

Tinker, Tailor, Indian Spy



Manassah Coyle, born 1756 in Ireland, came to America at a young age and settled in colonial Pennsylvania. As a teen, he began offering his services to help the cause for American Independence.

After substituting in Capt. Samuel Patton's company and later Capt. William Houston's company for short intervals, he headed west and was attached to Capt. William Perry's command as an Indian spy and scout. In 1781 he volunteered to go down the Ohio River as part of Col. Lochry's company in Gen. Clark's expedition against the Indians. On the 24th of August, 1781, having reached the mouth of the Big Miami on the Ohio, they were attacked by a large body of Indians led by Joseph Brant, a Mohawk military leader.

In Coyle's later statements, he believes that every one of his party were killed or made prisoner. It became known as Lochry's Massacre and was such a decisive defeat that it led to the cancellation of Gen Clark's campaign. As for Coyle, he was captured and taken through the wilderness to Detroit. Once there, he and other prisoners were turned over to the British who stationed them on an island in the St. Lawrence River just above Montreal.

Coyle escaped but was quickly recaptured and taken to a prison in Montreal. Four months later, he escaped again and this time successfully avoided recapture. Traveling through the

wilderness for about 300 miles, surviving on nothing but roots and berries, he came across inhabitants who informed him that he was approximately another 900 miles from his home in Westmoreland County Pennsylvania. He made that journey, avoiding both British and Indian fighters, to arrive home in December of 1782. He married, had children and eventually became my 5th great-grandfather.

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