



Little Turtle. Graphite drawing of Miami war leader Mihšihkinaahkwa (ca. 1747–1812) by Julie Langford Olds, 2007. Based on early engravings and on a painting by Gilbert Stuart destroyed when the British burned Washington, D.C., in 1814. Collection of the artist.

The half-century following the end of the American Revolution brought deep changes to indigenous peoples living south of the Great Lakes. During this time the Miami and their relatives, the Shawnee and Delaware, resisted the invasion of their homelands, confronted military defeat, reluctantly relinquished much of their home territories, and finally faced forcible removal from them.

Myaamiaki, the Miami, were originally a village-centered people who spoke a common language (Miami-Illinois) and shared the same culture. Miami people located villages along the *Waapaahšiki Siipiiwi* (Wabash River valley in northern Indiana) and the *Inoka Siipiiwi* (Illinois River valley in northern Illinois), at *Šikaakonki* along the southern shores of Lake Michigan (near Chicago, Illinois), and at *Pinkwi Mihtohseeniaki* or Pickawillany along the Great Miami River in western Ohio, which was so named because it was a route used to reach the Miami living along the Wabash. From spring to late fall

the lives of Miami people centered on these villages and focused on agricultural pursuits. They raised vast fields of *Myaamia miincipi* (Miami corn) and traded with their neighbors. In winter months Miami people would disperse to smaller camps to concentrate on hunting. Elderly and some younger people often remained in the more permanent village sites to maintain dwellings. In the spring, the people of the village would return to begin planting and preparing for the agricultural cycle. This rhythm of seasons and life cycles formed Miami people's lives for thousands of years.

These cultural rhythms were inherently connected to the lands the Miami called home. *Myaamionki*, or the homelands of the Miami people, ran from the Mississippi River east to the Scioto River and from the Ohio River north to the Fox River in Wisconsin and the St. Joseph River in southern Michigan. It was a shared landscape, overlapping with homelands of numerous indigenous peoples such as the Shawnee, Delaware, Illinois, Potawatomi, Ottawa, and Wyandot. After arrival of the French in the mid-1600s, indigenous groups also began to share this landscape with Europeans.

In the mid-eighteenth century Pennsylvanians and Virginians began to move west of the Scioto and into *Myaamionki* as invited guests of Miami, Shawnee, and Delaware peoples. In 1787 Congress enacted the Northwest Ordinance, outlining the future of territory northwest of the Ohio River. In the Northwest Ordinance this was spoken of as property of the United States.

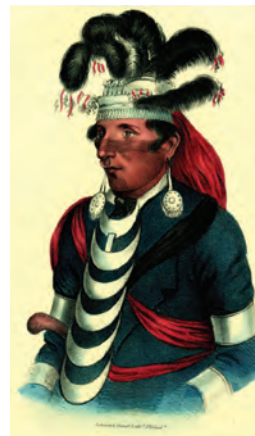
During the period leading up to the Northwest Ordinance, Miami village leaders like *Pakaana*, *Pinšiwā*, and Le Gris refused to attend treaty negotiations that recognized sole American ownership of lands north of the Ohio River. Meanwhile, thousands of Pennsylvanians, Virginians, and Kentuckians

were pressing farther west down the Ohio. Many of these settlers, regarded by the Miami and others as invaders, moved north onto “open” land used seasonally by indigenous peoples. Some Miami villages and their allies organized attacks on American settler communities, and Americans attacked Miami villages.

In 1790, the government of the United States, under the leadership of General Josiah Harmar, organized an attack on the Miami for their “depre-dations” against Americans and their refusal to “treat with the United States when invited.” Harmar not only attacked Miami warriors but devastated the Miami’s towns and crops to destroy their ability to feed themselves as winter approached. Harmar’s force was defeated in disastrous fashion by the Miami war leader *Mihšihkinaahkwa* (Little Turtle). However, the victory was far from joyous for the Miami people of *Kiihkayonki* (today’s Fort Wayne, Indiana), because Harmar’s forces burned their village and destroyed nearly twenty thousand bushels of corn. The following spring, as the Miami prepared to plant their crop, they also had to prepare for a second American assault. The Miami were joined now by their neighbors the Delaware, Shawnee, Ottawa, Potawatomi, Wyandot, and Kickapoo. While smaller American forces ravaged Miami villages farther down the Wabash River Valley, the Miami of *Kiihkayonki* prepared for the invasion of General Arthur St. Clair’s larger force, based near Cincinnati.

St. Clair began his invasion in the fall of 1791. Since destruction of the autumn crop two years in a row would have been a death sentence to the *Kiihkayonki* villagers and to Miami resistance, the Miami and their allies attacked the invading Americans while they were at a distance from the village. In the ensuing battle the combined Indian force killed 634 and wounded another 274 American soldiers. According to historian Harvey Lewis Carter, the Miami-led alliance’s victory was “the most overwhelming defeat in American military history.” From a Miami perspective, the damage done to the Americans was far greater than any their own villages could have sustained. But the invaders were not indigenous villagers, and their will to destroy the resistance was greater than that of any previous group the Miami had encountered.

In the fall of 1793, a third invasion of *Myaamionki* was attempted under the leadership of General Anthony Wayne. After major defeats Wayne was cautious about his strategy. By advancing slowly and utilizing a string of forts stretching from Cincinnati north to the Wabash River valley, he was able to take away local advantages of the Miami-led alliance. Miami leaders, including *Mihšihkinaahkwa* (Little Turtle), understood this strategy and attempted to get the alliance to negotiate for peace. When this effort failed, the Miami pulled back. They would participate in the final battle for military defense of their homelands, but no longer lead it. At the Battle of Fallen Timbers in summer 1794, General Wayne needed less than two hours to defeat an



Miami Chief Brewett.
Lithograph by James Otto
Lewis, *Aboriginal Port-*
folio, 1835–36. Miami Special
Collections.