

OBADIAH HOLMES JR. (1760-1834)

In the immediate post-Revolutionary War years, families in the region around the Chartiers Valley were ministered to by two itinerant circuit-riding clergy - the Rev. Joseph Doddridge from Wellsburg, and the Rev. Robert Ayers from Brownsville. Doddridge was a Methodist, and in 1791, he studied at Jefferson Academy, Canonsburg, perhaps at the same time that Francis Reno, first Vicar at St. Luke's, was a student. Doddridge became an Episcopalian out of his high regard for both the ministry of bishops and worship from the Book of Common Prayer. As time passed, Doddridge and his daughter Narcissa became chroniclers of local history.

In Doddridge's *Notes on the Settlement and Indian Wars*, republished in Pittsburgh in 1912, he described the constant tensions between early settlers and the Indians. Indian resistance to white pioneers was severe, especially in warm weather months, year by year. Settlers were called upon to be scouts or to go on raiding campaigns. Few families escaped loss, of a family member or property. The exasperation of settlers against the government was widespread. Not all Indians were war-like. The Moravians, part of the Delawares, wanted to be peaceful. Christian missionaries ministered to the Moravians, to the disgust of some settlers. In 1781, Col. David Williamson was chosen to inform the Moravians either to move further west of the Muskingum River, in Indiana, or to be resettled at Fort Pitt. Most of the Indians had moved to Sandusky, and the few that were found were brought to Ft. Pitt for a brief detention period, then released. Many settlers felt the Indians should have been executed.

Hassler in *'Old Westmoreland'* tells that on February 10, 1782, 40 Moravians unexpectedly attacked the home of Robert Wallace, Florence, Pa., on Raccoon Creek, in Washington County. Wallace believed that his wife and three children had been abducted. However, Mary Wallace had been killed, near Hookstown in Beaver County. Col. Williamson and Wallace, with Obadiah Holmes, Jr., and others formed a reprisal group to go to Gnadenhutten, in Indiana, on March 8, 1782 to massacre the Moravians. Once at the site, the group took a vote as to what would be done. Holmes and sixteen others voted not to massacre. The mixed crowd of 18 to 20 year old adventurers wanted blood and the killing began. Holmes, age 22, and his great-uncle Col. Williamson stood on the bank of the Muskingum River as a young Indian child ran by. Williamson rescued the boy, and eventually brought him to live with the family at their home two miles below Catfish Camp on the south bank of Chartiers Creek. One man in the expedition claimed to have killed 16 Indians, then sat down in fatigue, lamenting that he found no satisfaction and revenge in the slaughter. Three months later, Holmes again volunteered to go with Col. Williamson on the Sandusky campaign to redirect the Moravians who had been taken there by missionaries.

Obadiah Holmes, Jr., was married to Jane Richardson, and they raised two daughters and three sons. Obadiah and Jane are buried at an unknown location in the Burial Ground of Old St. Lukes. Their descendants permeated Pittsburgh society.

[\(back\)](#)