



The Mitten

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Pontiac's Rebellion

On the morning of May 7, 1763, 50 Indian warriors approached Fort Detroit. Their leader, a **charismatic** Odawa chief named Pontiac, had requested a meeting with Major Henry Gladwin, the fort's British commandant.

Pontiac carried a **wampum** belt that was green on one side and white on the other. His followers carried **concealed** tomahawks and knives. Once inside the fort, Pontiac planned to turn the belt over, giving the signal to attack the unsuspecting British Redcoats.

Much to Pontiac's surprise, the British soldiers were armed and ready. Gladwin had learned of Pontiac's plan. The Indians quietly left the fort. They returned the next day and asked to be let in. Gladwin refused. The Indians then laid **siege** to Fort Detroit. Pontiac's Rebellion had begun.

This Indian uprising against British authority occurred shortly after the British defeated the French in the French and Indian War. During the war, the British gave the Indians gifts. When

the war ended and the French were no longer a threat, the British stopped giving the Indians gunpowder, lead, and liquor. They also created problems with the fur trade that bothered the Indians.

In the spring of 1763, Native Americans attacked British forts all along the frontier. By early summer only Detroit and Niagara had not been captured.

Pontiac's siege fell apart in October as the Indians returned to their families to prepare for the upcoming winter. The Indians also learned that the French were not returning to the Great Lakes. The French even recommended that Pontiac make peace with the British.

Pontiac's Rebellion, one of the greatest Indian uprisings in American history, ended quietly.

The year after the siege, Major Gladwin retired to England where he led the life of a country gentleman. Pontiac was not so lucky. In 1769 fellow Indians murdered the Odawa leader because he had become too pro-British.

It is not known what Pontiac looked like. However, this sculpture of him is on a building in downtown Pontiac, Michigan.

Jim Cheek

