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Cocoochee: Mohawk Medicine Woman

HELEN HORNBECK TANNER

On the borderland of Canadian settlement southeast of Montreal, the Mohawk woman Cocoochee was born about 1740, grew to maturity, and acquired skill in herbal medicine and the special ability to contact the powerful world of the spirits. Although her childhood was sheltered in territory remote from the North American fighting frontier, her adult years were destined to be spent in a traumatic environment threatened almost perpetually by warfare.¹ Five times over a period of a quarter-century her household was uprooted, forced to move either by a sense of insecurity, by Indian defense strategy, or by direct attack. Following the initial transfer of Cocoochee's family from the hinterland of Montreal to the Ohio country about 1769, subsequent dislocations were brought about by major developments in Indian-White warfare west of the Appalachian mountains.

Cocoochee lived during an era that was critical for all Indian people in eastern North America. In the annals of western history, her life spanned the French and Indian War between France and England (1754-1760), Lord Dunmore's War against the Shawnee in Ohio (1774), the American Revolution (1775-1783), and the Indian-White warfare continuing in territory northwest of the Ohio River until 1794. For Indian people, this was a time when the kings of France and England unfairly extended their imperial rivalry into the Indians' country, and when American land speculators and frontiersmen turned Indian land into individual personal property.² No matter how these generalized

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developments on the historic scene may be analyzed today, in the eighteenth century they constituted a series of direct threats to the way of life and very survival of Coccoochee and her family.

Intercolonial warfare broke out during Coccoochee's teenage years. In the summer of 1755, rumbles of distant battles on the upper Ohio River reached Indian settlements around Montreal including the Mohawk village where Coccoochee lived.³ Her original homeland was the upper Richelieu River, the outlet to Lake Champlain emptying into the St. Lawrence River among the ribbon farms of the French *habitantes*.⁴ By the fall of 1755, aggressive British troops had won a victory close at hand at Lake George, south of Lake Champlain. Two years later, Mohawk life on the upper Richelieu was disrupted as the river valley, along with Lake Champlain and the Hudson River, became a great war road between the British at Albany and the French forces at Montreal. Finally, British troops converged at Montreal to win a decisive victory over the French in September, 1760.⁵

The war years were personally eventful for Coccoochee, born into the important Wolf clan. About 1757, the year when inter-colonial strife invaded the St. Lawrence region, she married Cokundiawsaw, a member of the Bear clan. They had a baby daughter by the time the military campaigns were over in Montreal. During the next eight years, while three sons were added to the family, Coccoochee and Cokundiawsaw became increasingly apprehensive about their future near British-dominated Montreal.⁶ The new government promoted colonization of the upper St. Lawrence valley and appeared in many ways far less friendly to Indian people than the previous French regime. The Mohawk couple finally made the decision to emigrate to the Ohio country following the land cession treaty in 1768 establishing the Ohio River as the boundary between regions of White and Indian settlement on the trans-Appalachian frontier.⁷ They looked forward to life in a region from which white settlers would forever be excluded by the terms of the treaty.

Coccoochee still carried her youngest son on a cradle-board, and had an active toddler in tow, when the family of six embarked on the seven hundred mile journey to central Ohio. Their move was not unusual; a number of families of Mohawk and other divisions of the Six Nations had preceded them to the Ohio country and others followed in the wake of the American Revolution. These Indian emigrants from Six Nations country, known as "Mingoes" in Ohio, joined Delaware, Shawnee and Wyandot villages, or established separate communities of their own.

This particular Mohawk family settled among the Shawnee villages on the edge of a broad prairieland on the west side of the Scioto River between the present towns of Circleville and Chillicothe, Ohio. By 1770,

they were living in a small village of about a dozen log houses whose inhabitants included the rising young Shawnee chief Blue Jacket.⁸ Nearby, six or seven other Shawnee villages were dispersed over a distance of twenty-five miles.⁹ In these new surroundings, Cocoochee and her husband hoped for a more serene future. From the economic point of view, it was a convenient location. Fur traders from Pennsylvania lived in every village, bringing the kettles, guns, needles, blankets and other European-made supplies that had become indispensable commodities for Indian people by the eighteenth century. Furthermore, a blacksmith and gunsmith who could keep these new implements and weapons in working order resided in the principal Shawnee village, Chillicothe, only fifteen miles away. Land for corn fields and vegetable gardens was neatly marked out beyond the town houses.¹⁰

Unfortunately, Cocoochee's move to the Shawnee town coincided with the time that Virginia frontiersmen were beginning to infiltrate the Shawnee hunting grounds in Kentucky. In 1769, Shawnee leaders first captured Daniel Boone in the Kentucky hunting grounds, seized the proceeds of his winter's hunt, and sent him home with two pairs of moccasins and a gun. But he and his companions returned within two years, the vanguard of the first few hundred Kentucky pioneers.¹¹ Thereafter, tension built up rapidly along both the Indian and the Kentucky shores of the Ohio River.

The first hostilities to alarm Cocoochee in her new situation erupted in 1774 when Lord Dunmore, Governor of Virginia, led an assortment of militia against the Shawnee. The main target for this expedition was the group of five Shawnee towns located near Delaware communities in the Muskingum valley of eastern Ohio, a hundred miles from Cocoochee's home. With apprehension, the Shawnee on the Scioto received news of the destruction of the Muskingum valley towns, but fortunately the advancing army halted before reaching the Scioto. Fearing imminent attack, the Scioto Shawnee sent a message of peace to Lord Dunmore, and arranged for a treaty council that prevented further violence that year.¹²

The outbreak of the American Revolution soon precipitated a general flight of the Shawnee to safer territory in northwestern Ohio. When the Indians first learned of the Revolution, which they interpreted as a family quarrel between father and children, they felt that they need not become involved. But by 1777, the Indian people in Ohio were all caught between the American base at Fort Pitt (Pittsburgh) and the British base at Detroit.¹³ Realizing that they lived in a potential war zone, Cocoochee's family joined other members of Blue Jacket's town in the Shawnee migration to the Mad River at the headwaters of the Great Miami River. Here

they relocated in a tight formation where they were further from the Ohio River and closer to the British supply base at Detroit.¹⁴

Beginning in 1777, Coocoochee took on the demands and underwent the sacrifices of a warrior's wife. Her husband Cokundiawsaw and their eldest son Wapanoo joined in expeditions directed against the Kentuckians and the increasing American traffic on the Ohio River. On more than one occasion, Cokundiawsaw returned with a fresh scalp which he prepared carefully and fastened into a circular wooden hoop for drying and preserving.

During the nine year interval, 1778-1786, that Blue Jacket's town remained in the Mad River valley, Coocoochee's only daughter was married and in turn became the mother of a baby girl, born in 1779. The first tragedy to strike the family came only a short time afterward, when Coocoochee's son-in-law died, probably in defense of the Shawnee towns or in an attack on a station in the interior of Kentucky.¹⁵ Three years later, the widowed daughter bore a son, whose father was said to be Simon Girty, the man most feared and hated by the American frontier settlers.¹⁶ In his capacity as liaison for the British Indian department, Simon Girty was a frequent visitor at the Shawnee towns, where his brother James, a paid interpreter, continued to ply the Indian trade.¹⁷ The young widow and her two children were all part of the household over which Coocoochee was presiding when the Revolution ended.

The end of British-American hostilities in the American colonies in 1781, and the acknowledged independence of the United States, in no way brought peace to the Ohio-Kentucky frontier. Kentuckians were responsible for the destruction of Delaware towns on the Muskingum in 1781 and the massacre of Christian Indians who returned to their fields on the Tuscarawas River the next year.¹⁸ In 1782, Kentuckians also directed an unsuccessful attack on the Wyandot towns at Sandusky, Ohio and destroyed Shawnee villages on the lower Miami River near modern Piqua.¹⁹ Retaliatory raids of the Indians took a toll in Kentucky. Many scores remained unsettled from this separate frontier vendetta.

As a result of the local developments during the latter years of the American Revolution, the Indian society of which Coocoochee was a part increasingly became multi-tribal. In addition to the Shawnee villages, Delaware, Wyandot and Mingo gathered on the Mad River, along with contingents of Cherokee warriors and visiting Creek delegations. In 1786, the entire inter-tribal region on the headwaters of the Great Miami became the major objective of resolute Kentuckians. The white militia had become formidable during the course of the American Revolution. Kentucky's population rose from a few hundred in 1775 to more than thirty thousand by 1786.²⁰

The post-Revolutionary phase of hostilities in the Ohio country drew into active combat Cocoochee's two youngest sons, White Loon and Black Loon, along with others of a new generation of young warriors. But the combined Indian manpower of northwest Ohio was unable to prevent Benjamin Logan's Kentucky expedition in 1786 from destroying crops, gardens and homes in Blue Jacket's town and nine others on the Mad River.²¹ Cocoochee's family and neighbors fled to dispersed hunting grounds, the only safe refuge under these circumstances.

Emerging from a winter in an isolated hunting camp, Cocoochee and her husband built their next home among Blue Jacket's warrior families at a new base of operations, the Miami Towns, at present Fort Wayne, Indiana. During 1787, Delaware and Shawnee groups moved from Ohio to the Miami country, establishing new towns in the locale where the St. Joseph and St. Mary's rivers unite to form the Maumee, a stream flowing northeastward into Lake Erie at Toledo, Ohio.²² For Cocoochee, her third home in the west may well have brought feelings of nostalgia. A small French population lived at Fort Miami, a fur trading center long in existence at the Miami Towns; and Canadian volunteers manned the small British post. Other residents included a few British traders and a silversmith connected with mercantile firms at Detroit.²³

The Shawnee community adjacent to the Miami Towns was located on the Maumee River a few miles east of Fort Miami. Indian people often visited the trading town, and traders circulated among the Indian villages and hunting camps to collect furs. Through some of these connections, Cocoochee's daughter became acquainted with George Ironsides, a highly respected trader at Fort Miami, and soon lived with him as his wife. An unusual figure in the rough and competitive trading world, Ironside had received a university education at Aberdeen before entering the fur trade in America.²⁴ The marriage alliance received Cocoochee's enthusiastic approval.

The three years that Cocoochee spent near Ft. Miami from 1787-1790 were critical in her personal life history. At first it seemed as though the omnipresent threat of attack by Kentuckians might come to an end. In the spring and summer of 1787, the leading Shawnee war chiefs, Blue Jacket and Captain Johnny, rounded up white prisoners in the Indian country and arranged a peace conference and prisoner exchange at Limestone (now Maysville) Kentucky. Daniel Boone hired wagons to bring Shawnee prisoners from Danville and paid for food and drink as well as musical entertainment at the great peace convocation in July.²⁵ The speech by Captain Johnny, who said that the villages at the Miami Towns were now peaceably inclined, as well as the speech by Benjamin Logan, who said that Kentuckians were interested in trade but not territory north of

the Ohio, were printed in the *Kentucky Gazette*.²⁶ Momentarily, peace rather than war appeared imminent.

The actions of the newly consolidated American federal government during 1787 were more ominous. In New York plans were developed to organize the Northwest Territory, including Ohio's Indian country, and to sell large blocks of land there for immediate settlement. The laying out of new town sites on the north bank of the Ohio River, and the establishment of Fort Washington in 1790 at fledgling Concinnati forecast a problematic future for the Indian allies gathered at the Miami Towns.²⁷

In the fall of 1790, the first large military expedition under General Josiah Harmar set out for the allied towns at the head of the Maumee River. Warned in advance, the Indian people fled to the woods, but again their homes, fields and food stores were put to flames, except for supplies that could be consumed by the under-provisioned soldiers. The Indians nevertheless administered a severe defeat to Harmar's retiring army.²⁸ In this engagement, with fierce hand-to-hand fighting using tomahawks and bayonets, Coocoochee's husband, Cokundiawsaw, was mortally wounded. He lived only a few hours after the battle, and was buried near the banks of the Maumee River.²⁹

Although some of the Indians immediately rebuilt their homes at the Miami Towns, and one faction of Shawnee and Delaware took refuge in Spanish Louisiana, Coocoochee and her remaining family joined the staunchly militant Indian contingent that moved sixty miles down the Maumee River to establish the next allied headquarters at a place called "The Glaize."³⁰ The distinctive name of French origin referred to the steep clay banks, earlier a noted buffalo wallow, at the juncture of the Maumee and north-flowing Auglaize rivers (now present Defiance, Ohio). Coocoochee's solitary dwelling at The Glaize was centrally situated among the Indian towns that moved soon after Harmar's defeat.³¹ She lived a mile west of Blue Jacket's town and three miles east of Little Turtle's town. Within a few miles were two more Shawnee and two Delaware villages, as well as a traders town of refugees from Fort Miami.³²

Overlooking the north bank of the Maumee River, Coocoochee's house commanded a view of the entrance of the Auglaize River and along several miles of wooded scenery in the Maumee bottom lands. Directly across the river, her daughter and George Ironside occupied a three room log cabin with a loft that served as a combined dwelling, store and warehouse. This was the largest establishment in the small trading community.³³ Wapanoo and his wife built their cabin in a Shawnee and Delaware settlement that straggled along the east bank of the Auglaize River, south of the trading town.³⁴ White Loon and Black

Loon were also married and lived in Blue Jacket's town a mile downstream from Cocoochee's home.³⁵ The two grandchildren Cocoochee had raised continued in her care.

A more detailed description of Cocoochee's life as a widow, once more in unfamiliar surroundings, indicates the resources she had developed and the status she had achieved by the time she survived more than fifty winters of frequently hazardous existence. In physical appearance, Cocoochee was of medium height but somewhat stout, and consequently awkward in her movements. She was customarily attired in a long calico shirt fastened in front with a silver brooch, a skirt of blue cloth with white edging belted at the waist with a striped sash, matching blue cloth leggings, and deerskin moccasins.

When withdrawn in her private world of contemplation, Cocoochee's features appeared stern and forbidding, but she was also capable of sociable conversation, exchanging anecdotes, and showing a great interest in all the events going on around her. Throughout the nearby villages, Cocoochee was esteemed for her skill in preparing and administering medicines, and for the power of her incantations which gave her insight into the future. War leaders generally consulted her before starting out on any important expedition, and she shared the spoils of their victories.³⁶

A woman of great physical vigor, Cocoochee at times was sensitive and compassionate, but always was capable of soul-stirring emotional energy. At middle age, she viewed her own past and future in the context of the long stream of existence of all her people, a panorama of experience that evoked a kaleidoscope of visions, ranging from depressing to inspiring. Often her thoughts dwelled on the larger world of events that had produced the present circumstances of her life. In this darker mood, she recalled the traditional accounts handed down by her ancestors on the St. Lawrence River, who had seen the first landing of the pale-faced people from their gigantic canoes with the spreading white wings. Motivated by insatiable avarice, these pale-faced people had rapidly grown in strength and power, and remorselessly continued to encroach on the land of the red men, who were weakened by disease, civil strife and extended warfare against the British and the "Long Knives" (Americans).

Cocoochee believed that these aggressive newcomers would not be satisfied until they had crowded the Indians northward to perish in the Great Ice Lake, or pushed them westward until those who escaped their rifle fire would drown in the Great Western Sea. The Great Spirit was obviously angry with the red people, particularly those of her own Mohawk nation who were severely reduced in numbers. In her most melancholy moments, Cocoochee felt that she and her children were the only remnants of her race, and feared that when they went to sleep in the

ground, nobody would be left to gather their bones for a proper celebration of the Feast of the Dead.³⁷

In a more optimistic frame of mind, Coocoochee joyously contemplated the distant spirit land, the rewarding future of all the brave and good members of her nation. This beautiful realm, ten times larger than the entire American continent, lay far beyond the western ocean. There, the changing seasons brought no extremes of heat or cold, wet or drought, and nobody became sick, old, or incapacitated. Corn and beans, pumpkins and melons grew spontaneously from the earth, along with trees laden with delicious fruits. The meadowlands were perpetually green, and fragrant flowers bloomed continuously; springs were clear and cool; the deep, gently flowing rivers held endless varieties of fish; and the woodlands were stocked with innumerable herds of buffalo, deer, rabbits, and every species of game, with open patches for a variety of berry bushes. Projecting above this scene were trees larger than anyone had seen before, trees spreading their leafy branches high among the stars. This paradise, exclusively for Indian people, contained everything imaginable to gratify the senses and delight the mind.³⁸

Although Coocoochee's spiritual and healing abilities gave her a special status in the community, her everyday life followed a pattern common to all women of her situation. The bark cabin in which she lived was constructed in a fashion typical of homes in all the surrounding villages. The framework over the fourteen by twenty-eight foot area was constructed of small saplings. Some were planted firmly in the ground to serve as posts and studs supporting the ridge poles. Others were tied to the skeletal frame with thongs of hickory bark, making girders, braces and rafters. The exterior covering of the cabin consisted of large pieces of elm bark seven or eight feet long that had been pressed flat to prevent curling, fastened to the poles with more hickory thongs. The narrow doorway scarcely six feet high opened on the western wall of the cabin. When the entrance needed to be closed off, it was blocked with another large sheet of bark held in position by braces.

The interior of the original cabin was a single common room, bordered on two sides by frame couches covered with deerskins and blankets that served for sitting and sleeping space. On the ground in the center of the room directly under the smoke opening in the roof was the fireplace. Over it, a wooden trammel, suspended from a ridge-pole, supported a cooking kettle. Coocoochee's household possessions varied little if any from those used by pioneer white women all across frontier America. She had a large brass kettle for washing and for boiling sap during sugar making season in the spring. A second kettle of copper was deep and close-covered for preparing hominy, the basic Indian dish of corn

softened by soaking with wood ashes. She also had a few knives, pewter and horn spoons, wooden bowls, tin cups, woven sieves, a variety of baskets, and a block for pounding corn.³⁹

Cocoochee's personal supply of worldly goods, and in fact the capital wealth of all the allied Indian towns, was increased with the supplies brought back in November, 1791, when General Arthur St. Clair's army expedition from Fort Washington was soundly defeated in a battle about seventy miles south of The Glaize.⁴⁰ Intensely prosecuted Indian warfare in 1791 and 1792 also brought many captives to the towns, adding an interesting variety to local society at The Glaize.

In the spring of 1792, a prisoner of incredible strength and agility, William Moore, was brought from the Ohio River shore to Blue Jacket's village, a mile from Cocoochee's cabin. Because of his formidable physical prowess, demonstrated before he was finally taken captive, Moore ran the gauntlet with his hands tied. In spite of this handicap, he bounded so swiftly between the lines of stick-wielding Indians, using his knees, heels and elbows so adroitly, simultaneously swinging his head with great force, that his opponents were knocked about on both sides. Cocoochee had great admiration for William Moore, who repaid her kind attitude by building an addition to her home. The second room often served as a pantry and spare bedroom but was also used as her private sanctuary for spiritual ceremonies.⁴¹

For seven months, beginning in July, 1792, Cocoochee's family included a young captive, an intelligent and resilient eleven-year-old lad named Oliver Spencer, whom White Loon had taken during a reconnaissance tour along the Ohio River near Cincinnati. Although she at first did not relish the added responsibility, the hungry boy with a badly scratched body and blistered feet was too pitiful to be ignored. Overcoming the problems of language communication, Cocoochee directed Oliver to bathe in the river, then lie on a blanket in the scorching sun for three or four hours. Meanwhile, she boiled a strong potion of red oak, wild cherry bark and dewberry roots, which Oliver drank frequently and occasionally used to soak his feet. Within a few days, he felt perfectly cured.⁴²

The chief event in Cocoochee's life during the spring season of 1792 was her observance of the Feast of the Dead, an occasion for reburial of her husband's remains. The new grave was placed a short distance from her dwelling, near the warpath from Detroit crossing the Maumee River and leading toward the Ohio River. In this location, Cocoochee could communicate with her husband, and his spirit could be invigorated by viewing the warriors as they went on their military expeditions, until his probation period was over and he travelled to his final abode in the delightful spirit land.

Cokundiawsaw was buried in a sitting posture, facing west, accompanied by all the material objects necessary for a warrior and hunter: his rifle, tomahawk, knife, blanket and moccasins. Friends attending the ceremony tossed in other articles, presents for his journey. At the head of the grave they placed a red-painted post about four feet high, with the image of a face carved near the top, and underneath marks for the nineteen scalps he had taken in battle. On important occasions thereafter, scalps with hair of different length and color could be seen attached to a long, slender pole, swaying in the wind over his grave.⁴³

A second important occasion for Coccoochee was the Green Corn Ceremony performed about the middle of August. This harvest festival, commonly observed from the Caddo country of East Texas to the Creek towns in Florida, was also an annual event for the Shawnee. The all-day celebration at Coccoochee's home began with serious oratory in the morning, then continued after a mid-day meal with games, dancing and drinking. Participants included Coccoochee's daughter and George Ironside, her three sons and their wives, a few other Shawnee families and the captive William Moore. Following the custom of Indian gatherings, the morning ceremony began with the ritual of passing a pipe around the circle of seated participants. Highlight of the morning was a speech by a respected elder who first thanked the "Great Spirit" for the generous gifts they all had received and later shouted defiance against the "pale faces" who were encroaching on Indian land. To climax his rhetorical display, the elder exhorted the warriors to drive back the "Big Knives" to the region south of the Ohio River. This inspiring finale brought the audience to their feet with shouts of approval. Shortly they turned to sports events.⁴⁴

Footraces were first on the schedule, followed by a series of wrestling matches and a special test of strength in retaining a grip on a slippery length of greased leather thong. In preparation for this portion of the festivities, William Moore had built a viewing stand behind Coccoochee's cabin. This structure consisted of a raised platform with a rear wall and roof to shield the older guests from the sun as they watched the athletic events. As a special privilege, Moore was allowed to join in the wrestling competition and managed to throw one of the leading Shawnee contestants. This dangerous victory he managed to dismiss as a lucky accident rather than evidence of superior strength, since he knew that it was clearly unwise to demean his captors' physical ability.⁴⁵

Coccoochee had prepared a feast for all her guests. She served fish, venison, boiled "jerkey" made from dried beef, stewed squirrels, squashes, roast pumpkins and several varieties of corn dishes. These included succotash made of eut corn and beans, corn-on-the-cob, corn bread, and a

batter poured into cornleaf molds and baked in the ashes of the fire. Eating utensils were wooden bowls and spoons fashioned from wood, horn or tin.⁴⁶

Following a short interval of after-dinner smoking, a small keg of rum was brought out and passed around. When the liquor appeared, the men immediately gave all their knives and weapons to Cocoochee for safe-keeping before continuing with the sports events. Among all Indians, this precaution was taken before commencing a "frolic" in order to prevent personal injury as a consequence of clumsy or quarrelsome drinking behavior. Later in the afternoon, the recreation turned to social dancing led by a traditional singer who accompanied his own songs with the rhythmic beat of a small drum, adjusting the tempo for each number. Forming two circles, men and women circulated in opposite directions.

By evening, when the Green Corn Festival reached the last stage of an intoxicated revel, William Moore, George Ironside, and young Oliver Spencer had all departed. At the last moment, White Loon challenged a fellow warrior to one more wrestling match and was severely burned when he was thrown into the fire, a misfortune that brought the day's celebration to a sudden halt.⁴⁷

Although sharing a jug of rum had become an established custom at all major social functions, Cocoochee and other Indian women were occasionally terrorized by the behavior of their male relatives as a consequence of a private drinking bout. The most frightening sound to drift through the night air was the disjointed song of a weary reveler, giving warning as he proceeded erratically on the homeward trail. Living in an isolated location, Cocoochee was seldom troubled, but one late winter evening her son Black Loon came close to bringing tragic violence to her home. Her young prisoner Oliver Spencer, whom she had come to regard as a son, unfortunately had offended Black Loon. Returning from a "frolic" at Little Turtle's Miami village, located about four miles up the Maumee River, Black Loon veered off the river path toward Cocoochee's cabin, with vengeance in mind.

Alerted to potential danger by the approaching sound of the drunken "ki-ou-wan-ni" refrain, Oliver sprang from his bed, seized a blanket and dashed outside to crouch behind the house. In his hiding place, he heard Black Loon thrust open the door and inquire his whereabouts. When Cocoochee insisted that the boy was absent, Black Loon in a demented rage slashed his knife through the deer skins on Oliver's bunk, then seized the sleeping cat and threw it into the fire, holding the poor animal on the coals with his foot. Cocoochee pushed her son aside, grabbed the shrieking and dying cat, threw it outside into the snow, and then sent Black Loon on the path toward Blue Jacket's town. Fortunately, such a dreadful incident occurred very seldom.⁴⁸

In the general exchange of hospitality, Coocoochee often visited friends in the neighboring villages of "The Glaize" region, accompanied by the three children who were part of her household. Late in July, 1792, they all attended a reception at Blue Jacket's home, a special occasion on his return from an extensive diplomatic journey among the tribes farther west. Blue Jacket's town consisted of perhaps thirty or forty bark cabins housing a population of about three hundred people. Vegetable gardens and pasture lands for horses and cattle lay behind the town, while the extensive acreage of unfenced cornfields were across the river separated from potentially marauding livestock.

Blue Jacket himself was a handsome man, dignified in bearing. His wife was half-French, the daughter of a Shawnee woman and Colonel Duperon Baby, prominent Detroit resident and former Indian agent.⁴⁹ Blue Jacket maintained a broad range of contacts among the regional Indian tribes, French inhabitants, and British officials in Detroit and Montreal.

Notable guests at Blue Jacket's reception were The Snake, chief of the Shawnee town nine miles further down the Maumee River, and Simon Girty, of the British Indian department.⁵⁰ Captured by the Seneca as a child, Girty was one person in the gathering who might be able to communicate with Coocoochee in her native Mohawk, since both Indian nations spoke very similar Iroquoian languages. Thoughtfully considering his reputed earlier connection with her daughter, Coocoochee still preferred to avoid the hardy veteran of frontier warfare, identified by whites as an infamous renegade who led the Indians against his own compatriots.

Simon Girty's appearance at the age of 53 would make him conspicuous in any group. He had a dark, shaggy head, low forehead, sunken grey eyes, heavy eyebrows meeting at the bridge of a short flat nose, and thin and compressed lips—features combined to present a forbidding appearance. He was clad in Indian attire, but lacked the decorative ornaments and heavy silver earrings usually worn by Indian men. Knotted about his head was a silk scarf, pulled low over one eye to conceal an ugly scar. Girty inferred that it came from a sabre wound at St. Clair's defeat; but according to local reports, he had been struck with a tomahawk wielded by the Mohawk leader Joseph Brant, about whom he had made disparaging remarks following a joint expedition across Ohio in 1781. Even at Blue Jacket's social event, Simon Girty wore a pair of silver mounted pistols stuck handily in his belt, and by his side hung a short dirk that served the ordinary purposes of a knife.⁵¹

Aside from her periodic visits to Blue Jacket's town, Coocoochee often crossed the Maumee River to see her daughter and George Ironside.⁵² For

Coocoochee, it was a joy to see her daughter happily married to a kind and humane man, who thoughtfully provided presents for his mother-in-law. Occasionally she travelled a few miles further up the Auglaize River past the trading town to see Wapanoo. She was troubled by the fact that her eldest son was sometimes given to surly moods which his wife bore with considerable grace and patience.⁵³

Much of the satisfaction of Coocoochee's day-by-day existence came from the children in her household. In 1792, Sotonegoo at the age of thirteen was a cheerful girl with laughing eyes. Her half brother, whom Coocoochee called Simon although his mother had given him a Mohawk name, possessed the characteristic energy of a ten year old, and had grown somewhat willful and headstrong due to his grandmother's indulgence. Oliver Spencer made a place for himself in the family group, sharing the responsibilities divided among the three children. These included keeping the horse out of the five acre corn field, gathering firewood in the oak and hickory forest on the table land behind the cabin, washing the lye from the corn to make good hominy, gathering berries, and tending the vegetable garden.⁵⁴

In early spring time, their sugar-making equipment was loaded on the horse and taken a few miles away to a rude shelter set aside for this purpose. In a good season, they produced more than a hundred pounds of maple sugar, which was carefully stored in small packages. The children had their ball games, pastimes, and recreation, too. The boys could practice their skill with a reed blow gun, or shoot fish with arrows in the clear water of the Maumee. Oliver Spencer became a practiced hunter, and once with the aid of the family dog brought back a huge wild cat. Coocoochee devoted considerable time to his proper education. He soon learned Shawnee, and appreciated the traditional tales she recounted during a winter's evening. She also taught him Indian dances, and laughingly ridiculed the English country dances and hornpipes he performed for her.⁵⁵ Although she clearly thought Oliver would remain with her, messages circulated throughout the British and American settlements resulted in arrangements for his return to his family by way of Detroit. He left shortly after the maple sugar season of 1793.⁵⁶

In the early fall of 1792, prior to young Spencer's departure, the tempo of life in Coocoochee's neighborhood changed rapidly from languid summer leisure to bustling activity as preparations were underway for an inter-tribal council of great import. Over a thousand allied Indians were gathering around Captain Johnny's Shawnee town located on the east bank of the Auglaize River about a mile south of the traders' town. Cheerful refrains of *voyageurs* songs floated up from boats on the Maumee transferring provisions from the British base at the Maumee

rapids to a storehouse in the trading community opposite Coocoochee's home. The French baker could scarcely keep up with the demand for bread. After a series of preliminary conferences and ten days of deliberations, the council decided to insist on the Ohio River boundary line for white settlement, although pioneers had already advanced along the northwest side into present day Ohio.⁵⁷

The inter-tribal council at The Glaize was followed by an interlude of buoyant optimism for Coocoochee and her people. In mid-October, spies reported that supplies were being transported under strong convoy to the three American outposts north of Cincinnati. The Indians immediately organized a joint force of two hundred Shawnee and Miami warriors under the leadership of Little Turtle, the Miami who had directed the defeat of General St. Clair the previous year. On their way to join the Miami camped near the traders' town, White Loon and Black Loon, along with a contingent of fifty Shawnee from The Snake's and Blue Jacket's towns, stopped at Coocoochee's cabin to get her opinion concerning the prospects for their military enterprise.

Acceding to their request, the old woman retired to her private room for nearly an hour of communion with her sources of spiritual power. Above the low humming of her voice, sticks could be heard striking the cabin walls and iron kettles. When she reappeared, wildly excited expressions animated her countenance. Her message was conveyed partially with a grand gesture. Standing before the Shawnee war party, she stretched out both arms at her sides and slowly drew her fingertips together to form a circle of maximum circumference. At the same time she exultantly exclaimed "Meechee! Meechee! Meechee!", repeating the Shawnee adjective signifying "great." The Shawnee confidently joined the rest of the warriors, interpreting this revelation as a forecast of "Many scalps, many prisoners, and much plunder."⁵⁸

The expedition returned a month later after a victorious encounter with Kentuckians and American troops near Fort St. Clair, fifty miles north of Cincinnati. The booty included a good many horses as well as tents, kettles, blankets and staple foods. White Loon and Black Loon were among the fortunate possessors of fine new horses. Grateful for the inspiring aid she had given them, the Shawnee brought to Coocoochee six blankets, several pounds of tobacco and a small keg of whiskey.⁵⁹

By the next year, the portents for the future of Coocoochee's people were not encouraging. The fateful decision to maintain the Ohio River boundary line for white settlements was affirmed in 1793. General Anthony Wayne's carefully planned campaign against the Indians at The Glaize, outlined in 1792, was drawing to a climax. In mid-summer of 1794, "The Big Wind," as Indians called General Wayne, sent his troops

northward on the warrior path that crossed the Maumee River near Cocoochee's home. Warned by a deserter, the Indian people were able to flee down the Maumee River, where the warriors regrouped for a final encounter and were defeated in August at the Fallen Timbers, near Perrysburg, Ohio. On the site of the trading town, Wayne built Fort Defiance. All the Indian towns and the cornfields lining the shores of the Maumee were set afire, and the former inhabitants became dependent upon the British Indian department for food, dispensed at a refugee camp on Swan Creek in the outskirts of modern Toledo, Ohio.⁶⁰

The subsequent life of Cocoochee, the Mohawk medicine woman living among the Shawnee, is a matter of conjecture, although fragments of information have come to light concerning her family and associates. George Ironside's next home was near Malden on the Ontario side of the Detroit River, where he later became British Indian Superintendent. This was very likely the residence as well of Cocoochee's daughter, for Ironside's son later stated that his mother came from a Shawnee community.⁶¹ Black Loon and White Loon spent the early years of the nineteenth century in the Shawnee towns of northwestern Ohio, centered at Wapakoneta on the upper Auglaize River. Black Loon died during the War of 1812, in which he served in the American forces; White Loon lived at least to the 1830's, maintaining regular contact with Oliver Spencer, who became a prosperous resident of Cincinnati.⁶²

Cocoochee may have stayed with any branch of her family, or perhaps lived at Blue Jacket's next town, located near a Wyandot community on the Detroit River at present day Gibraltar, Michigan. Blue Jacket himself died about 1811. Probably Cocoochee joined her husband in the spirit land before she found herself living in still another warpath; the Detroit River became a war zone in 1812.

During her most active years, Cocoochee's life displayed an outward pattern of periodic refugee existence, as she was recurrently buffeted by the advance of frontier warfare. Despite many vicissitudes, she drew on inner strength to preserve a way of life that had meaning and integrity in the tradition of her people. Although her warrior husband was killed at the prime of life, her four children and her grandchildren remained close to her, mutually reinforcing the family ties so highly valued in Indian society. In addition, Cocoochee achieved a position of respect and influence in the multi-tribal society into which her life was cast—an ultimate personal triumph.

NOTES

1. Biographical sketch of Coocoochee is reconstructed from basic information in Oliver M. Spencer, *The Indian Captivity of O.M. Spencer*, ed. Milo M. Quaife (Chicago, 1917; Reprinted New York, 1968). Young Spencer at age eleven lived in Coocoochee's home in northwestern Ohio from July, 1772 to February, 1773.

2. In 1758, a Delaware chief forcefully voiced the Indians' objections during a council with a British emissary:

D-n you, why do not you and the French fight on the sea? You come here only to cheat the poor Indians, and take their land from them.

Christian Frederick Post, "Two Journals of Western Tours [1758]", in Reuben Gold Thwaites, ed., *Early Western Travels* (New York, 1966), I: 212.

3. Howard H. Peckham, *Pontiac and the Indian Uprising* (Chicago, 1961), pp. 41-43. Braddock's defeat during his expedition against French held Fort Duquesne (present Pittsburgh) on July 9, 1755 was a factor in strengthening French influence among Indians for the balance of the warfare continuing to 1761.

4. Spencer identified her people as "the Wolf tribe of the Iroquois formerly living on the Sorel" (Spencer, *Captivity*, p. 77). The name "Sorel" was given to the present Richilieu River flowing northward in New York from Lake Champlain to enter the St. Lawrence River northeast of Montreal, Quebec. See Samuel Holland, "A Map of the River St. Lawrence (1773)", MS. Crown Collection, 119:23, Photostat, The Newberry Library, Chicago.

5. For details of these campaigns, see Edward P. Hamilton, *The French and Indian Wars* (New York, 1962), pp. 182, 195-99, 291-304. Although inter-colonial warfare began in 1754, war in Europe was not officially declared until after the fall of Minorca in 1756, the date marking the beginning of the Seven Years' War ending with the Treaty of Paris in 1763.

6. All four children were born before 1770. Spencer, *Captivity*, p. 79. The only grandchildren reported by Spencer were those of her daughter who apparently was the eldest of her children. Key dates in the personal life of Coocoochee are estimates based on Spencer's observations and general information about Indian marriage and family patterns.

7. The boundary established by the Treaty of Fort Stanwix (present Rome, New York) was considered definitive by Indian people, although British military leaders doubted its enforceability. American authorities confirmed the boundary at the outset of the Revolutionary War in treaties signed at Pittsburgh. Repercussions in the Ohio country are interpreted by Randolph C. Downes, *Council Fires on the Upper Ohio* (Pittsburgh, 1940), pp. 141-43.

8. Spencer erroneously assumed that Coocoochee's family came directly to Blue Jacket's town located in 1792 on the Maumee River about a mile east of present Defiance, Ohio. Since only Ottawas were living on the lower course of the Maumee River at that time, it is reasonable to assume that the family went to the town where Blue Jacket lived in 1770, on Deer Creek in the Scioto River valley. Blue Jacket's residence is noted by David Jones, *A Journal of Two Visits Made to Some Nations of Indians on the West Side of the River Ohio in the Years 1772 and 1773* (Burlington, 1774; Reprinted New York, 1865), p. 52.

9. Thomas Hutchins, "The Route from Fort Pitt to Sandusky, and thence to Detroit," in Charles A. Hanna, *The Wilderness Trail*, 2 vols. (New York and London, 1911), II: 204. For map location, see Helen Hornbeck Tanner and Adele Hast, "Indian Villages, Ohio, Pennsylvania and New York, 1760-1794," in Lester

Cappon, ed. *Atlas of Early American History* (Princeton, 1976), p. 21. Information on the Shawnee towns is summarized by Erminie Wheeler-Voegelin, "An Ethnohistorical Report on the Indian Use and Occupancy of Royce Area 11, Ohio and Indiana," in Helen Hornbeck Tanner and Erminie Wheeler-Voegelin, *Indians of Ohio and Indiana Prior to 1795*, 2 vols. (New York, 1974), II: 145-48.

10. Jones, *Journal*, pp. 55-56.

11. Downes, *Council Fires*, pp. 11-12.

12. Helen Hornbeck Tanner, "The Greenville Treaty," in Tanner and Voegelin, *Indians of Ohio and Indiana*, I: 90-94. For complete documentary history, see Reuben Gold Thwaites and Louise Phelps Kellogg, eds., *Dunmore's War* (Madison, 1905).

13. American and British leaders urged Indians to remain neutral until 1777. Tanner and Voegelin, *Indians of Ohio and Indiana*, I: 96-97.

14. New locations of the towns of the Shawnee and their allies, principally in Logan County, Ohio, are mapped by Tanner and Hast in Cappon, ed. *Atlas*, p. 21. For descriptions of towns, see Tanner and Voegelin, *Indians of Ohio and Indiana*, II: 651-53.

15. The girl was an "orphan," age 13 in 1792. Spencer, *Captivity*, p. 82. Shawnee warriors suffered casualties during two major periods of hostilities in 1780: (1) British and Indian expedition that captured 350 Kentuckians at Ruddells and Martins Stations in May, and (2) Retaliatory attack on Chillicothe near present Xenia, Ohio, and Piqua on the lower Mad River in October. Charles Gano Talbert, *Benjamin Logan, Kentucky Frontiersman* (Lexington, 1962), pp. 105-116.

16. As a child, Simon Girty was a captive of the Seneca; his brother James lived with the Shawnee. They later became Indian traders and deserted American-held Pittsburgh to serve the British Indian service in Detroit. Simon was considered the leading renegade. Consul W. Butterfield, *History of the Girtys* (Cincinnati, 1890), pp. 8-15, 47-51, 74.

17. The Rev. David Jones met James Girty in the Shawnee country in 1773. Jones, *Journal*, p. 60. In 1783, James Girty established Girty's Town at present St. Mary's, Ohio.

18. Louise Phelps Kellogg, *Frontier Retreat on the Upper Ohio, 1779-1781* (Madison, 1917), pp. 378-79. The death of 90 pacifist Moravian Indians is known as the "Gnadenhütten Massacre." Consul W. Butterfield, *An Historical Account of the Expedition Against Sandusky* (Cincinnati, 1873), pp. 36-38.

19. Butterfield, *Expedition*, pp. 63, 151-52, 216-17. Major DePeyster to General Haldimand, Detroit, January 7, 1783, *Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections* 20 (1892): 87; Talbert, *Benjamin Logan*, pp. 172-76.

20. Talbert, *Benjamin Logan*, pp. 18, 239.

21. Simon Girty to Capt. A. McKee, Oct. 11, 1786, *Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections* 24 (1895): 34-35.

22. Major John Hamtramck to W. Sargeant, July 20, 1790, Winthrop Sargeant Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society; Transcript in Ohio Valley—Great Lakes Ethnohistorical Archives, Indiana University.

23. A vivid account of the trading community at Fort Miami and nearby Indian towns was written by Henry Hay, "Journal of Henry Hay," ed. Milo M. Quaife, *Wisconsin Historical Society Proceedings* (1914): 208-61. The silversmith was John Kinzie, an important trader at Chicago in 1812. A.T. Andreas, *History of Chicago*, 3 vols. (Chicago, 1884-1886), I: 100-102. Blue Jacket also had a residence. Antoine Gamelin, "Journal," in W.H. Smith, ed. *The St. Clair Papers*, 2 vols. (Cincinnati, 1882), II: 157.

24. Hay, "Journal," p. 332, n. 77.
25. Talbert, *Benjamin Logan*, pp. 219-20.
26. *Kentucky Gazette*, August 25, 1787; Photostat from Lexington Public Library by University of Michigan Library, 1918; copy in The Newberry Library, Chicago.
27. Following passage of the Northwest Ordinance in 1787, Marietta was established at the mouth of the Muskingum River in 1788, and settlements were founded near present Cincinnati in 1788 and 1789. Samuel P. Hildreth, *Pioneer History* (Cincinnati, 1848), pp. 193, 207, 223. The federal government tardily made plans in 1788 to purchase from the Indians lands already being settled. Tanner and Voegelin, *Indians of Ohio and Indiana*, I: 118-21; Henry Knox, Secretary of War, to the President of the United States, June 15, 1789, *American State Papers*, Class 2: *Indian Affairs*, 2 vols. (Washington, 1832), II: 13.
28. Josiah Harmar to Henry Knox, Nov. 23, 1790., Harmar Papers, Vol 11, pp. 16-28, Letter 8., Clements Library, Ann Arbor; *American State Papers*, *Indian Affairs*, II: 132-34.
29. Spencer, *Captivity*, pp. 80-82.
30. The migration to Spanish Louisiana was noted by the trader Francois Vigo. Vigo to Sargeant, April 12, 1792, Winthrop Sargeant Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society; Transcript in Ohio Valley—Great Lakes Ethnohistorical Archives, Indiana University. See also Zenon Trudeau to Louis Lorimer, May 1, 1793, in Louis Houck, ed., *The Spanish Regime in Missouri*, 2 vols. (Chicago, 1909), II: 51.
31. The area of present Fort Wayne, Indiana, was gradually abandoned by the Miami and their Shawnee and Delaware allies. They were dependent on the British for supplies in the winter of 1791-92. Alexander McKee to John Johnson, Jan. 28, 1792, *Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections* 24 (1895): 366.
32. Spencer, *Captivity*, pp. 85, 89, 95, 111, 116. Delaware communities are described by Hendrick Aupauqmut, "A Narrative of an Embassy to the Western Indians," ed. B.H. Coates, *Memoirs of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania* 2, Pt. 1, (1827): 97-99.
33. Spencer, *Captivity*, pp. 95-96.
34. Spencer stayed overnight at this dwelling before being turned over to Coocoochee. Spencer, *Captivity*, p. 74.
35. Spencer, *Captivity*, pp. 89, 111.
36. Spencer, *Captivity*, pp. 77-78, 87.
37. Spencer, *Captivity*, pp. 120, 127.
38. Spencer, *Captivity*, p. 128.
39. Spencer, *Captivity*, pp. 83-84, 86-87.
40. Gen. St. Clair's account of his defeat at present Fort Recovery, Ohio, is in *American State Papers*, *Indian Affairs*, II: 137-38. The incident is regarded as the most humiliating defeat ever suffered by an American army. Loss is stated as 630 out of a total force of 1,400. Reginald Horsman, *Matthew Elliott, British Indian Agent* (Detroit, 1964), pp. 68-69.
41. Spencer, *Captivity*, pp. 97-98, 100-101.
42. Spencer, *Captivity*, pp. 41-44, 77.
43. Spencer, *Captivity*, pp. 80-82.
44. Spencer used the terms "Great Spirit" and "pale face" in his interpretation of the speech. Spencer, *Captivity*, pp. 102-104.
45. Spencer, *Captivity*, pp. 105-106, 111-12.
46. Spencer, *Captivity*, pp. 106-107.

47. Spencer, *Captivity*, pp. 112-13.
48. Spencer, *Captivity*, p. 111.
49. Lyman Draper, Interview with Nanette Caldwell., Draper Mss. S17, 176 (1863), Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin.
50. Spencer, *Captivity*, pp. 90-91.
51. Spencer, *Captivity*, pp. 92-93.
52. Spencer, *Captivity*, pp. 95-97.
53. Spencer, *Captivity*, pp. 74-75.
54. Spencer, *Captivity*, p. 123.
55. Spencer, *Captivity*, pp. 117-21, 125-26.
56. Spencer, *Captivity*, pp. 126, 129.
57. Young Spencer was apparently unaware of the magnitude of the council that took place so close to Coocoochee's home. Capt. Henrick, who brought an American peace message to the confederated tribes, reported his reactions. Hendrick Aupaumut, "Narrative," p. 117. The British Indian Agent, Alexander McKee sent minutes of the deliberations to his superiors after the meetings were ended on October 7, 1792. McKee, "Proceedings of a General Council of Indian Nations," *Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections* 24 (1895): 483-98.
58. Spencer, *Captivity*, pp. 115-16.
59. Spencer, *Captivity*, p. 117.
60. Richard C. Knopf, ed., *Anthony Wayne, A Name in Arms* (Pittsburgh, 1960), pp. 351-55.
61. George Ironside to Mudge, April 11, 1831, Record Group 10, Indian Affairs V, p. 569, Public Archives of Canada, Ottawa. This information was provided by James A. Clifton, University of Wisconsin—Green Bay.
62. Spencer, *Captivity*, pp. 111, 171,