Bridge, Jr., was ordered to stand, which, with his “knees tottering,” he did with much difficulty. The rope was adjusted around his neck. The silent onlookers braced themselves and awaited the sheriff’s signal, which would send the wagon bolting from under the young man, when suddenly a cheer arose from the rear of the crowd. The sheriff hesitated.⁹³

Everyone watched as a man rode toward the gallows on a large “fancy grey” horse. Handing the reins to an onlooker, the stranger addressed the condemned man standing before him and dramatically declared: “Sir, do you know in whose presence you stand?” Bridge shook his head. The man continued, “There are but two powers known to the law that can save you from hanging by the neck until you are dead, dead, dead; one is the great God of the Universe, the other is J. Brown Ray, Governor of the State of Indiana; the latter stands before you . . .” Handing the young man his written pardon, the governor graciously announced, “you are pardoned.” Bridge could take no more. Falling “in a swoon,” he was caught in the arms of twenty-one-year-old Captain Nineveh Berry, who later described the scene as “thrilling and exciting in the extreme!”⁹⁴

The crowds responded with hearty approbation, and many sang the praises of the governor. There were some, however, who expressed disfavor that the chief executive had waited until the last possible moment, and there were still others, more cynical, who wondered whether this was a sensational campaign maneuver from a man who had his eye on the upcoming fall elections. Lest there be any question regarding the governor’s motivation, consider that the same James B. Ray, one month before, had performed the same last minute stunt when pardoning an old Revolutionary War soldier in Brookville, Indiana. The governor chose to pardon the old soldier from the gallows at the last minute, causing much the same stir.⁹⁵

Speaking through their interpreter, Martin Lane, it was said that the Senecas in attendance were in perfect agreement with the governor’s decision and that they were “satisfied” with the justice done. Johnston, too, believed that John Bridge, Jr., “was compelled by his father to be a party in the murder, he is very young and his life appears to be necessary for the support of his mother.”⁹⁶

The whole unfortunate affair was over. John Bridge, Jr., who many presumed had later “died of a broken heart,” did quite well after enduring this nightmare. Taking the remnant of his family, he and

⁹³ Smith, *Early Indiana Trials and Sketches*, 179; Nowland, *Early Reminiscences of Indianapolis*, 166; *Brookville Inquirer and Franklin Republican*, June 21, 1825.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*; Forkner and Dyson, *Historical Sketches of Madison County*, 423; *Brookville Inquirer and Franklin Republican*, June 21, 1825; Nowland, *Early Reminiscences of Indianapolis*, 166.

⁹⁵ Smith, *Early Indiana Trials and Sketches*, 23.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 179; *Brookville Inquirer and Franklin Republican*, June 21, 1825; Nowland, *Early Reminiscences of Indianapolis*, 166; Johnston to McKenney, June 10, 1825, Piqua Agency, M234, roll 669.

his grandfather, John Harper, headed home to Butler County, Ohio. For a number of years Bridge worked as a laborer on farms that belonged to friends of his deceased father. He married in 1834. He returned to Indiana in 1837, settled in Carroll County, and made a modest living in the dry goods business. As far as can be determined, his dark sin would remain a secret to his new Carroll County neighbors.⁹⁷

The trials at the falls marked one of the rare times that Indians obtained justice in a grievance against white men in the Northwest Territory. Oliver H. Smith, the author of *Early Indiana Trials and Sketches*, is mistaken, however, in his claim that it was the first time white men were hanged for killing Indians. There were, for example, a number of capital cases recorded in Puritan New England.⁹⁸

Johnston was obviously relieved by the outcome of the trials. In a letter to General Noble he indicated the depth of his concern for the Indians: "I have spent almost 27 years of my life in the public service, 23 of that in managing the Indians and so barbarous an outrage on these wretched people never occurred within my knowledge as the one on Fall Creek, Indiana. I believe for cold blooded treachery and cruelty the history of the country furnishes no parallel to it."⁹⁹ The final cost of the trial for the federal government totaled almost seven thousand dollars, all of which passed through Johnston's hands. After the executions the Indian agent's work in Madison County was finished, and he headed home to Piqua, Ohio. Believing that the friends of the murderers would "try to do him some injury" before he reached his home, Johnston made his way east under cover of darkness, an all but impossible journey in a country without roads. He made it to Greenville, Ohio, where a circus consisting of "an elephant, a monkey and two men" had just left town on its way to Piqua. Dismounting, he followed the elephant's tracks and arrived home "at daylight, perfectly safe."¹⁰⁰

Time moved on, and southern Madison County quickly fell into an easier rhythm. Attracted by the rich farmland, more settlers chose to live in the area, and the village at the falls of Fall Creek continued to grow. Thomas H. Pendleton surveyed his farm to the southeast of the falls in January of 1830. Dividing his land into plots, he founded the town that he named after himself. The little Hoosier town would never have the national spotlight again. In 1847, for an unknown reason, Dr. Henry Cook exhumed the remains of a body thought to be one of the men executed in 1825.¹⁰¹ It is not known what

⁹⁷ Kingman Bros., pubs., *History of Carroll County, Indiana* (Chicago, 1882), 247.

⁹⁸ See Yasuhide Kawashima, *Puritan Justice and the Indian* (Middletown, Conn., 1986).

⁹⁹ Johnston to Noble, December 21, 1824, Piqua Agency, M234, roll 669.

¹⁰⁰ Johnston, "Reminiscences of Sixty Years," 164; Conover, *Concerning the Forefathers*, 56.

¹⁰¹ Forkner and Dyson, *Historical Sketches of Madison County*, 778.

he intended to find. As time passed, however, the details of the story of the famous massacre and trials were forgotten.

In 1872 an old retired man came to visit the town of Pendleton. Nobody paid much attention to him as he quietly walked the land around the falls and visited the local cemetery. Perhaps the heavily bearded man who was dressed in a black suit and necktie may have even been out looking around the Big Lick. He did not buy anything, talk to anyone, or need anything. He seemed to be on a personal quest. The somber stranger, sixty-six-year-old John Bridge, Jr., did not stay in Madison County long and departed town as quietly as he had arrived. He would die at his home in Delphi, Indiana, four years later in April of 1876.¹⁰²

¹⁰²Kingman Bros., pubs., *History of Carroll County, Indiana . . .*, ed. Thomas B. Helm (Chicago, 1882), 247; Forkner and Dyson, *Historical Sketches of Madison County*, 778.



JOHN BRIDGE, JR., IN HIS LATER YEARS

Reproduced from Kingman Bros., pubs., *History of Carroll County, Indiana . . .*, ed. Thomas B. Helm (Chicago, 1882).