

Catherine Chandler

Author's Note

These poems represent two chapters in *Annals of the Dear Unknown*, a verse-tale relating the events leading up to, during and following the Battle of Wyoming (aka The Wyoming Massacre), an American Revolutionary War battle that took place in Wyoming Valley, Pennsylvania in July 1778, with a particular focus on her Connecticut Yankee ancestors, the Munsons.

In “Together They Come” Diah Munson, returning to Wyoming Valley after having secured a safe haven for his family to ride out the war, unexpectedly meets up with his children, who have narrowly escaped the violence, at Shohola on the Delaware River. “In a Lonely Field” describes the scene of the carnage approximately three months following the battle.

Together They Come

As Wilmot shepherded the family
across the Minisink's first sixty miles,
he anguished over what had come to pass —
his mother dead, Benoni given up,
the settlement about to be destroyed,
the grief soon to befall his father, Diah.
He knew the dangers lurking in the woods,
yet sensed a deep and unseen power of grace.
Little Walter walked most of the way
and rarely asked to ride the patient horse.

As Diah rode back from Connecticut,
unsettling news he'd heard along the way
from families heading eastward on the trail,
made sleep next to impossible. He reached
the shallow crossing on the Delaware,
and stopped to rest his horse and stay the night
at Sam Wares' inn and tavern at the clearing
Lenape named Shohola (Place of Peace).
He rose at daybreak, hoping to be back
with Rachel well before the week was out.

Diah saw them first. Bedraggled, barefoot,
at the water's edge, waiting their turn
to mount the horse and ford the Delaware.
Beside himself with joy, he cried out, *Will!*
then realized that Rachel was not there.
On hearing every detail of their loss,
Diah neither wept nor censured God,
but quietly withdrew into himself,
vowed never to return, and planned ahead,
his children clinging to his unsaid words.

In a Lonely Field

For weeks, marauders made their presence known in what was once Westmoreland. As they left the scene of carnage, so did all the circling, hissing, satiated turkey vultures, who, for now at least, would have to settle for an injured warbler or a woodland vole. In late October, settlers who'd returned to salvage what they could of wasting crops, were ordered to recover and inter the remains of those who'd perished in July.

Distinctive shoes helped to identify a few of them, but not with certainty, for most had been reduced to scattered bones and rotting rags. The men dug two mass graves and laid their friends and family to rest as best they could. The Battle of Wyoming faded from collective memory, as older settlers died, and new ones came to harvest trees and dig for anthracite. A monument eventually was built.

Diah Munson never did go back to place a proper headstone on the grave of Rachel Tyler Munson, wife and mother of their dozen children, living, dead, and lost. Within six months he married Eunice Bradley, a cousin whom he kept as bedmate, cook, and nanny. And because the Pennymites had occupied his Susquehanna claim — and later were awarded title to it — Diah bought a grist mill and moved on.