

Student Resource Page 4-2
Original Document
Paxton Boys Massacre Indians in Pennsylvania

Directions: Read the text below and then answer the questions.

[The Indians] were ...here when the first white settlers came, they were entirely peaceable and seem'd as much afraid of the other Indians as the whites were.... [M]y older brother and sisters us'd to be whole days with them....

[On] a very cold morning in the 12 mo 1763 five or six men came in, they had guns which they left outside, they were very cold, their coats cover'd with snow and sleet. I don't think my father was personally acquainted with any of them tho he knew from what part of the country they came, he made up the fire to warm them.... [W]hile they warm'd themselves they enquir'd why the Indians were suffer'd to live peaceably here, my father told them they were quite inoffensive living on their own land and injuring no one... they ask'd what would be the consequences were they destroy'd, my father told them he thought they would be as liable to punishment as if they had destroy'd so many whites....

[A]t length they went away without telling what they had been about, in the meantime my two brothers ten and twelve years old had been out looking at the strangers horses (as such boys are wont to do) ...after they were gone my brothers said they had tomahawks tyed to their saddles and they were bloody....[W]hile ...[we] wondered what it could mean a messenger came... giving information of the dreadfull deed.

My father and some others went down to see them buried, shocking indeed was the sight, the dead bodies lay among the rubbish of their burnt cabbins like half consumed logs....The rest of the Indians I think to the number of 28 who were absent from the town at the first slaughter were collected together and put into the jail at Lancaster for safety as it was said, but the merciless wretches [now numbering 57]... went thither and (I cannot say in spite of opposition for it does not appear there was any made) broke open the jail and cruelly and in a shocking manner destroyed them all, old men and women and children....The Paxton boys after the dreadfull massacre in Lancaster made boast now they had gotten as many scalps they would go to Philadelphia and the Quakers would share the same fate.

Source: From "Recollections written in 1830 of life in Lancaster County 1726-1782 and a History of settlement at Wright's Ferry, on Susquehanna River," by Rhoda Barber. The Historical Society of PA.

<http://www.hsp.org/files/barberpaxtonexcerpt.pdf>.

1. What statements does the author make that show the author's family were sympathetic to the Indians massacred by the Paxton Boys?
2. Why do you think there was no opposition to the Paxton Boys when they broke into the jail and killed the Indians there?
3. What questions would you ask if you could interview the author today?

Take It Further: Find out why the Paxton Boys singled out the Quakers in Philadelphia for their wrath. How were the Quakers viewed by others in Pennsylvania and elsewhere?