

THE GIRTY BOYS

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For the Indians to return the white members of their tribe to their “place of basic origin,” meaning the British fort nearest where they had been captured, was not an easy task. There were so



many captives—some estimate as many as 700—and they were spread out among various tribes across hundreds of miles. For many Indian families, more difficult than the logistics were matters of the heart. Following this edict meant parting with their loved ones.

Simon did not want to leave New York state, nor did the natives want him to go. The chief that adopted him, Koyingwaurtos, looked at him as a son and was really saddened, and so was Simon.

Many of the white captives were not the least bit interested in being surrendered to the British. But to uphold their end of the treaty, their tribes had to comply. Many an Indian father had to tie his wife's or child's hands and feet when he left them at the fort so they wouldn't come running after him. The farewell scenes were heart-breaking.

Various treaties were drawn up to support the Easton treaty and, as their chiefs signed them, one by one James, George, Simon and Mary Girty were delivered to Mercer's Fort, the temporary building General John Stanwix was using as a base of operations while he supervised construction of the new fort at the Point. This ambitious bastion would be the largest of the frontier forts, and his men were busy at work, using brick made from clay dug on Ayers Hill, wood cut at a mill on Saw Mill Run and stone quarried on nearby Herron Hill. Stanwix planned to name the fort in honor of the radical British statesman, William Pitt.

Colonel William Crawford, a good friend of General George Washington, took the Girtys into his home. Simon was soon fast friends with Crawford's son John and John's cousin, Van Swearingen. Seventeen-year-old Van Swearingen was fascinated with the Girty boys and their Indian ways, and at his request the boys

As many as half the white captives did eventually escape and return to their Indian families.

Duquesne University now stands on Ayers Hill.

Saw Mill Run flowed into the Ohio about a mile below the Point.

There was a moat entirely surrounding Fort Pitt, which made it inaccessible by land unless you went over a drawbridge. But the water was channeled from the Allegheny River, and there was a water entrance to the fort on the western side.