

Daniel Greathouse (1750 - 1777)

The following information is from a variety of sources, collected over the years. Many of the depositions and other reports about the events were collected and published by Dale Payne in "Indian Warfare and Massacres on the (West) Virginia Frontier Part II"

Possibly the most famous or infamous of all the Greathouses was Daniel Greathouse. His actions have been described as precipitating Dunmore's War. The infamous episode at Baker's Station with the killing of Chief Logan's family was first attributed to Michael Cresap but later to Daniel and other Greathouses. Some of the Greathouse infamy has been renewed through the writings of author Allan Eckert whose books have portrayed the Greathouses in an unfavorable light. In the "Frontiersman" (1992), Eckert reported that a Jacob Greathouse and his men killed Shikellimus, Logan's father, and shot and stripped the pregnant sister of Logan and hung her by her wrists. While still living they cut open her belly and left her to die with the unborn infant dangling from her abdomen . . . Neither Logan nor Cresap nor Daniel Greathouse survived long after Lord Dunmore's War. Daniel Greathouse died about 1777 before he was age 30, supposedly from measles. Michael Cresap fought in the Pont Pleasant campaign but died of illness in New York a year later. Logan died or was murdered about 1780. None of these men knew of the fame, or infamy, they later acquired.

Lord Dunmore's War in 1774, was said to be precipitated by the massacre of Logan's family. But in reality the war was not likely about Cresap, Greathouse or Logan's murdered family or his reprisals. It was about land.

An interview was held with Allan Eckert, May 13, 1993, for the film "West Virginia". The interview reveals his perception about the times in which these men lived.

Allan Eckert said, "The Indians didn't realize what the concept of land ownership was. The land belonged to everyone and everyone could use it. Wisely and well. There were no such things as property lines. To drive a stake into the earth would be like driving a stake into the breast of their Mother. I mean they considered the earth, the Mother. They called it Mother Earth. And, so this concept of land ownership was just very foreign to them. Now, they did have territory. And they would fight among themselves, the various tribes, in order to maintain their territory, and keep it free from other tribes incursioning into their areas and taking their game and so on, or the materials that they needed. But, not to own the land. Not to have land as the White concept of land holding was. Thus, when the Whites came in, and suddenly were building fences, suddenly were claiming lands, cutting down the forests, burning the prairies, destroying, almost always, destroying as they came along. This was a concept so far beyond their thinking, that it appalled them and they felt it was very, very wrong.

The Proclamation of 1763 more or less prevented the whites from crossing the Allegheny Rivers, the Kings, or the Allegheny Mountains. The King said, "You will not go behind the Appalachians, you will not go beyond this point, the crest of the Appalachians is the

boundary line between the western lands and the English lands" . Well, the Treaty of Fort Stanwix came along and that, more or less, wiped it out and left all these lands that had been open only to traders in the past now open for settlement. And, there was a tremendous land rush started. People, who were skimping out on an income on a little plot of land in the east, suddenly saw these great vistas of land open to them if they would just go there and claim it. And so they came in droves; they spilled over the mountains and rushed into these lands and began claiming them as their own. And it was no difficulty; you just simply marked some trees with a tomahawk at the four corners of your land, and that was then your land.

There were many who wanted to mass fortunes in this land as they knew it would be very valuable in time to come. George Washington was one, in particular, who wanted to claim a good bit and he came down the Ohio River several times, but, mostly, he sent agents in. He would hire people, people like Cresap and Crawford, William Crawford, and, these people would come in as his agents, stake out lands and survey and claim these lands for him and would do this for a wage. There were also huge land companies that formed. The Ohio Company, the Virginia Company, the Illinois Company. They came in and they began collecting these great bounties of lands and establishing their settlements and their rights to these lands. Also, by use of surveying teams, people, teams led by people like Doctor Briscoe and Hancock Lee and so on, many others who were experienced surveyors and would come down and see where the really good land was. And, of course, the best land was the bottom lands where you could grow good crops and you did not have to fight the hills to drag your plows through it and so on. And these lands went very quickly.

In this day and age, I think we find it probably a little difficult to understand the enormity of the move that these people were making. They were leaving a civilized culture in the east and moving into a wilderness, a hidden land, a land that was really fraught with all kinds of dangers and unexpected happenings. This was a land populated by what they called savages, because these were a people who were savage in defending what they felt was their own. They came in and they built rude cabins with very rude tools. Sometimes the cabins were only ten feet square or fifteen or twenty feet square. Just enough to house people and keep them relatively safe and relatively warm. They existed with the very barest of necessities, and it was a very hard, rough and difficult life for them. But, going back again to the lands, they wanted lands and they were willing to take almost any kind of risk. Almost, any kind of hazard, almost any kind of difficulty, simply to get those lands."

When asked about the number of deaths due to Indian raids, Eckert responded, "When the wars broke out in earnest, . . . the Indians decided that they really had to fight the whites to keep them out. Heretofore, they had tried through treaty, to keep them back, they had made all kinds of agreements and they were always broken and, almost, always by the whites. When they finally decided they had to fight, they fought with fantastic brutality and savagery. They would spread out in small war parties, usually anywhere from six to twenty or thirty warriors, rushing through the land like a little red tide engulfing any settler, especially the isolated settlers, who had no defense except their

own weapons, their own flintlock rifles or whatever they had. And, wiping out whole families. They would come in and there would be a family, maybe of a husband."

On April 30, 1774 the murder of several Indians occurred about thirty miles above Wheeling, in Virginia, on the west side of the Ohio at the cabin of Joshua Baker. It is often referred to as "The Massacre at Yellow Creek". Some of those murdered were believed to be members of Chief Logan's family. After this occurred Chief Logan became an avowed enemy of all whites and savagely murdered many whites in retaliation.

There are many versions of the events that occurred that fateful day. Michael Cresap was first blamed by Thomas Jefferson and even Logan himself, but later the blame was placed on Daniel Greathouse and his family. Daniel Greathouse was a Sergeant serving under Captain Michael Cresap. McSherry in his "History of Maryland" reported, "Cresap's Rifle Company numbered some one hundred and thirty men, who were armed with tomahawks and rifles, painted like Indians, and dressed in hunting shirts and moccasins." He and other historians reported that the settlers at Cumberland and Frederick Maryland turned out to watch their skill with the rifle, when the men would hold a target in their hand for another to shoot at. An eye witness watching them at Boston also reported their skill at this game.

Thomas Jefferson's first account of the massacre said, "In the spring of the year 1774, a robbery and murder were committed on an inhabitant of the frontiers of Virginia, by two Indians of the Shawnee tribe. The neighbouring whites, according to their custom, undertook to punish this outrage in a summary way. Colonel Cresap, a man infamous for the many murders he had committed on those much-injured people, collected a party, and proceeded down the Kanhaway in quest of vengeance. Unfortunately a canoe of women and children, with one man only, was seen coming from the opposite shore, unarmed, and unsuspecting an hostile attack from the whites. Cresap and his party concealed themselves on the bank of the river, and the moment the canoe reached the shore, singled out their objects, and, at one fire, killed every person in it."

However, in 1797 Jefferson's report was publicly challenged by Maryland Attorney General Luther Martin who was also Michael Cresap's son-in-law. Martin published letters claiming that Logan's speech was a fabrication and that the charge against Michael Cresap of murdering Logan's family was false. Jefferson, now vice-president and future candidate for the presidency, solicited depositions from surviving participants and observers of the affair, and in 1800 published an amended version saying, "Captain Michael Cresap and a certain Daniel Greathouse, leading on these parties, surprised at different times traveling and hunting parties of the Indians having their women and children with them and murdered many. Among these were unfortunately the family of Logan, a Chief celebrated in peace and war, and long distinguished as a friend of the whites."

Several other versions of this incident have been recorded:

From "Frontiersman Odyssey" by Lt Col Vaughn K. Goodwin
The Cresaps of Maryland

"Thomas Jefferson first tried to place the blame for the killing of Logan's family on Michael Cresap, who was nowhere near the area. Jefferson's charge was largely based on Logan's famous speech. Michael Cresap was at his settlement about 25 miles above Yellow Creek at the time of the killings. . . In response to inquiries into the subject, George Rogers Clark, who was in one of the scouting parties under Michael Cresap at the time, said "I have a perfect recollection relative to Logan's story. The conduct of Captain Cresap I am perfectly acquainted with. He was not the author of that murder, but a man by the name of Greathouse was." . . . Some transactions that happened between Captain Cresap and Logan a few days prior to the murder of Logan's family gave Logan grounds to suppose it was Cresap. . . Many others who were in the vicinity at the time stated that Benjamin Sappington and his party, which was from Washington County, Pennsylvania, and which was headed by Daniel Greathouse, were the ones that killed Logan's family at Yellow Creek. . . As a result of the evidence that came forth, Jefferson substituted the following in his original statement and in charges against Cresap. "Captain Michael Cresap and a certain Daniel Greathouse, leading on these parties, surprised at different times traveling and hunting parties of the Indians having their women and children with them and murdered many. Among these were unfortunately the family of Logan, a Chief celebrated in peace and war, and long distinguished as a friend of the whites."

May 6, 1774 Valentine Crawford, who lived on Jacob's Creek, near the Youghiogheny River, in Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania sent a letter to Colonel George Washington. Valentine was an agent of George Washington and in his letter says: "I am sorry to inform you the Indians have stopped all the gentlemen from going down the river. In the first place they killed one Murphy, a trader, and wounded another, then robbed their canoes. This alarmed the gentlemen very much, and Major Cresap took a party of men and waylaid some Indians in their canoes that were going down the river and shot two of them and scalped them. He also raised a party, took canoes and followed some Indians from Wheeling down to the Little Kanawha, when, coming up with them, he killed three and wounded several. The Indians wounded three of his men, only one of whom is dead; he was shot through, while the other two were but slightly wounded. On Saturday last, about twelve o'clock, one Greathouse and about twenty men fell on a party of Indians at the mouth of Yellow Creek and killed ten of them. They brought away one child a prisoner, which is now at my brother, William Crawford's"

Although Joseph Doddridge was a baby at the time of the massacre, he later married Jemima Bukey whose sister, Mercy Bukey was married to Daniel Greathouse's brother, Harmon Greathouse Jr. Mercy would have been about 6 years old at the time of the event, and Harmon would have been about 12. The three oldest Greathouse young men most likely to have been involved would have been Daniel, Jacob and John, It is not known for sure what or how the stories would have been told in the families about what happened at Baker's station.

Joseph Doddridge's report: from *Notes on the Settlement and Indian Wars* by Joseph Doddridge, Original printing 1824 Wellsburg, VA

"The (massacre at Baker's about 40 miles after that at Captina) was perpetrated by thirty-two men, under the command of Daniel Greathouse. The whole number killed at this place and on the river opposite to it was twelve, besides several wounded. . . The party were concealed in ambuscade, while their commander went over the river, under the mask of friendship, to the Indian camp, to ascertain their number; while there an Indian woman advised him to return home speedily, saying that the Indians were drinking and angry on account of the murder of their people down the river, and might do him some mischief. On his return to his party he reported that the Indians were too strong for an open attack. He returned to Baker's and requested him to give any Indians who might come over, in the course of the day, as much rum as they might call for, and get as many of them drunk as he possibly could. The plan succeeded. Several Indian men, with two women, came over the river to Baker's, who had previously been in the habit of selling rum to the Indians. The men drank freely and became intoxicated. In this state they were all killed by Greathouse and a few of his party. I say a few of his party; for it is but justice to state that not more than five or six of the whole number had any participation in the slaughter at the house. The rest protested against it as an atrocious murder. From their number being by far the majority, they might have prevented the deed; but alas! they did not. . . The Indians in the camps, hearing the firing at the house, sent a canoe with two men in it to inquire what had happened. These two Indians were both shot down as soon as they landed on the beach. A second and larger canoe was then manned with a number of Indians in arms; but in attempting to reach the shore, some distance below the house, were received by a well directed fire from the party, which killed the greater number of them and compelled the survivors to return. A great number of shots were exchanged across the river, but without damage to the white party, not one of whom was even wounded. The Indian men who were murdered were all scalped. The woman who gave the friendly advice to the commander of the party, when in the Indian camp, was amongst the slain at Baker's house."

Recorded in 'History of Washington County' by Boyd Crumrine:

"I, William Huston, of Washington County, in the State of Pennsylvania, do hereby certify to whom it may concern: That in the year 1774 I resided at Catfish's Camp, on the main path from Wheeling to Redstone; that Michael Cresap, who resided on or near the Potomac River, on his way up from the river Ohio, at the head of a party of armed men, lay some time at my cabin. I had previously heard the report of Mr. Cresap having killed some Indians said to be the relations of Logan, an Indian Chief. In a variety of conversations with several of Cresap's party they boasted of the deed, and that in the presence of their chief. They acknowledged that they had fired first on the Indians. They had with them one man on a litter who was in the skirmish. I do further certify that, from what I learned from the party themselves, I then formed the opinion, and have not had any reason to change that opinion since, that the killing, on the part of the whites, was what I deem the grossest murder. I further certify that some of the party who afterwards killed some women and other Indians at Baker's Bottom also lay at my cabin on their march to the interior part of the country; they had with them a little girl, whose life had been spared by the interference of some more humane than the rest. If necessary, I will

make affidavit to the above to be true. Certified at Washington, this 18th day of April, A. D. 1798."

From History of Roane County West Virginia by William H Bishop published in 1927: "Daniel Greathouse, Captain, commandant of the small division of Colonel Michael Cresap's men who killed the party of marauding Indians on the Virginia side of the Ohio at the mouth of Yellow Creek, (a stream emptying into the Ohio river from the north west, nearly midway between Pittsburgh and Wheeling), in which Indian party were "all the relatives of Logan, Chief of the Mingos." Authority for this killing was denied by Colonel Cresap and by Governor Dunmore, but this act of Greathouse's initiated the military activities that led up to and culminated in the Battle of Point Pleasant and ending of maraudings and Indian atrocities in the valleys of the Monongahela and the Kanawhas. When one reads the list of robberies, murders and kidnappings by those Indians, of fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters and children of some of the Greathouse men, we do not wonder they did not wait regular military orders. We read in a history, "Our Western Border," by McKnight, that after the defeat of the Indians at The Battle of Brushy Run, the Indians surrendered to the white men, children of Pennsylvanians numbering forty-nine males and sixty-seven females, and of thirty two males and fifty-eight females... and more than a hundred Virginians."

In 1895 Reuben Gold Thwaites, Secretary of the Wisconsin Historical Society, edited "Chronicles of Border Warfare" by Withers and added some footnotes. He says: "The date is now well established -- April 30. Withers is altogether too lenient, in his treatment of the whites engaged in this wretched massacre. . . Daniel Greathouse lived in the vicinity -- a cruel, blood-thirsty fellow, who served Connolly as a local agent in fomenting hatred of Indians. . . Cresap's party were intending to strike the camp of Logan, but . . they abandoned the project. In the meantime, probably without knowledge of Cresap's intent, Greathouse had collected a party of 32 borderers to accomplish the same end."

The following statement of the murder of Logan's family and the other Indians at the mouth of Yellow Creek, was a personal recollection of Judge Jolley, who claims he saw the Greathouse party the day after the affair. It was first published in Silliman's journal in 1836:

" I was about 16 years of age, but I very well recollect what I then saw and the information that I have since obtained, was derived from (I believe) good authority. In the spring of the year 1774, a party of Indians encamped on the northwest of the Ohio near the mouth of the Yellow Creek. A party of whites called ' Greathouse's party' lay on the opposite side of the river. The Indians came over to the white party, consisting I think, of 5 men and 1 woman, with an infant. The whites gave them rum, which 3 of them drank, and in a short time they became very drunk. The other 2 men and the woman refused to drink. The sober Indians were challenged to shoot at a mark, to which they agreed; and as soon as they emptied their guns, the whites shot them down. The woman attempted to escape by flight, but was also shot down; she lived long enough however, to beg mercy for her babe, telling them that it was a kin to themselves. The whites had a man in the

cabin, prepared with a tomahawk for the purpose of killing the 3 drunken Indians, which was immediately done. The party of men then moved off for the interior settlements and came to 'Catfish camp' on the evening of the next day where they tarried until the day following. I very well recollect my mother feeding and dressing the babe; chirruping to the little innocent, and its smiling. However, they took it away and talked of sending it to its supposed father, Colonel George Gibson of Carlisle, Pennsylvania who was then and had been for many years a trader among the Indians. The remainder of the party at the mouth of Yellow Creek, finding that their friends on the opposite side of the river were massacred, attempting to escape by descending the Ohio; and in order to prevent being discovered by the whites, passed on the west side of Wheeling Island and landed at Pipe Creek, a small stream that empties into the Ohio a few miles below Grave creek, where they were overtaken by Cresap with a party of men from Wheeling. They took one Indian scalp and had one white man (Big Tarrener) badly wounded. They, I believe, carried him in a litter from Wheeling to Redstone. I saw the party on their return from their victorious campaign. The Indians had for some time before these events thought themselves intruded upon by the 'Long Knife', as they at that time called the Virginians, and many of them were for war. However, they called a council, in which Logan acted a conspicuous part. He admitted their grounds of complaint, but at the same time reminded them of some aggressions on the part of the Indians, and that by a war they could but harass and distress the frontier settlements for a short time; that the 'Long Knife' would come like the trees in the woods, and that ultimately they should be driven from the good lands which they now possessed. He therefore strongly recommended peace. To him they all agreed; grounded the hatchet, and everything wore a tranquil appearance, when behold the fugitives arrived from Yellow Creek and reported that Logan's father, brother and sister were murdered! Three of the nearest and dearest relations of Logan had been massacred by white men. The consequence was, that this same Logan, who a few days before was so pacific, raised the hatchet with a declaration that he would not ground it until he had taken ten for one, which I believe he completely fulfilled, by taking 30 scalps and prisoners in the year 1774. The above has often been related to me by several persons who were at the Indian towns at the time of the council alluded to, and also when the remains of the party came in from Yellow creek. Thomas Nicholson in particular, has told me the above and much more. Another person (whose name I cannot recollect) informed me that he was at the towns when the Yellow creek Indians came in, and that there was great lamentations by all the Indians of that place. Some friendly Indians advised him to leave the Indian settlements, which he did. Could any rational person believe for a moment that the Indians came to Yellow creek with hostile intentions, or that they had any suspicion of similar intentions on the part of the whites, against them? Would five men have crossed the river, 3 of them become in a short time dead drunk, while the other 2 discharged their guns, and thus put themselves entirely at the mercy of the whites; or would they have brought over a squaw with an infant papoose, if they had not reposed the utmost confidence in the friendship of the whites? Every person who is at all acquainted with Indians know better, and it was the belief of the inhabitants who were capable of reasoning on the subject that all the depredations committed on the frontiers, by Logan and his party in 1774, were as a retaliation for the murder of Logan's friends at Yellow creek. It was well known that Michael Cresap had no hand in the massacre at Yellow creek."

Statement by Charles Polke 15 November 1799 Shelby County, State of KY. "About the latter end of April or beginning of May, 1774, I lived on the waters of Cross creek about sixteen miles from Joshua Baker who lived on the Ohio, opposite the mouth of Yellow creek. A number of persons collected at my house, and proceeded to the said Baker's and murdered several Indians, among whom was a woman said to be the sister of the Indian chief, Logan. The principal leader of the party was Daniel Greathouse. To the best of my recollection the cause which gave rise to the murder was, a general idea that the Indians were meditating an attack on the frontiers. Captain Michael Cresap was not of the party; but I recollect that some time before the perpetration of the above fact it was currently reported that Captain Cresap had murdered some Indians on the Ohio, one or two, some distance below Wheeling."

Declaration of Honorable Judge Harry Innes: "On the 14th of November, 1788, I accidentally met upon the road Joshua Baker, the person referred to in the certificate signed by Polke, who informed me that the murder of the Indians in 1774, opposite the mouth of Yellow creek, was perpetrated at his house by thirty-two men, led on by Daniel Greathouse; that twelve were killed and six or eight wounded, among the slain was a sister and other relations of the Indian chief, Logan. Baker says Captain Michael Cresap was not of the party, that some days preceding the murder at his house two Indians left him and were on their way home, that they fell in with Capt. Cresap and a party of land improvers on the Ohio and were murdered, if not by Cresap himself, with his approbation; he being the leader of the party, and that he had this information from Cresap."

John Sappington made a statement 13 February 1800. The person who signed his statement, Samuel McKee, Jr, said that John Sappington also told him at the same time he made the statement, that he was the man who shot the brother of Logan, and that he likewise killed one of the Indians in one of the canoes, which came over from the opposite shore. Portions of John Sappington's statement: "Logan's family. if it was his family, was not killed by Cresap, nor with his knowledge, nor by his consent, but by the Greathouses and their associates. They were killed 30 miles above Wheeling, near the mouth of Yellow creek. . . It was at the house of one Baker the murder was committed. Baker was a man who sold rum, and the Indians had made frequent visits at his house . . . To the best of my recollection there were three of the Greathouses engaged in this business."

A William Robinson who was living in Clarksburg, Harrison County, Virginia dictated a statement on 28 February 1800. He says he was captured by Indians 1774 taken to and apparently to a camp where he met Logan who apparently befriended him. He also said that Logan told him about the killings at Yellow Creek, and requested that he write a letter for him to Captain Michael Cresap asking why he had killed Logan's people. He also describes what he believes one of the relatives of a victim of Yellow Creek explained to him in sign language. Supposedly, the letter that Logan dictated to be written by Robinson said: "To Captain Cresap - What did you kill my people at Yellow Creek for. The White people killed my kin at Conestoga a great while ago, and I thought

nothing of that. But you killed my kin again on Yellow Creek, and took my cousin prisoner then I thought I must kill too; and I have been three times to war since but the Indians are not Angry only myself. According to Ruben Gold Thwaites in his *Dunmore's War*, the note was written on 21 July 1774 and was left on a war club at the site of the John Roberts family's massacre on 24 September 1774.

It was later claimed that Jefferson had suppressed a letter from General George Rogers Clark that blamed Greathouse, whose actions were "more barbarous" than Jefferson had described. The letter, later published, described the events and Clark said "the story is substantially true; I was of the first and last of the active Officers who bore the weight of that War, and on perusing some old papers of that date I find some Memoirs, but independent of them I have a perfect recollection of every transaction relative to Logan's Story. The conduct of Cresap I am perfectly acquainted with, he was not the author of that murder, but a family of the name of Greathouse. . . I discovered that Cresap was displeased and told him that he must be a very great Man, that the Indians shouldered him with every Thing that had happened – he smiled & said he had a great mind to tomahawk Greathouse about the matter."

The full truth will probably never come out. By the time the depositions were taken, Greathouse, Cresap and Logan were all dead. The Greathouses had all moved on, and the intent of the depositions and Clark's letter were apparently to clear the name of Michael Cresap.