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Abstract

The August 10, 1757 massacre at Fort William Henry contradicted eighteenth-century European standards for warfare. Although British colonial opinion blamed it on Native American depravity, France’s Native American allies acted within their own cultural parameters. Whereas the French and their British enemies believed in the supremacy of the state as the model for conduct, Native Americans defined their political and military relations on a personal level that emphasized mutual obligations. With the fort’s surrender, however, the French and British attempted and failed to bring European cultural norms into the American wilderness. While the French triumphed in Fort William Henry’s capitulation, Native Americans required plunder, scalps, and prisoners to prove individual valor and an honorable victory. Denied the spoils of victory with the surrender, they seized the initiative in their assault on the siege’s survivors. The massacre at Fort William Henry revealed a gruesome divergence between two differing concepts of diplomacy and warfare.

Keywords

1757, massacre, Fort William Henry, Native Americans, France, Britain, diplomacy, warfare

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Hysteria and Infamy of the Massacre

Montcalm’s 1757 summer offensive into New York terrified the American colonists. “That Fort William Henry was invested...by a body of *French* and *Indians*, is past Doubt, and very probably are at this time, in Possession of it,” bemoaned an August 8 article of the *New York Gazette*.¹ Continuing, it lamented, “If so, *Fort Edward* falls of Course, and where they stop is hard to determine.”² At the southern end of Lake George, both forts commanded a crucial junction of British imperial power in North America. From the Richelieu River to the north and down Lake Champlain and into Lake George, France had an almost unobstructed water route into the northeastern reaches of the British colonies. Guarding the portage between the lake and the Hudson River, both forts secured the heart of the New York colony. Terrifyingly though, with Fort William Henry’s fall, France and its Native American allies menaced the American colonists’ security and livelihoods.

¹ “That Fort William-Henry was invested...,” *New York Gazette*, August 8, 1757.

² *Ibid.*

Just as Britain's own war effort floundered in North America, France seized the initiative. On the northeastern frontier, France held an overwhelming advantage over its opponents in its Native American allies. While the Mohawks deserted the British after heavy losses at the Battle of Lake George, other Native Americans flocked to France's standard.³ Under it, following Montcalm's victory at Oswego in 1756, a coalition of tribes assembled from beyond the colonial cultural frontier.⁴ To the colonists and British, they acted outside the norms of civilized warfare. Jonathon Carver's description in his 1778 *Travels Through the Interior Parts of North America* stressed this divergence in especially demonic terms:

When the Indians succeed in their silent approaches... a scene of horror, that exceeds description, ensues.... The figure of the combatants all besmeared with black and red paint, and covered with the blood of the slain, their horrid yells, and ungovernable fury, are not to be conceived by those who have never crossed the Atlantic.⁵

With Montcalm victorious at Fort William Henry, the American colonies appeared at the mercy of a barbarous conqueror. Explained Pennsylvania's Lieutenant Governor William Denny to the General Assembly on August 16, "Some grand Design is on Foot" that together with the continued "bloody Outrages of a most barbarous Enemy" threatened their destruction.⁶

The massacre at Fort William Henry went completely against eighteenth-century ideals of honorable combat. Granted a generous surrender by Montcalm, the defeated British garrison under Lieutenant Colonel George Munro expected a safe transfer to neighboring Fort Edward. According to the agreed terms, Montcalm granted them "the usual Honors of War" with the right to keep their arms, "baggage of the Officers and Soldiers," French protection for "all the sick and wounded," and for "their honourable defense," the right to keep "one Piece of Cannon."⁷ Most importantly, he pledged "a Detachment of French Troops" for an escort on the retreat.⁸ In return, they agreed not to serve against France or its allies for the space of eighteen months and

³ Ian K. Steele, *Betrayals: Fort William Henry and the "Massacre,"* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990) 71.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 78-80.

⁵ Jonathon Carver, *Travels Through the Interior Parts of North America, in the Years 1766, 1767, and 1768* (London: C. Dilly; H. Payne; J. Phillips, 1781), 313.

⁶ "The Speech of the Honourable William Denny," *Pennsylvania Gazette*, September 1, 1757.

⁷ "Articles of Capitulation granted to Lieut. Col. Munroe," *Boston Gazette*, September 5, 1757.

⁸ *Ibid.*

return the French, Canadian, and Native American prisoners taken in North America since the beginning of the war.⁹

Yet, France's Native American allies disregarded the agreed terms. First, by killing the sick and wounded and plundering the soldiers' property, and then, most infamously, by assaulting the retreating column. Colonial accounts written after the trauma painted a picture of unmitigated carnage. Carver, himself a witness, revealed a scene of ritualized slaughter. With "the war-woop given," he wrote, in the "horrid scene which now ensued; men, women, and children were dispatched in the most wanton and cruel matter, and immediately scalped."¹⁰ Adding a demonic aspect, he continued, "Many of these savages drank the blood of their victims, as it flowed, from the fatal wound."¹¹ Altogether, rationalizing the event, the historian Ian K. Steele broadly estimated in his book *Betrayals: Fort William Henry and the "Massacre,"* that between 69 and 185 soldiers and civilians lost their lives, with many others taken into captivity.¹²

The massacre confirmed the colonists' fears of French duplicity and murderous intent. At Oswego, Montcalm's forces had failed to protect the surrendered British garrison and its entourage, and now they allowed another post-surrender killing. Because they did not "protect us from these insults," Carver concluded, "they tacitly permitted them."¹³ Underscoring his opinion, he claimed, "I could plainly perceive the French officers walking about at some distance, discoursing together with apparent unconcern."¹⁴ Although the British and American colonists held a distinctive advantage in manpower and supplies, France had seemingly dealt them a resounding defeat. They, in turn, blamed the massacre on French jealousy against the British North American colonies' prosperity. "'Tis certain," proclaimed the *Pennsylvania Gazette* on August 25, "that the Growth of the British Colonies has long been the grant Object of French Envy" and now they intended "to make the present War as bloody and destructive as possible!"¹⁵

Nature of the French and Native American Alliances

The French North American war effort relied on Native American alliances. Compared to Britain's colonial model, France's stressed cooperation over conquest. Although still

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Carver, *Travels Through the Interior Parts of North America*, 320.

¹¹ Ibid., 320.

¹² Steele, *Betrayals*, 144.

¹³ Carver, *Travels Through the Interior Parts of North America*, 320

¹⁴ Ibid., 320.

¹⁵ "Fort William Henry," *Pennsylvania Gazette*, August 25, 1757.

interested in asserting their authority, with only one-tenth the number of British colonists spread out over a greater area, France's colonists lacked the same expansionist drives as their British counterparts.¹⁶ Without the same colonial presence, they also lacked the British colonies' numerical support for defense. In addition, as a land and not sea power, France also could not project military power into North America to the same extent as the British. Against "the designs the English have against us," concluded the Chevalier de Raymond, a disgruntled, yet experienced, French officer, in his 1754 report of the colony, the French needed to employ "the panic fear that they have of Indians."¹⁷

In a frontier war, France needed reliable Native American aid and fighters skilled in frontier warfare. Although Canadians augmented their military capabilities, without a significant colonial population, Native Americans played an essential role in wilderness fighting and reconnaissance. Within "the woods of America," Louis Antoine de Bougainville, one of the Marquis de Montcalm's officers, stated in his journal, "one can no more do without them than without cavalry in open country."¹⁸ This type of warfare, he believed, ideally suited their talents. In particular he praised "this talent they have of finding tracks in the woods," and through examination, discovering in great detail, "the number that have passed, whether they are Indians or Europeans, if the tracks are fresh or old, if they are of healthy or sick people."¹⁹

France, however, never directly controlled its Native American allies. Native Americans, instead, prized their freedom of action and rejected direct authority. As the Jesuit missionary, Pierre Roubaud, accompanying the expedition against Fort William Henry lamented, "The Savage is his own Master and his own King, and he takes with him everywhere his independence."²⁰ In making diplomatic choices, each tribe shrewdly calculated the possible advantages and disadvantages of their service. Despite their common enemies, they frustrated and confounded the French. "The caprice of an Indian," Bougainville wrote, "is of all possible caprices the most capricious."²¹ Often, criticized as needlessly cruel to enemies, burdensome on

¹⁶ Frank W. Brecher, *Losing a Continent: France's North American Policy, 1753-1763* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1998), 20.

¹⁷ *On the Eve of the Conquest: The Chevalier de Raymond's Critique of New France in 1754*, ed. and trans. Joseph L. Peyser (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1997), 74.

¹⁸ *Adventures in the Wilderness: The American Journals of Louis Antoine de Bougainville*, ed. and trans. Edward P. Hamilton (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1964), 149.

¹⁹ Bougainville, *Adventures in the Wilderness*, 54.

²⁰ Reuben Gold Thwaites, ed., *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents, Travels and Explorations of the Jesuit Missionaries in New France* (New York: Pageant Book Company, 1959), 70: 137.

²¹ Bougainville, *Adventures in the Wilderness*, 37.

limited provisions, and prone to desertion, they encumbered the French war effort. Decrying their abuses and independence, Bougainville complained:

Everyone must have time to get drunk, and their food consumption is enormous. At last they get started, and once they have struck, have they only a single scalp or one prisoner, back they come and are off again for their villages... Each does well for himself, but the operation of the war suffers, for in the end they are a necessary evil.²²

Native American societies rejected direct authority. Although tribal governments differed, few had autocratic systems of governance. Instead, they held power in common with elders respected as orators and advisors rather than absolute rulers, as in a European model.²³ James Smith's narrative of his captivity and adoption among the Ohio tribes during the 1750s stressed that in contrast to the European state, "The chief of the nation, is neither a supreme ruler, monarch or potentate," as they lacked control over diplomacy, assemblies, or taxation.²⁴ Instead, they held power through persuasion and never expected absolute deference. While "the village chiefs and war chiefs can have influence," Bougainville remarked, it "depend[ed] upon how much they exert it, and upon their attention to keeping the kettles full, so to say."²⁵

France's effective command of its allies required an in depth understanding of their customs and traditions. Advised Raymond, "Only in studying their character, their customs, their passions, their nature, their tastes, their way of thinking, [and] of expressing themselves in their speeches" could an officer properly work with them.²⁶ In making and maintaining alliances, the French adapted to Native American cultural conceptions of power. Unlike the French, Native Americans rejected the European model of the state as a basis for diplomacy and instead emphasized the primacy of personal bonds and metaphorical familial relationships.²⁷ In New France, they saw their loyalty not to the French state, but directly to the king or colonial governor as the fatherly figure, the Great Onontio. Crucially, wampum belts underscored their

²² *Ibid.*, 60.

²³ William R. Nester, *The Great Frontier War: Britain, France, and the Imperial Struggle for North America, 1607* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2000), 91.

²⁴ *An Account of the Remarkable Occurrences in the Life and Travels of James Smith, During his Captivity with the Indians in the Years 1755, '56, '57, '58, '59* (J. Grigg, No. 9 N. Fourth Street, 1831), 148.

²⁵ Bougainville, *Adventures in the Wilderness*, 134.

²⁶ The Chevalier de Raymond, *On the Eve of the Conquest*, 58.

²⁷ Earle Lockerby, "Maintaining the Alliance: A French Officer's Account of the Mi'kmaq, Maliseet, and Kennebec at Louisbourg in 1757," *Native Studies Review* 18, no. 2 (2009): 3, 16.

personal connections. “Their official records,” related Raymond, “are wampum belts” that recorded “the agreements and treaties made with them” and the colonial government.²⁸

As fathers, the French authorities had obligations towards their metaphorical children. Differing from European systems of power where the father premeditated in religious, political, and familial relations, in Native American societies, the father could not compel obedience. Instead, he commanded authority primarily as a provider for his family.²⁹ Gifts ceremoniously signified both the foundations and renewal of these kinship ties. Reflecting on their relations, Raymond wrote, “In giving them these presents, let it always be in the name of the Great Onontio” and, expect in return, that they will be “faithful in obeying him and doing his will.”³⁰ In this, they created a compact whereby the French authority’s validity vested itself in reciprocal rewards. Lacking this, Native Americans felt no reason for obedience towards their French superiors. Advised Raymond, as measures of service, they required each gift be, “in proportion...to the importance of the matters that you have dealt with.”³¹

Likewise, France’s Native American allies believed in a communal style of warfare. Without the model of the state, they looked towards communal authority and concerns. Although the European presence in North America changed their methodologies, with a greater emphasis on killing, tribes still respected their traditional beliefs. War continued as an integral part of their cultures as a means for communal restitution and vengeance for deaths of family or neighbors.³² “The passion for revenge,” Carver believed, animated communities with “vengeance pursued with unremitted ardor.”³³ In pursuing their objectives, each tribe accorded that each participant pledge a personal commitment to the communities’ concerns. At a war feast near Fort Duquesne J.C.B, a French soldier who served in North America, recorded meat “cut in small bits and distributed...to each warrior” with the group showing their dedication by eating the meat “as though wishing to do the same with their common enemy.”³⁴

At the same time, however, Native American societies retained an individualist impulse in how they conducted warfare. James Smith, an adoptee in the Ohio region, documented one

²⁸ The Chevalier de Raymond, *On the Eve of the Conquest*, 58.

²⁹ Lockerby, “Maintaining the Alliance,” 16

³⁰ The Chevalier de Raymond, *On the Eve of the Conquest*, 58.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 59.

³² Nester, *The Great Frontier War*, 92.

³³ Carver, *Travels Through the Interior Parts of North America*, 299.

³⁴ J.C.B. *Travels in New France*, ed. and trans. Sylvester K. Stevens, Donald H. Kent, and Emma Edith Woods (Harrisburg: The Pennsylvania Historical Commission, 1941), 80.

man who, though esteemed “a great warrior,” justified his abstention from combat because he believed, “If the English and French had a quarrel, let them fight their own battles themselves.”³⁵ Willing participants, though, went to war with expectations for individual glory and required plunder, scalps, and prisoners to prove honorable conduct in combat. Witnessing returning warriors, Susannah Johnson, during her captivity at the Abnaki missionary village of St. Francis, underscored the ritual importance of these spoils even in a tribe more acculturated to the French. She wrote; the “Warlike ceremonial” required that “the captives or spoil which may crown their valor, must be decorated to every possible advantage” to reflect the village’s esteem.³⁶ Such plunder reflected individual achievement in battle. After General Braddock’s 1755 defeat, Smith recorded “several Indians” returning to Fort Du Quesne in “British officers’ dress,” complete with the various accoutrements “which the British wear.”³⁷

Above all though, Native American societies prized live captives. They not only attested to the captor’s valor, but served practical functions as well. Although tribes may vent their vengeance through ritual tortures, more frequently, they valued captives for economic reasons. In addition to replacing lost members, by the mid-eighteenth century and Seven Years War’s outbreak, captives fed into a growing market in New France. Sold to Canadians as forced labor or ransomed back to the British colonies, they guaranteed their captors a reliable profit.³⁸ “They cannot make money half so fast any other Way,” recalled a letter from Montreal printed in the August 11, 1755 *New York Mercury*, “as by taking Englishmen and selling them for Slaves; and the French are very willing to buy them.”³⁹ New France’s market for healthy captives signified Native Americans’ transitions into a new European value system that at the same time allowed the continuance of tribal traditions.

Lacking captives, successful Native American warriors often took scalps as alternatives. Although progressive historians have often blamed the introduction of scalping on Europeans, scalps held a ritual significance predating European contact.⁴⁰ Collected as trophies, these offered proof of honorable combat. Shortly after his capture near western Pennsylvania, Smith

³⁵ Smith, *An Account of the Remarkable Occurrences in the Life and Travels of James Smith*, 86.

³⁶ Susannah Johnson, *A Narrative of the Captivity of Mrs. Johnson: Containing an Account of her Sufferings, During Four Years, with the French and Indians* (Windsor, VT: Thomas M. Pomrot, 1814), 54.

³⁷ Smith, *An Account of the Remarkable Occurrences in the Life and Travels of James Smith*, 20.

³⁸ Nester, *The Great Frontier War*, 93.

³⁹ “New Haven,” *New York Mercury*, August 11, 1755.

⁴⁰ James Axtell and William C. Sturtevant, “The Unkindest Cut, or Who Invented Scalping,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 37, no. 3 (July 1980): 451, 461.

recorded his captors giving a special “scalp haloo” accompanied with “quick and sudden shrill shouts of joy and triumph” for their grisly trophies.⁴¹ Colonial bounties, just as with prisoner taking, however, transformed and encouraged the practice by incorporating it into the colonial economy.

Cultural Conflict in 1757

The presence of large numbers of Native Americans from beyond the pale of New France’s value systems underscored the cultural divisions of Montcalm’s campaign. Among his coalition, he included, according to Bougainville, 820 “domesticated” warriors from New France’s Catholic mission villages near Québec and 979 from the mostly unconverted tribes of the West.⁴² These western fighters lived far from Quebec and the center of French colonization; their societies differed greatly from the missionary villages on the St. Lawrence.⁴³ Since Montcalm’s victory at Oswego the previous year, news of spoils gained from a captured British fortress spread to the farthest reaches of New France and he easily gained recruits for a diverse coalition of allied tribes. For some, they lacked the presence of French interpreters, missionaries, or Canadian officers to assert French leadership and came instead as unpaid allies expecting plunder from the victory as their sole condition for participation.⁴⁴

Their standards for war differed considerably from the ideals of eighteenth-century European combat. While the domesticated tribes on the St. Lawrence moderated their capacities for violence, the Western tribes persisted in exercising the utmost brutality upon their enemies. Horrified, Bougainville wrote his mother:

Listen to what the chiefs said to M. de Montcalm three days ago. “Father, do not expect that we can easily give quarter to the English. We have young men who have never yet drunk of this broth. Fresh meat has brought them here from the ends of the earth. It is most necessary that they learn to wield the knife and plunge it into an English heart.”⁴⁵

⁴¹ Smith, *An Account of the Remarkable Occurrences in the Life and Travels of James Smith*, 21.

⁴² Bougainville, *Adventures in the Wilderness*, 150-151.

⁴³ Steele, *Betrayals*, 80.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, *Betrayals*, 80-82.

⁴⁵ Bougainville, *Adventures in the Wilderness*, 331.

Worse still, their displays of martial values threatened the dispositions of the Eastern converted tribes.⁴⁶ Roubaud, for instance, stressed how their acts of brutality threatened his Abnaki catechumens' moral purity. While they had the spiritual potential of "perfect Christians," preventing them from beating British captives taken by the Ottawas in a raid on Lake George required his greatest powers of persuasion.⁴⁷

This disparate coalition's viability hinged on Montcalm's leadership. Though Native Americans totaled only 1,600-1,800 of an approximately 8,000-men force, Montcalm's leadership over them remained crucial.⁴⁸ While European siege craft dominated the actual attack on the fort, he needed Native American forces to disrupt British intelligence on Lake George and isolate the fort's garrison. Despite their disparate backgrounds and intertribal rivalries, however, they united under his command. His victory at Oswego greatly boosted his esteem among them to heroic proportions. Bougainville recorded a Michilimackinac orator's opinion of "this famous man, who on putting his foot on the ground has destroyed the English ramparts" and now through his exploits, deserved, "the grandeur of the loftiest pine trees and the spirit of the eagle."⁴⁹

Among these differing tribes, Montcalm exemplified the importance of France's personal diplomacy. As the Native American forces' overall leader in the field, he assumed the king's fatherly authority over all of them regardless of background. Even as many tribes threatened desertion with spoils and captives gained from previous raiding on Lake George before the siege, he, through personal persuasion (though his exact promises remain unknown), kept the army together.⁵⁰ Suiting his patriarchal role, he provided for and safeguarded the tribes' under his command. In his speech at the war council before the attack, which Bougainville transcribed, he informed the tribes that, that charged by "the great King," he came "to protect and defend [them]," and ensure "that [they] are made happy and invincible."⁵¹ Now, to the "children of the same father, the Great Ononchio," he granted them "this belt as a sacred pledge" for "the defeat of the English and the destruction of Fort George [also known as Fort William Henry]."⁵²

⁴⁶ Steele, *Betrayals*, 80.

⁴⁷ Thwaites, *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents*, 70: 109-115.

⁴⁸ Francis Jennings, *Empire of Fortune: Crowns, Colonies, and Tribes in the Seven Years War in America* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1988), 316; Bougainville, *Adventures in the Wilderness*, 150-153.

⁴⁹ Bougainville, *Adventure in the Wilderness*, 115.

⁵⁰ Steele, *Betrayals*, 89-90.

⁵¹ Bougainville, *Adventures in the Wilderness*, 147.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 147.

Massacre at Fort William Henry

The Native Americans expected a share in Montcalm's impending victory. Although they experienced varying degrees of French cultural influence, the various tribes under his command anticipated an appropriate compensation for their efforts in captives and other spoils. An Abnaki orator informed Montcalm, according to Roubaud, at the campaign's start, that as "thy children," they "share thy perils, and sure indeed that they will soon share thy glory."⁵³ Montcalm understood that, in order to sustain his force in the field, he needed to placate his allies. Reliance on Native American auxiliaries, just as at Oswego, however, jeopardized an honorable conclusion for the siege at Fort William Henry.⁵⁴ Tellingly, according to Bougainville, during the siege of Fort William Henry, Montcalm notified Monro, "That humanity obliged him to warn him" that "perhaps there would not be time, nor would it be in our power to restrain the cruelties of a mob of Indians of so many different nations."⁵⁵

Monro's surrender with the honors of war imposed a foreign element into the American wilderness. Underscoring Montcalm's warning, one Abnaki, recorded by Bougainville, shouted, "Take care to defend yourself, for if I capture you, you will get no quarter."⁵⁶ Accustomed to fighting for the plunder, scalps, and prisoners, Montcalm's Native American allies did not see a fort's mere capitulation as an honorable victory. Although he secured the chiefs' pledges to respect the agreement, after the fort's surrender, he rapidly lost any influence he had over his Native American contingents. Not content with pillaging "what we had agreed to give up to them," Roubaud lamented, they resolutely ignored the agreed terms of surrender.⁵⁷ Horrifyingly, foreshadowing the next day's massacre, they fell upon the fort's hospital killing and scalping the sick and wounded. Roubaud even described one warrior brandishing "a human head" in triumph "as the most splendid prize that he could have secured."⁵⁸

By accepting the surrender, Montcalm betrayed his allies' trusts. Under no absolute bond of loyalty to him or France, they accompanied the expedition for spoils that the surrender now denied them. As their metaphorical father, Montcalm created a compact whereby their loyalty required an appropriate reward. Lacking suitable spoils of combat, he failed in his duty and they

⁵³ Thwaites, *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents*, 70: 105.

⁵⁴ Jennings, *Empire of Fortune*, 296, 318.

⁵⁵ Bougainville, *Adventures in the Wilderness*, 159.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 159-160.

⁵⁷ Thwaites, *Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents*, 70: 177.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 70: 179.

felt no reason to obey him. With only a select few warriors having such trophies, both the British and French appeared in collusion against their interests.⁵⁹ According to an article printed in *Scots Magazine* in October of 1757, “An English officer heard an Indian chief violently accuse the French general with being false and liar,” because they fought for “the plunder of the English,” and denied it, now “they would have it” regardless of the agreed terms.⁶⁰ An abortive attempt at retreat that night further enraged them because it revealed Montcalm’s intent to protect the garrison against their interests.⁶¹

When the British column left Fort William Henry, the Native Americans seized the initiative against the surrender agreement. First contented merely with plunder, they took away the column’s packs, clothes, weaponry, and other effects. Then, the retreat degenerated into a massacre as Montcalm’s estranged allies attacked the retreating soldiers. Ironically, according to Bougainville’s account, the supposedly “domesticated Abnakis of Panaomeska, who pretend to have recently suffered some bad behavior on the part of the English commenced the riot,” as “they shouted the death cry and hurled themselves on the tail of the column.”⁶² Other tribes, sensing their opportunity for plunder, scalps, and prisoners, joined the attack. In sympathy, Roubaud recalled,

They were so many dead whose bodies very soon strewed the ground and covered the enclosure of the entrenchments. This butchery, which in the beginning was the work of only a few savages, was the signal which made nearly all of them ferocious beasts. They struck, right and left, heavy blows of the hatchet on those who fell into their hands.⁶³

The Native Americans’ desires for captives, however, diminished the massacre’s scope. The actual killing lasted for a comparatively short period because it only facilitated their ultimate goal for prisoners.⁶⁴ Roubaud estimated that “the massacre was not of long continuance, or so great as such fury gave us cause to fear” because the British’s “patience” allowed the Native Americans to begin to “take them prisoners.”⁶⁵ Having witnessed the massacre, Carver implicitly reflected this motive in his account despite his many explicit denunciations of their

⁵⁹ Steele, *Betrayals*, 112-113.

⁶⁰ “Affairs in North American and the East Indies,” *Scots Magazine*, October 1757, 543.

⁶¹ Steele, *Betrayals*, 113.

⁶² Bougainville, *Adventures in the Wilderness*, 172.

⁶³ Thwaites, *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents*, 70: 179-181

⁶⁴ Steele, *Betrayals*, 119.

⁶⁵ Thwaites, *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents*, 70: 181.

cruelty. “Dexterously avoiding their weapons,” he plunged through the crowds of warriors “till at last two very stout chiefs” grabbed him.⁶⁶ Following this, his captors quickly ignored him for “an English gentleman of some distinction” dressed with “fine scarlet velvet” breeches that they soon killed for his resistance.⁶⁷ Carver’s narrative though, wrongly assumed Native American depravity as a motive. For instance, in describing “a fine boy” dragged away, he presupposed from “his shrieks” that he “was soon demolished” without accounting for the possibility that he had been taken away as a live captive, as often occurred with children.⁶⁸ Moreover, he himself defied his own expectations in survival. At any time during his escapades, his assailants might have killed him, and that they did not attested to ulterior goals in the massacre.⁶⁹

Conclusion

With Fort William Henry’s capitulation, Montcalm lost control of his army. “Nothing was more critical for us than the situation in which the French army was in,” Roubaud wrote.⁷⁰ Just as Monro surrendered, Montcalm’s own Native American allies deserted him. They served for spoils and they intended to get them regardless of the agreement Montcalm signed. Their relationship with French authority reflected their own cultural assumptions in regards to political power and warfare. They considered the French king and his representatives in New France as their fathers bound to provide for them in return for dutiful service. Montcalm, having failed in his duty with the surrender agreement, abandoned their reciprocal relationship and they resorted to massacre as restitution for the spoils of war.

⁶⁶ Carver, *Travels Through the Interior Parts of North America*, 322.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 322-223.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 323-324.

⁶⁹ Steele, *Betrayals*, 159.

⁷⁰ Thwaites, *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents*, 70: 197.