

Life of John Snider

Prologue

John Snider lived a long time ago in the area that is now northern West Virginia. This was before there was a West Virginia, or even a United States of America. As a young boy, he was captured by Indians and spent several years among them. Eventually he returned to the eastern settlements. John was thirty-three years old when the Declaration of Independence was signed, not that he would have noticed it much. He lived far out on the western wilderness where the concern was more for safety from Indians than independence from England. This is the story of John Snider's life.

There are many different stories about John Snider. Some have been told and retold through the generations about his relationship with the Indians. Reliable details about his time with the Indians and his return are not available, though dramatic (and contradictory) stories persist through tradition.¹

How do I know that what I have written here is true? I don't. In fact, it is possible that I have drawn some incorrect conclusions. Some mysteries will always remain. However, I started with a statement made by a grandson relating to John Snider's Indian experience. The Reverend Joshua Martin Snyder wrote of his grandfather that "the circumstances of his capture, and many circumstances that occurred while he was with the Indians, would be interesting to relate, but circumstances of the same character have been so often published to the world, that I forbear to relate them."² This statement led me to research many captivity narratives, including one that I discovered listing known white captives of a particular Seneca tribe. The name "the Snyder boy" is on that list.³

¹A letter from Ila Snyder Christianson described John Snider's escape from the Indians: "Once John and an Indian were in the woods splitting logs together. John noticed the Indian not paying attention and he knocked out the wedge which caused the Indian to catch his hand in the large log. Seeing that this Indian would not be able to move for a while, John ran off to freedom." Blanche Snider (b. 1889) provides her version of John Snider's story: "John was captured by the Indians, when a young man, he later escaped and killed his captor. The scalp stitched around his powder horn was observed and handled by myself when I was a child in the home of Joseph W. Snyder in Bentleyville, Penn." It is unlikely that John escaped, though some escapes were reported. The probability of either of these two escape scenarios is extremely remote. It is also unlikely that he was exchanged for Indian prisoners. This was also rare, as there were very few Indian prisoners kept by the English. It is possible that John was "redeemed," that is, paid for by his parents to buy him out of captivity, but this is also unlikely given the length of time he stayed with the Indians and the circumstances of his capture. It is most likely, by far, that he was returned to one of the English forts as a result of an agreement or treaty of peace.

²Joshua Martin Snyder, *History of the Genealogy, Life, Labors and Writings of Joshua Martin Snyder*.

³Joseph A. Francello, *The Seneca World of Ga-No-Say-Yeh (Peter Crouse, White Captive)* quoting an unpublished manuscript of Mrs. Trippe. "Mrs. Trippe makes reference to Mary Jamison, Peter Crouse, White Boy Pierce, the brother Seneca White and White Seneca, and the Snyder boy, for a total of six specifically mentioned." Though I don't know for sure that this is the same person, discovering the mention of "the Snyder boy" among the white captives of the Senecas was exciting. That he was referred to as "the Snyder boy" makes me think he returned to the eastern settlements and that he didn't grow up and stay in Indian territory. We also know that prisoners were returned from the lands John was supposedly taken to by the Senecas. Finally, I have a map showing the Seneca nation boundary when John was captured. It is in the expected place, near John's later Indian Camp Farm.

At the very least, what I have written should be informative of what typically happened to white captives. I have taken much supporting research from captivity narratives and correlated that information with facts about John Snider that are available. If Joshua Snyder's statement is accurate, those narratives also should reflect what happened to John Snider. The result is not meant to be a fictional story of what could have been but an attempt to relate the probable facts as they may well have been.⁴

Before the Capture

John Snider's father was born around 1710 in Germany. He grew up there, probably a farmer. But that was not an easy life. Religious and economic persecution were driving tens of thousands of Germans from their native land to America. His father came to eastern Pennsylvania around 1735, while massive immigration from Germany was occurring into that region. It is likely that John's father was indentured, as such was commonly the case for young men newly arrived in America. After serving for several years to work off the cost of his passage, John's father was released.⁵

John Snider was born in 1743. He, his younger brothers George, Elisha and Rudolph, and his sister Mary went with their parents to start a farm. Virginia, to the south, offered land to those that would take up a farm on the frontier. These were often German families.⁶ The colonial governments induced the Germans to move to lands west of the English settlements to act as a "living barrier" against the Indians.⁷

Life was rough along the frontier, and Indian raids were common. There were no newspapers

⁴Some of the better references used for this research include: (1) R. VanDerBeets, *Held Captive by Indians, Selected Narratives 1642-1836* (Knoxville, 1973), (2) *Indian Captivity* by Oliver M. Spencer, orig. published in 1835 recounting incidents of 1795, (3) *The Seneca World of Ga-No-Say-Yeh* (Peter Crouse, White Captive), Joseph A. Francello, PhD. Muhlenberg College, University Press of America. (4) *Mary Jemison, Seneca Captive* by Jeanne LeMonnier Gardner, Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc. New York, (5) *Loudon's Indian Narratives, A Selection of Some of the Most Interesting Narratives, of Outrages, Committed by the Indians in Their Wars with the White People*, Carlisle, 1808 (1888 reprint) and (6) *The Death and Rebirth of the Seneca*, Anthony F. C. Wallace, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1970. The *Preston Register*, attributed to Col. Wm. Preston lists 298 persons killed, wounded, taken prisoner, escaped, or returned in the period from Oct. 1754 through May 1758. This is in the Draper collection and also is reprinted in Joseph A. Waddell, *Annals of Augusta Co. from 1726 to 1871*.

⁵Seven years was a common length of indenture. Some immigrants considered being indentured an easy way to get to know the customs of the new land and the farming or other skills which would be required to be successful here. There are stories of immigrants who could have paid for their passage, but hid what wealth they had and were sold into indenture. They would recover their money at the end of the indenture period. At that time, the immigrant would be released and would take up lands of his own. Waiting several years to make a start in America, with money and training, was sometimes preferred to starting immediately, with few skills and no money.

⁶J. N. Heard, *White into Red, A Study of the Assimilation of White Persons Captured by Indians*, 1973.

⁷Jost was the name of Hans Justus Heydt. He went from New York to Pennsylvania and then to the Shenandoah Valley, now near Strassburg in 1731, with a group of 16 families. Germans were being recruited by Virginia to live on the frontier and provide a living barrier to Indian attacks. He wrote that the nearest markets were at Fredericksburg, Maryland, or in Pennsylvania. They had to make their own roads for much of the way. For an excellent map of German settlements along the frontier in 1750, see Faust's, *The German Element in the United States*.

and few people could read or write anyway. But word of Indian raids on white settlers spread, sometimes disseminated by trappers, hunters, or tradesmen who travelled through the frontier. At other times, missionaries told tales that struck terror into the hearts of frontier families. John's mother, like every frontier mother who cared for her family, felt a chill every time an unexpected sound came from the trees near their small farm. Was it a deer stepping on a dried branch, or was it a savage Indian preparing to strike?

John's mother wasn't the only one nervous. A neighbor widow, Athalia Minor, was even more concerned.⁸ Mrs. Minor's husband, Steven, had died in 1750, leaving his wife with six children, the youngest of whom was John Minor. Though John Minor would become famous as a pioneer settler many years later in lands further west, when Athalia's husband died, young John Minor was just another defenseless three-year-old child on the frontier. Athalia's other older children did what they could to work the farm or to provide food through hunting. It was difficult to be a widow with six children on the frontier. Athalia welcomed the assistance of the neighboring Snider family.

In return for help from the Sniders, when her oldest son was old enough to go hunting, he hunted game for both families. Sometimes he took young John Snider along with him. One day late in the summer of 1754, eleven year old John Snider was to go on a hunting trip with the oldest Minor boy. At first, John Snider's mother was reluctant to let him go. Though children matured quickly on the frontier, her son was still very young. But she didn't expect him to be gone long. The weather was cool and winter would soon be upon them. More provisions were needed for the coming months. John's father was busy working the farm, putting away the last of their farm crops. That was man's work, too strenuous for a young boy like John or for his younger brothers. Since John was the oldest child in the Snider family and seemed to have a knack for hunting, his mother consented to let him go on the hunt with Athalia Minor's son.

Winter was a relatively safe time to be out hunting. This land was the summer hunting ground of several Indian tribes, but this hunting trip was well into fall.⁹ Those tribes often moved in the winter to southern villages. The Seneca tribe, for example, moved down to the lower Ohio valley in the winter. However, winter had not completely set in, and the weather the next day turned warm. This was not a good sign. John's mother knew that "Indian summer" weather meant increased probability that Indians would be in the area.

Even if they were, she hoped they would be friendly Indians. The Iroquois¹⁰ were known to come into the area sometimes, but she had heard that last fall, Benjamin Franklin and others

⁸Athalia (Updike) Minor, wife of Stephen Minor. These were the descendants of Thomas Minor, who arrived on the ship *Arabella* in 1629. Dorothy T. Hennen, 1776-1976 – A Time to Remember.

⁹In particular, the land of what is now northern West Virginia was neutral Indian territory. That is, there were no permanent settlements in that area at this time. However, Indians did use it for hunting, just as young John Snider was attempting to do. From Waychoff we learn that further to the north at that time there was a Shawnee Indian village across the river from the mouth of Ten Mile Creek and another near Millsboro at Poundstone Bottom opposite Gray's landing.

¹⁰The Seneca nation's homeland was the Finger Lakes area between Genesee River and Seneca Lake. East of them were the Cayuga, the Onondaga, the Oneida, and the Mohawk Indians. These were the Five Nations in the original Iroquois Confederacy. In 1722, there were Six Nations after the Tuscarora refugees from North Carolina took a seat in the council. In this manuscript and in quotations used, the term "Iroquois" can refer to the Iroquois Confederacy or to a particular nation, such as the Senecas.

had worked a treaty with the Iroquois of peace in return for British assistance against the French, who were encroaching on Indian lands from the north.¹¹ However, not all Indians were allied with the British. There were some Indian nations who had alliances with the French. Those were the ones that John's mother feared. Her fears were justified.

The Capture

A small group of Seneca Indians was in the area.¹² They were a "war party," whose mission was to raid the settlements.¹³ They would show their bravery in battle, and intended to bring back valuables and captives. They also would kill and bring back scalps of their adversaries to prove their bravery. This was not an organized band, with a clear leader and plan. Each attacking brave was out to prove his prowess, and as such the barbarities were often swift and extreme.

Minor's small hunting party fell under attack. John watched in terror as savages attacked the small group of hunters. Many of the whites were killed outright and scalped. The scalps showed that there had been a battle and that the braves were victorious. Those that were not killed were taken captive.¹⁴ John was one, perhaps the only one, who was taken alive. He had no way of knowing what was in store for him. John imagined the worst tortures and a horrible death awaited him at any moment.

John didn't understand why he was captured and the others were killed. In general, the Indian ways were not understood by the white settlers. The cultures were fundamentally different. Even those who spent time among the Indians, such as the early missionaries, had trouble understanding the native culture. For example, they expected the Indians to adopt the white man's ways. They tried to teach the Indian men methods of farming, using European techniques used by the farmers in the white settlements to the east. They overlooked the fact that Indian women, not the men, were responsible for farming.

Another major misunderstanding about the American Indian culture was the role of the family and the clan system. Indian families were small, especially compared to the American white families of the 1700's. White settler's families were large due to a "patriarchal-

¹¹The Iroquois "requested assistance" from the Pennsylvania colony against the French as part of a treaty negotiated at Carlisle, Pennsylvania in October, 1753, with Benjamin Franklin attending. The last phase of the French and Indian Wars began in 1754. Both the French and the English tried to enlist the Iroquois; different nations of the Six Nations sided with England or France. Eventually, the British were victorious, as signalled by the capture of Fort Niagara in 1759.

¹²Reason points to John spending his time in the Seneca Indian nation, and the path through which he travelled is on a line from what was then Virginia to the Seneca Nation. Boundary lines for the Seneca nation are known for the years 1736, 1749, 1754 and 1768 (see Map 2 in Abrams' *The Seneca People*).

¹³There had always been intertribal feud-wars with neighboring tribes. When a warrior died, war parties went out to bring back persons to replace the mourned-for dead. This could be done in three ways: by bringing back the scalp of a dead enemy (the scalp might even be put through an adoption ceremony); by bringing back a live prisoner (to be adopted, tortured and killed and often eaten ceremoniously; this latter practice ended by the 1600s); or by bringing back a live prisoner to be allowed to live and even to replace in a social role the one whose death called for this "revenge."

¹⁴Babies were often killed, usually by holding their feet and smashing their heads against a tree or other solid object. Others who could not travel swiftly were commonly killed quite early after the capture. Young boys and girls often were spared if they could be captured alive.

agricultural” concept of having many children to help out with the farming. The Seneca women controlled not only the children, but the very decision as to how many they would have. The Seneca custom was for a woman to bear children only when the last child was able to walk and mostly take care of themselves, which was about the age of four or five.¹⁵

A woman could augment her procreative powers through adoption of children. This might be to increase her family or to replace a child that had died. Adoption was one way for a woman to achieve greater status within the matriarchy of Seneca society. “They not only did the adopting but had the unquestioned right to initiate it.”¹⁶ Thus replacement of a child was a very common reason to capture whites.¹⁷

Young John was taken north-westerly, the quickest path away from other white settlements and back into Seneca territory. This was a hard, forced march. Once an attack was complete, the Indians wasted no time to victoriously return home. If there were older adult captives, the Indians would usually take the first day or so of the journey to see which captives looked strong and whose temperaments met with Indian approval. Often a day or so into the retreat, all captives except those few who would be taken all the way into Indian lands would be killed and scalped.¹⁸ John was comfortable in the woods. His grandchildren would comment that he was a natural woodsman and hunter. He was glad he was young and strong enough to survive the brutal pace the Indians maintained spacing themselves from the white settlements.¹⁹

Though he had never travelled this far from his frontier home, he had a pretty good idea where he was at least for the first several days of the retreat. One night soon after his capture, the Indians stopped at a beautiful place to rest. Some of the fear had left John, for

¹⁵Arthur C. Parker, *The History of the Seneca Indians*, Port Washington, New York, Ira J. Friedman, Inc., 1967, pp 74-75.

¹⁶Pennsylvania Archaeologist, Vol XVIII, page 79.

¹⁷More rarely, white settlers were captured for profit. For a time, the British paid for white colonist’s scalps (see Gardner’s *Mary Jemison, Seneca Captive*). Later, the British would pay for white captives who were English. One white settler, an English boy, was sold back to the British. When he was talking to Coo-h-coo-cheeh the night before she was to tell him he would be leaving, she asked about his family, where he had lived. He told her about coming from England. “Her brow for a moment seemed deeply clouded, and the mournful tones of her voice betrayed her mingled feelings of melancholy and regret. She spoke of the first landing of the ‘pale faces’ from their monstrous canoes, with their great white wings, as seen by their ancestors; of their early settlements, their rapid growth, their widely spreading population, their increasing strength and power, their insatiable avarice, and their continued encroachments on the red men; who, reduced by diseases, thinned by civil wars, and diminished by their long and various struggles, first with the British (*Met-a-coo-se-a-qua*) then with *Se-mon-the* (the Americans or Long-knives), were no longer powerful; and that they would not be satisfied until . . . all [Indians] would at length be exterminated.”

¹⁸This was especially terrifying for young children who had been captured with their parents. One story recalls a night a few days into the retreat into Indian territory. A mother and daughter had been captured. That night, the daughter was given a pair of moccasins and the mother was ignored. The mother explained what would happen, but the child couldn’t believe it. The next morning, the mother had been killed and the daughter discovered she would have to carry her mother’s scalp for the remainder of the journey.

¹⁹David Boyd was a 13-year-old boy captured in western Pennsylvania in 1756. The book *White Into Red, A Study of the Assimilation of White Persons Captured by Indians* (J. Norman Heard, Scarecrow Press, Metuchen, New Jersey, 1973) has several narratives that likely parallel John Snider’s story. David Boyd’s story is one. The book is excellent, with chapter headings including “Treatment of Captives in the Eastern Woodlands,” “Time Required to Become an Indian,” “The Critical Age,” and “Redeemed Captives: Their Struggle to Readjust.”

he was still alive. He noticed the beauty of the place. Though that night it was an Indian camp, he thought that someday, if he should live through this ordeal, a place like this would be where he would want to live. He was exhausted. He had no way of knowing that they had reached the boundary of the Seneca nation and that the rest of the trip would be less strenuous. That night, John fell asleep in an exhausted slumber.

The next morning the Indians took him further north toward Fort Duquesne. John didn't know it, but Indian settlements near the fort at the confluence of the Ohio²⁰ and the Monongahela rivers were a common "safe place" where many white captives were initially brought. The French, who were in alliance with the Indians²¹ at this time, held Fort Duquesne.²² John didn't have any idea that he would be in this location again almost a decade later, when the fort had been renamed Fort Pitt and was in the hands of the British.

A few days after the capture, the war party approached the Indian village near Fort Duquesne in western Pennsylvania. While they were still several hours away from the village, there was much excitement among the braves. John knew that something was going to happen, though he didn't know what for sure. John had heard stories about the Indian "gauntlet." This sounded like a horrible experience, where a captive had to run between two rows of Indian braves. They tried to beat down the runner. If they did, he or she would have to start again and again, if necessary, to try to make it through. This was the way the Indians judged the character of the captives. If the captive made it through the gauntlet to the approval of the Indians, red paint was applied to the captive. This was a symbol that he or she would be accepted into one of the tribes. If for any reason the captive was not to be accepted, he or she would be painted black. This was a sure sign of death.²³

What John didn't know is that everyone didn't have to run the gauntlet. Younger children ran a gauntlet of squaws and young braves. There was little danger - it was mostly for the amusement of the Indians. A ten year old boy recounted his experience: At the Indian camp there was a ceremony where the killings of the raid were recounted, and then suddenly he was pounced upon by "a little old Indian" who made out like he had "vanquished his enemy." The young captive later wrote: "Immediately all the women began to scream, and the children, down to the small papoose, setting up a long shrill war whoop, gathered around me; I clung to Waw-paw-waw-quaw, but young as I was, I should have been compelled to run the gauntlet through the women and infant warriors, had I not from great debility,

²⁰The term "Allegheny" for the river was given by the white inhabitants. To the Indians the same river that flowed past their winter home to the south and continued up past modern day Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania was known over its entire length as the Oh-he-yo, which means "handsome river" in their language. (From Alden's Seneca Indians Missions)

²¹In the early 1700s, both the French and the British were trying to gain the alliances of the Indians. The French would "live with them on terms of equality, adopt their manners, venture on war parties with them, and willingly marry their daughters. The individual Frenchman was a congenial companion. His colony asked only for the right to trade, but also demanded that the Indians only trade with the French. The French colonial policy was a menace."

²²A famous white captive, Mary Jemison, would be brought here after her captivity only a few years later. Mary was also born in 1743. See Gardner's book, *Mary Jemison, Seneca Captive*.

²³A historically accurate and quite readable description of this ordeal is contained in the popular paperback by Alexander Thom, *Follow the River*.

occasioned by dysentery, been scarcely able to move faster than a walk.”²⁴

Some white captive children were “adopted” before they reached the Indian village. Their conduct on the trail and a specific home planned for a captive could result in avoidance of this frightening and physically punishing gauntlet ritual. Those that were already spoken for went through a different ceremony while still outside the Indian village. The young white captive was stripped naked by squaws who had come from the village. The grime and dirt from the retreat was washed away, and, for boys, the hair was cut in the Indian style. Then the white captive was decorated in red paint. Indian clothes were put on and the new “Indian” would be brought into the village. Indian women would feed and take care of the new arrival. Finally, the new “parent” would be introduced; she would come and administer to the needs of the weary captive as if he or she were her own son or daughter.

Indian Ways

John soon learned that the family system was quite different from that to which he was accustomed. Immediately, he was adopted in every sense of the word. The kinship system of the Senecas was strong and extensive. Unlike white society, where the nuclear family was all-important, the Seneca’s social structure was the clan system. The powerful person was the woman leader of the clan. Related women lived in the same dwelling, or longhouse. Husbands lived in the longhouse, but were from varied cousin clans. Children belonged to the mother’s clan indefinitely. Even in marriage, the husband had no claim to any property of the wife (such as the corn stored in the longhouse). He had rights only to what he had brought in himself. If he did not do his share of providing for the family of the longhouse, he would be asked to leave, which would put him back as a burden on his own clan (his mother’s clan) or he would “marry” again into another clan.

Young John also learned another difference - that Indian boys lived a completely different life than their colonial counterparts. Young Indian boys were to shun menial tasks. “Children, especially boys, are not held to work; the latter are to become hunters. They are allowed their own way. . . They follow their own inclinations, do what they like and no one prevents them, except it be that they do harm to others; but even in that case, they are not punished, being only reprovved with gentle words. Parents had rather make good the damage than punish the children.”²⁵ Thus John found a life with few responsibilities outside of hunting and engaging in activities that would prepare him to be a brave warrior. For a young boy, this life seemed much easier than that he had been taken from.

He was treated kindly by all, just as if he had been a blood member of the tribe. Another Seneca captive recalled, “none of them offered me any rudeness.”²⁶ The adopted white captives were completely immersed and accepted. White prisoners thus adopted often identified themselves thoroughly with their captors and did not want to be repatriated, even when that was offered to them.

²⁴Oliver M. Spencer, *Indian Captivity*, orig. published in 1835 recounting incidents of 1795, page 71.

²⁵Archer B. Hulbert and William N. Schwarz, *David Zeisberger’s History of the North American Indians*, Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Society, 1910, p. 16, Western History Collection, Denver Public Library.

²⁶The Seneca People by George H. J. Abrams, 1976 by Indian Tribal Series.

The Seneca of this period tilled the land in common, after their ancient practices, and had communal store houses.²⁷ Their crops were corn, beans, squashes, pumpkins and melons, while from their orchards they picked apples, pears, plums and peaches. They had little need for cows, for the woods about them furnished plenty of meat. Horses were preferred as domestic animals, as they were more easily cared for, and could forage for themselves in winter, if encouraged with a daily supply of corn.

“The wealth of the forests and rivers East of the Mississippi produced the high culture of the Woodland Tribes. The use of log houses and bark wigwams and the bark canoe for the main method of transportation were two factors of note. There was a variety of crafts: wearing silk applique, wood carving, silver work, pottery, and the fashioning of birch bark. The Iroquois tribes [that] extended as far south as Virginia are noted especially for grace of line and delicacy of pattern in quilt and bead embroidery. Plant forms were the main source of design and were used freely with a naturalism that contrasts sharply with the highly stylized geometric design of the Plains Indians.”²⁸

John was surprised to learn that the Seneca Indians, when they weren't on the warpath, dressed for the most part like white people of the frontier. Their native “cuts” were still to be observed, and, even when flannel and broadcloth were employed, they used the Indian style of hunting shirt. Leather leggings were the vogue and moccasins were the common foot gear.

The women were neatly dressed in broadcloth skirts, flannel underskirts and leggings. Their overdresses were often of light flannel or turkey-cloth of solid color, green, red or blue, and profusely beaded. Ribbons were neatly sewn on around the collar and bottom, and row after row of silver brooches ornamented the clothing of those who had wealth and position.

John learned to live and work among his captors, and soon adopted many of their ways. The speech of his captors was “soft and melodious Seneca,” quite a change from John's own German language.²⁹ He learned the language and the ways of a young brave. He was still too young to join a war party, but as an Indian the time would come when he would have to prove his bravery and join in a raid against the white settlements.³⁰ He had been captured and brought into the tribe at an age that usually meant he would adopt Indian ways. The

²⁷Seneca Life, 1755-1775.

²⁸This paragraph is taken from a display in the basement of the Jocelyn Museum in Omaha, Nebraska. There, visitors find a display of the clothing, designs, and art of the native American Indians. The contrast between the eastern and western Indians' designs is unmistakable.

²⁹A missionary spoke with Peter Krause who had been taken by the Senecas when the young boy was 14. He reported that the white captive had learned to speak in “soft and melodious Seneca” and that his ears had been slit “from apex to lower extremity.” This custom was common among the Indians for decorative purposes. (Timothy Alden's *Seneca Indians Missions* is an abstract of his journal of activities among the Senecas.)

³⁰John Ward was captured in 1758 at the age of three. He was completely assimilated, married an Indian, and had several children. On three separate occasions John Ward was in a war party which fought against members of his own white family. In the first battle, his own natural father was killed. His own half-Indian daughter was almost killed by a surprise attack on their Indian village in 1791. A year later, his brother James Ward was a member of the militia which attacked the Indian village again. John Ward, the white captive who had grown up an Indian, was mortally wounded. James heard his dying brother, John, calling for help in his Indian language just before he died.

longer he stayed with the Senecas, the more he became like them and felt as one with them.³¹

Indian Border Problems Worsen

By 1756, John had finished his second year in captivity. The Indians of many tribes were increasing their attacks on the encroaching settlers. The Delaware tribe was one of the most violent and persistent. This tribe was one of the confederacy of the Six Nations. The British finally quit trying to resolve the Delaware issue with diplomacy, and in 1756 enticed the other tribes of the Six Nations to suppress their Delaware brothers by paying for the scalps of the Delaware Indians:

Minutes of Comm'rs. Premiums for Scalps, 1756.

At a meeting of the Board of Commissioners for laying out Sixty Thousand Pounds for the King's Use, April 9, 1756.

AGREED, That it be again proposed to the Governor to issue a Proclamation as soon as may be, offering Rewards for the Scalps of Enemy, Indians; and that the Governor be informed this Board are willing to allow the following Premiums for the same, viz.

| | Dollars |
|--|---------|
| For every Male Indian Prisoner above Ten years old that shall be delivered at any of the Governments Forts or Towns. | 150 |
| For every Female Indian Prisoner, or Male Prisoner of Ten years old and under, delivered as above. | 130 |
| For the Scalp of every Male Indian of above Ten years old. | 130 |
| For the Scalp of every Indian woman. | 50 |

The recommendation was approved by Governor Morris on 8th April, 1756. This bounty turned the Indians of the Six Nations against the Delaware tribe, that had “continued, and still do continue, committing the most barbarous and cruel Murders on every Part of our Borders. . .”

This bounty did not stop the Indian raids. Sentiment against the British grew, and increasing white settlement “irritated the Confederacy,” causing more of the member tribes of the Six nations to side with the Delewares. By 1761, John had been with the Indians seven years. At eighteen, he had not yet gone on a raid against his own people, but the time would come soon when that would be expected of the young brave. John could sense that the sentiment against the British was growing very strong and that something significant was going to happen.

³¹“Indianization” occurred to different degrees depending on the age at the time of captivity. A study of many captivities showed that the critical age for young girls was age twelve, beyond which they would not adapt well to Indian ways. For boys, the critical age was fourteen. John Snider was under fourteen when he was captured, yet he was old enough to remember his family and the way he was brought up by his German parents. Culturally, he would have been torn. Such was the case for the rest of his life.

Guyasuta, an Allegheny River leader, attempted to recruit various tribes for a concerted attack on British forts. The other tribes refused. Colonel Henry Bouquet learned that the Indians were very near putting together a combined assault on border settlements. "Col. Henry Bouquet at Ft. Pitt attempted to quiet increasing Indian objections, assuring them that White settlement would cease west of the Allegheny Mountains. This official policy thwarted land speculators who planned to open the area to settlement. Settlers and traders did nevertheless, continue to intrude, leading to a number of massacres on both sides."

Colonel Bouquet's 1761 policy bought very little time, as it was mostly ignored. In 1763, King George III established the crest of the Appalachian mountains as the westernmost boundary of white settlement, but his proclamation, like that of Col. Bouquet, was ignored by the white settlers pushing westward. The reaction by the Seneca was to try again to get the Delaware, Shawnee, and other tribes to attack British forts. This time, there was more support for the plan against the British. Forts all along the frontier fell under attack.³²

This war, known as Pontiac's War, was initially successful for the Indians, with all the forts on the entire western frontier falling into Indian hands except Detroit and three forts in Pennsylvania (Bedford, Ligonier, and Pitt). The fort at Detroit was saved by an Indian squaw, who revealed the plan to the British. The three Pennsylvania forts owed their safety to Colonel Henry Bouquet, who understood Indian ways and was able to react accordingly.³³

Peace, British Terms

Though the Indians had laid siege to the Pennsylvania forts, Colonel Bouquet was ultimately victorious. Two punitive expeditions were immediately organized to invade the Indian territory. Colonel Bouquet led one expedition into Ohio. The Indians quickly wearied of the struggle and lent a willing ear to proposals of peace. By the autumn of 1764, he was in a position of power over the Indians, and summoned the chiefs of the Seneca, Delaware, and Shawnee tribes.

Before he would listen to any suggestions of peace, he demanded that by the 29th of October, 1764, the Indians should deliver into his camp all white prisoners whatsoever who were in their hands, whether they be English or French, women or children, whether they be adopted by a tribe, united by marriage, or held on any other pretense.³⁴ They were required also to furnish the prisoners with clothing, food, and horses, as far as Fort Pitt. After the white captives had been delivered, he declared, he would be ready to dictate terms of peace.

³²The Delawares and some tribes in alliance with them, particularly the Shawanese and Senecas, continued their barbarities. The Delawares joined forces with the French to fight against the English. In the French and Indian War, the French and Indians fought against the British for territories west of the Alleghenies. The French lost, and relinquished their claims to that territory. The Indians found that they had merely changed masters; no longer the French but the more powerful British were now oppressing them. The Indians then decided it was necessary to resist and crush the British before British power was too strong. The Indians felt that they might, by a bold stroke, crush the advancing white settlers, and regain the hunting land which the red men had lost. They were told that the Great Spirit was angry with them because they were cowards.

³³Col. Henry Bouquet was a colonel in a German regiment. He had had significant experience in the French and Indian War which made him a valuable commander on the frontier.

³⁴The papers of Henry Bouquet, F152 .B77 1951 Volume 5 Penn Hist. and Museum.

Instructions were sent back to the Indian villages. The harsh command from their chief was difficult to accept. The attraction of the Indian life was very strong. Many wanted to remain with the Indians or planned to return to them. Speaking from personal observation of the Senecas, one author wrote: “The author in his boyhood has listened to the recitals of captive whites among the Senecas, and well remembers how incredible it seemed that they should have preferred a continuance among them to a return to their own race. . . [the white captive,] young when captured, is partly to be accounted for in the novelty of the change - the sports and pastimes - the ‘freedom of the woods’ - the absence of restraints and checks, upon youthful inclinations. But chiefly it was the influence of kindness, extended to them as soon as they were adopted. The Indian mother knew no difference between their natural and adopted children; there were no social discriminations. . . They had all the rights and privileges in their tribes, nations, confederacy, enjoyed by the native Iroquois.”³⁵

Families in the villages were to be torn apart, but the commands of the chiefs who were meeting with Col. Bouquet had to be obeyed. Many captives that the Indians were being forced to return had grown accustomed to Indian ways and did not want to leave.³⁶ On Nov. 15, 1764, Col. Bouquet wrote:

“We have already upwards of 200 Captives delivered, & many of them have remained so many Years amongst them, that they part from them with great reluctance. We are obliged to keep Guards to prevent their Escape, and unless they are treated with Indulgence and Tenderness by their Relations, they will certainly return to their Savage Masters.”³⁷

The Exchange

John’s brothers and parents did not give up hope that he was alive and might be returned to them.³⁸ His father, unfortunately, didn’t live to see the return of his son in 1764. But when word spread that many white captives were to be returned at Fort Pitt, John’s brothers came in hopes of finding him among the returnees.

The Indians from several tribes, including the Senecas, brought two hundred and six persons whom they had taken as prisoners – eighty-one men (32 of Virginia, 49 of Pennsylvania), and

³⁵O. Turner, *Pioneer History of the Holland Purchase*, Buffalo: Jewett, Thomas and Company, 1849, p. 46.

³⁶The chiefs were not happy to comply with Bouquet’s request, either. An incident from two years earlier, in August of 1762 at Lancaster Pennsylvania, shows one reason why. In an earlier exchange, Thomas King, an Iroquois chief, sadly agreed to surrender his prisoners. The chief wrote: “You have told us of the Six Nations that we must assist you to see your flesh and blood. We have done what we can. . . I have got a great many of them, though at first with great difficulty. When I brought them by the English forts they took them away from me. . . they got them from me and I believe they have made servants of them. This is the reason why I brought so few of them. No wonder they are so loath to come, when you make servants of them.”

³⁷Two did escape from Col. Bouquet’s group. One was Elizabeth Studebaker (see Sipe’s *Indian Wars of Pennsylvania*, p. 482, 834) and Rhoda Boyd (Charles A. Eastman, *Indian Boyhood*, Boston, 1937 pp, 16-18).

³⁸They would not have found their son’s body, and they may have found the Minor boy. Since according to tradition he was out hunting with a man named Minor, and since there is no record of a Minor among the Indian captives, it is logical to assume Minor was killed in the Indian raid. Finding Minor’s body and not John’s probably led his parents to conclude that their son had been taken alive.

one hundred and twenty-five women and children. Relatives of many who had been taken by the Indians were with the army at Fort Pitt to receive the released captives.³⁹ The scene at this reunion was described by a soldier named William Smith:

“... fathers and mothers recognizing and clasping their once-lost babes; husbands hanging round the neck of their newly-recovered wives; sisters and brothers unexpectedly meeting together after long separation, scarce able to speak the same language, or, for some time, to be sure they were children of the same parents!

“... The Indians, too, as if wholly forgetting their usual savageness... delivered up their beloved captives with the utmost reluctance... Among the children who had been carried off young, and had lived long with the Indians, it is not to be expected that any marks of joy would appear on being restored to their parents or relatives. Having been accustomed to look upon the Indians as the only connections they had, having been tenderly treated by them, and speaking their language, it is no wonder that they considered their new state in the light of a captivity, and parted from the savages with tears.”⁴⁰

White captives in the Indian territory that is now Ohio and western Pennsylvania were part of this exchange. The Senecas, who had held John for nine years, delivered their last prisoners to Col. Bouquet on November 9, 1764.⁴¹ The Chief of the Senecas, Keyashuta, was present. The list of prisoners returned at Fort Pitt includes one “German John” among the adult males. Other names from the rolls of the captives were “Cut-Arm” and “German Girl” because they could no longer remember their given names.⁴²

Colonel Bouquet’s strong dealings with the Indians resulted in a cessation of hostilities, and on Dec. 5, 1764, the Governor of Pennsylvania declared peace with the Delaware, Shawanese, and the Senecas. Some had no home to come home to. Some were really French, not British. All that were not claimed or recognized were taken to Carlisle, Pennsylvania. For John, his brothers awaited him.

Between Two Worlds

When he was exchanged, he learned that his father had died and that his mother had moved back with his brothers to the eastern settlements. The incident that took her son from her and killed some of her neighbors, the Minors, was enough to convince her to leave the frontier behind and to move back to the German community in Eastern Pennsylvania.

John’s brothers took him across the state to see his mother. Though they knew he was their brother, she did not recognize him. Nine years with the Indians had changed almost

³⁹Those prisoners whose relatives or friends had not come with the army were taken to Carlisle, Pennsylvania, to be identified there. There are many fascinating stories about these reunions.

⁴⁰White Into Red, p. 3 quoting from William Smith, *An Historical Account of the Expedition Against the Ohio Indians in the Year 1764*, (Philadelphia, 1765) pp. 26-27, 29.

⁴¹The initial exchange was at the Camp upon Muskingham. Then the army marched with the returned captives to Fort Pitt. Incidents during this march were fascinating, including one young brave who had fallen in love with a girl who had grown up among the Indians. She didn’t want to leave, either. The young brave followed the army all the way to Fort Pitt, taking considerable risk along the way.

⁴²White Into Red, p. 4. That there was a returned captive “German John” is inconclusive, though supportive of the theory that John Snider was among the Indian captives returned.

everything about him. Later, John's grandson would recall that upon seeing him, she claimed he was not her son. But examination of his arm showed a scar that had been there before his capture. She accepted him immediately as her son. His years among the Indians had not only changed him physically, he had acquired the Indian attitudes and culture. The ways of the German community were unappealing to him, and he very much wanted to return to the lands to the west.

His brothers were then in their late teens. Once back, he was asked so often about his captivity that soon he grew tired of repeating the story and even rude to those that would ask. But he did talk to his brothers of a place he had camped with the Indians after the capture during their retreat into Indian lands.

The Return to Indian Camp Farm

Though John Snider had returned from Indian lands, white settlers continued to push westward into Indian territory. Loud complaints were made to the colonial authorities by the Indians.⁴³ The Governor of the territory, Governor Penn, replied to the Indians that the land was so far removed that he was powerless to enforce the law. In addition, using the winter as an excuse, he wrote that it would be "extremely difficult, if not impractical, to oblige these lawless people to abandon their present habitations, and to remove with their families and effects into the interior part of the country." He suggested waiting until spring.

When the spring of 1768 arrived, the problem had worsened. At the opening of the legislative session that year, Governor Penn called on the Assembly to enact a stronger law to dissuade unauthorized white settlement in Indian lands. The first law of the session was passed, which provided "that if any person settled upon lands not purchased of Indians by the proprietaries, shall refuse to remove for the space of thirty days after having been requested to do so, or if any person shall remove and then return, or shall settle on such lands after the notice of the provisions of this act have been duly proclaimed, and such persons on being duly convicted shall be put to death without benefit of clergy."⁴⁴

Later that same year, 1768, the Iroquois Confederacy surrendered their own and their tribal dependents' claims to the lands south of the Ohio and Susquehanna rivers. This was known as the "New Treaty"⁴⁵ or the Treaty of Fort Stanwix. These lands were used by many tribes, but the Iroquois negotiated the sale and kept all the proceeds. The Indians hoped to get rid of a source of frontier friction between the English and themselves by opening up all of Kentucky and a large area in Western Pennsylvania and West Virginia to settlers. The result was not what was expected, for what they had sold was the principal hunting grounds of their Shawnee allies, who quickly were no longer their allies but joined with western Indians

⁴³Near the close of 1767, General Gage, in command of the royal forces in America, notified Governor Penn that something must be done to stop the unlawful encroachments of white settlers into Indian lands or there would be trouble from the Indians due to the "obstinacy of the people who persist to settle on their lands."

⁴⁴Bates, *History of Greene County*, p. 198.

⁴⁵See the map on the inside front cover of *The Horn Papers* showing which lands were acquired from Indians at which times. What would become Greene County was acquired in 1768.

in a rival Western confederacy to resist white colonial expansion. From then on, settlers could worry about Shawnee.⁴⁶

John had been back from captivity four years when the 1768 treaty was signed that made the land he remembered from his boyhood capture available for settlement. That same year he decided to return to where he had camped that night thirteen years earlier. He was now a man twenty-six years old, wise to ways of the Indians and of the woods. His brothers and sister and their families decided to come with him, along with several other families. Among them was the family of John Evans, including young Dorcas, who would be John's wife.⁴⁷ They trusted John to help them build a new life on the frontier. John Evans settled in what was to become Greene County in extreme southwestern Pennsylvania. This was just north of John's farm, which became known as Indian Camp Farm. The youngest child of his old neighbor, Athalia Minor, also moved into this area. John Minor became known as the "Father of Greene County."

John Snider was the first pioneer to survive in that part of the frontier, perhaps because he was familiar with Indian ways and had learned to think like an Indian brave. He and his wife, Dorcas, lived at Indian Camp Farm for the rest of their lives.

⁴⁶Though the land had been acquired legally, by treaty, Indian unrest continued. The influence of the French was also felt as some tribes aligned with the French against the British. The English assumed a haughty attitude and treated the Indians with an air of contempt. The English also were land-hungry and were willing to go against the French militarily to keep the French out. The Indians, with unstable alliances with both countries, were in a difficult situation.

⁴⁷Just as in the Indian system, John left the "business" to his wife. Actually, it is probable that Dorcas took care of all the "business" in the family. In particular, Will Snyder relates that Dorcas Evans once sold one of John Snider's slaves and was later involved in litigation relating to the sale. Since a woman could not be sued, the Bill of Sale was altered to have John Snider's name on it. As far as labor, just as in the Indian villages, John left it to others. He had learned to be a hunter and a woodsman. He returned to the place he had been taken when captured by Indians, which became known as Indian Camp Farm. There, he lived a life between his two worlds. It must have been difficult for him to belong to neither.