



## Pontiac's Rebellion

**O**n the morning of May 7, 1763, 50 Indian warriors approached Fort Detroit. Their leader, a **charismatic** Odawa chief named Pontiac, had requested a meeting with Major Henry Gladwin, the fort's British commandant.

Pontiac carried a **wampum** belt that was green on one side and white on the other. His followers carried **concealed** tomahawks and knives. Once inside the fort, Pontiac planned to turn the belt over, giving the signal to attack the unsuspecting British Redcoats.

Much to Pontiac's surprise, the British soldiers were armed and ready. Gladwin had learned of Pontiac's plan. The Indians quietly left the fort. They returned the next day and asked to be let in. Gladwin refused. The Indians then laid **siege** to Fort Detroit. Pontiac's Rebellion had begun.

This Indian uprising against British authority occurred shortly after the British defeated the French in the French and Indian War. During the war, the British gave the Indians gifts. When

the war ended and the French were no longer a threat, the British stopped giving the Indians gunpowder, lead, and liquor. They also created problems with the fur trade that bothered the Indians.

In the spring of 1763, Native Americans attacked British forts all along the frontier. By early summer only Detroit and Niagara had not been captured.

Pontiac's siege fell apart in October as the Indians returned to their families to prepare for the upcoming winter. The Indians also learned that the French were not returning to the Great Lakes. The French even recommended that Pontiac make peace with the British.

Pontiac's Rebellion, one of the greatest Indian uprisings in American history, ended quietly.

The year after the siege, Major Gladwin retired to England where he led the life of a country gentleman. Pontiac was not so lucky. In 1769 fellow Indians murdered the Odawa leader because he had become too pro-British.

Jim Cheek



**It is not known what Pontiac looked like. However, this sculpture of him is on a building in downtown Pontiac, Michigan.**

# Attack at MICHILIMACKINAC



Paramount Press

*The Conspiracy-Fort Michilimackinac* is a painting by Robert Griffing. It shows Ojibway men discussing plans to surprise the British.

**T**he Indian uprising that began at Detroit soon spread all across the western frontier as other British forts came under attack. One of the most brilliant attacks came at the Straits of Mackinac.

On June 2, 1763, Captain George Etherington and about 40 British soldiers at Fort Michilimackinac watched as the visiting Sauk Indians challenged the Ojibway to a game of lacrosse in front of the fort.

Although warned by a local fur trader that he should be **suspicious** of the Indians, Etherington ignored the advice. The fort's gates were left open and the soldiers' muskets stood unloaded.

Indian women, who were wearing blankets

on this hot and humid day, watched the game. Several times the ball was thrown over the fort's walls and retrieved. One time after the ball flew into the fort, the Indians grabbed tomahawks, knives, and clubs that had been concealed beneath the women's blankets and attacked.

The Native Americans captured the fort in a matter of minutes. One British trader who watched the attack later wrote, "The dead were scalped and mangled, the dying were writhing and shrieking under the [Indians'] knife and tomahawk." Seventeen Englishmen were killed in the attack.

The Native Americans sent Etherington and his other men to Montreal. The following year, the British army reoccupied the fort.

# Where to Take Your Family

This tomahawk is believed to have once belonged to Chief Pontiac. It is on exhibit at the Detroit Historical Museum. First opened in 1928, the Detroit Historical Museum is one of Michigan's largest museums. The museum's many highlights include exhibits on Detroit's role in the Underground Railroad and the city's development as the automobile capital of the world.

## Detroit Historical Museum

5401 Woodward Avenue  
Detroit, MI 48202  
(313) 833-1805  
[www.detroithistorical.org](http://www.detroithistorical.org)



Detroit Historical Museum

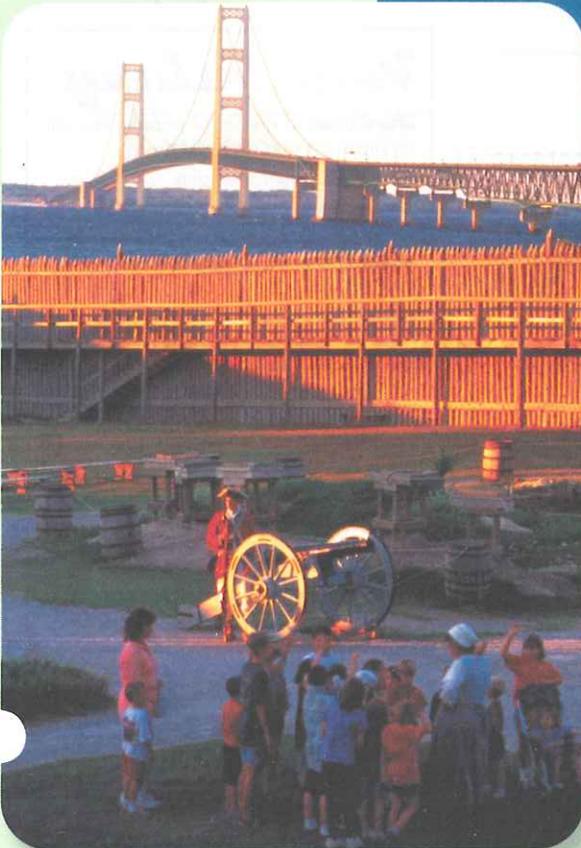
Every Memorial Day weekend, more than 400 reenactors dress as Indians, soldiers, voyageurs, and villagers to reenact the 1763 attack on Fort Michilimackinac.

Called the Fort Michilimackinac Pageant, over half the cast members are residents of Mackinaw City. Some have been participating since it was first held in 1962.

Today, Colonial Michilimackinac serves as a living history museum operated by Mackinac State Historic Parks. Visitors can explore the fort and fur trading outpost, play colonial games, and watch musket and cannon firing demonstrations.

**Colonial Michilimackinac**  
(231) 436-4100  
[www.mackinacparks.com](http://www.mackinacparks.com)

**Fort Michilimackinac Pageant**  
[www.mackinawcity.com](http://www.mackinawcity.com)



Mackinac State Historic Parks



# What Did You Learn?

## ACROSS

- Chief Pontiac carried a wampum belt that was \_\_\_\_\_ on one side and white on the other.
- At Fort Michilimackinac, Captain George \_\_\_\_\_ survived the Indian attack, but seventeen of his men died.
- Pontiac's surprise attack on Fort \_\_\_\_\_ failed because the British commandant knew what he was planning.

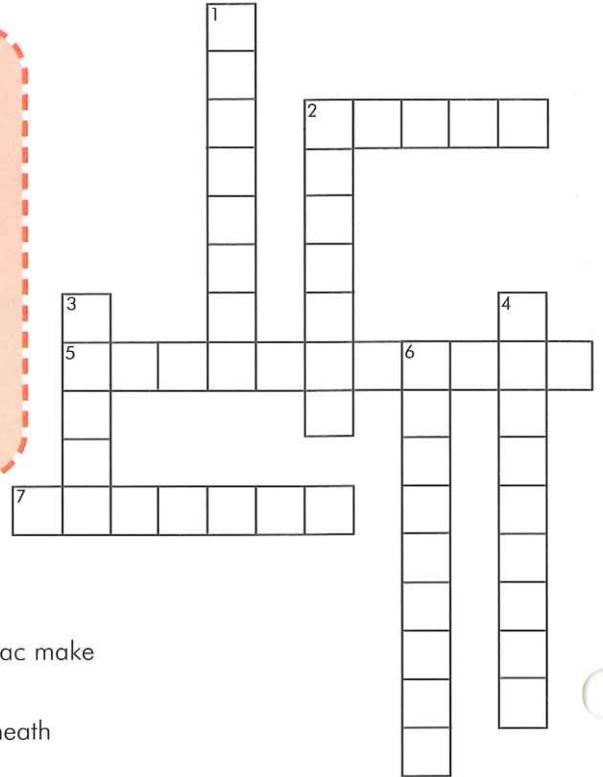
## DOWN

- At Fort Michilimackinac, the Indians played a game of \_\_\_\_\_ in front of the fort just before they launched their attack.
- Major Henry \_\_\_\_\_ was the British commandant at Fort Detroit.
- When the French left the Great Lakes, they recommended that Pontiac make \_\_\_\_\_ with the English.
- Indian women had knives, \_\_\_\_\_, and clubs hidden beneath their blankets for the attack on Fort Michilimackinac.
- During the French and Indian War, the British gave the Indians \_\_\_\_\_, lead, and liquor.

### Word List

(in random order)

GLADWIN  
GREEN  
GUNPOWDER  
LACROSSE  
TOMAHAWKS  
PEACE  
DETROIT  
ETHERINGTON



## Vocabulary

**Charisma:** a quality of people who stir up devotion and enthusiasm

**Conceal:** to keep hidden

**Siege:** surrounding an area in order to capture it

**Suspicious:** to be doubtful or lack trust without proof

**Wampum:** beads made into belts and used as money and in ceremonies