

### ON THIS DAY IN WEST VIRGINIA HISTORY SEPTEMBER 27



Marker at the site of the Foreman Massacre

On September 27, 1777, Captain William Foreman and a company of Hampshire County militia were ambushed by Native Americans in the "Narrows," south of Wheeling.

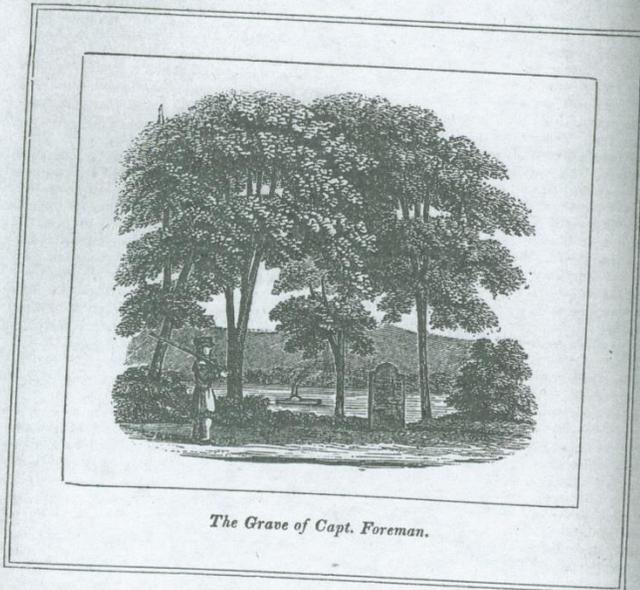
**CSO: SS.8.21**

**Investigate the Document:** (*Historical Collections of Virginia, Henry Howe 917.5.H856*)

1. Foreman's Massacre resulted in the loss of Captain Foreman and \_\_\_\_\_ of his men.
2. What was Captain Foreman's crucial mistake?

**Think Critically:** The stone erected to honor the memory of Captain Foreman states that he was "slain by a band of ruthless savages—the allies of *civilized* nation of Europe—on the 25<sup>th</sup> of Sept. 1777." The inscription is referencing *what* European nation?

Grave Creek is situated upon a plain on the Ohio, 12 miles below Wheeling, at the mouth of Grave Creek. It is divided into two distinct villages. Elizabethtown, the upper village, is the county-seat; the lower village is called Moundsville. Unitedly they contain 1 newspaper printing office, 2 mercantile stores, a classical academy, an extensive steam flouring-mill, and a population of about 1,200. West Union, 16 miles N.E. of the C. H., near the Pennsylvania line, contains a few dwellings.



The Grave of Capt. Foreman.

Grave Creek was first settled in 1770, by Joseph Tomlinson, an emigrant from Maryland. In 1772, he discovered the mammoth mound at this place; and about this time several other families from Maryland emigrated here. During the succeeding years, the inhabitants suffered considerably from the Indians, and erected forts for their security.

About four miles above the village of Grave Creek, on the bank of the Ohio, is a monument bearing the following inscription:

This humble stone is erected to the memory of Capt. Foreman and twenty-one of his men, who were slain by a band of ruthless savages—the allies of a civilized nation of Europe—on the 25th of Sept., 1777.

So sleep the brave who sink to rest,  
By all their country's wishes blest.

The account of the massacre which the monument is designed to commemorate, is thus given in a communication to the American Pioneer:

About the time of the attack at Wheeling, which occurred in September, (1777,) Capt. Foreman and his men were surprised at the head of Grave creek narrows; the account of which event, as given in the Border Warfare, differs somewhat from the way Robin Harkness, my uncle, related it, who was with Capt. Foreman at the time. I will, therefore, give it as related by him. A smoke was discovered down the river in the direction of the fort at Grave creek, which induced those at Wheeling to believe that the Indians had not yet left the country, and that the fort at Grave creek had been set on fire. In order to make discoveries, on the 25th of September Capt. Foreman, with 45 men, set out for Grave creek. Having arrived there, and seeing the fort standing, and discovering no signs of the Indians, they returned. On arriving at the foot of the Narrows, a contention arose between Capt. Foreman and a man by the name of Lynn, who had been sent with him as a spy, about which road they should take, the river or ridge. Lynn urged the probability of the Indians having been on the opposite shore, and had more than likely seen them pass down; and the most likely place for waylaying them was in the narrows, and therefore urged the necessity of going the ridge road. Foreman, being indisposed to take the counsel of Lynn, proceeded along the base of the hill. During the contention, Robin Harkness sat upon a log, having very sore eyes at the time, and took no part in the dispute; but when Capt. Foreman started, he followed him. Lynn, however, with seven or eight other frontiers-men, went the ridge road. While passing along a narrow bottom at the head of the narrows, the foremost of Capt. Foreman's men picked up some Indian trinkets, which immediately excited a suspicion that Indians were near, which caused a halt. Before them some five or six Indians stepped into the path, and behind them about the same number; and at the same moment a fire was poured in upon them from a line of Indians under cover of the river bank, and not over fifteen steps from the white men. Those that escaped the first fire fled up the hill; but it being steep and difficult to climb, they were exposed for some time to the fire of the Indians. Lynn and his comrades, hearing the fire when they were below them on the ridge, ran along until opposite. They then proceeded to the brink of the hill, where they saw a man ascending near them, who had got nearly to the top when he received a shot in his thigh, which broke it. Lynn and his comrades ran down and lifted him up, carried him over the hill, and hid him under a cleft of rocks, and then proceeded to Wheeling. As Robin Harkness was climbing the hill near the top, and pulling himself up by a bush, a ball struck it and knocked the bark off against him, which alarmed him, as he supposed it to be the ball; he however proceeded on and escaped unhurt. In this fatal ambuscade, twenty-one of Capt. Foreman's party were killed, and several much wounded: among the slain were Capt. Foreman and his two sons. The Indian force was never ascertained; but it was supposed to have been the same party that attacked Fort Henry, at Wheeling, which was supposed to have been upwards of 300 strong. On the ensuing day, the inhabitants of the neighborhood of Wheeling, under the direction of Col. Zane, proceeded to the fatal spot to bury those who had fallen, and at the same time to get the man who was wounded and hid under the rocks, who was still alive and finally recovered.

Within a quarter of a mile from the Ohio, on the river flats at Grave Creek, in full view of the passing steamers, is the mammoth mound. On the summit is an observatory, erected by Mr. A. B. Tomlinson in 1837. From his communication in the American Pioneer, we derive the following facts:

The Mammoth Mound is 69 feet high, and about 900 feet in circumference at its base. It is a frustum of a cone, and has a flat top of about 50 feet in diameter. This flat, until lately, was slightly depressed—occasioned, it is supposed, by the falling in of two vaults below. A few years since a white oak, of about 70 feet in height, stood on the summit of the mound, which appeared to die of age. On carefully cutting the trunk transversely, the number of concentric circles showed that it was about 500 years old.

In 1838, Mr. Tomlinson commenced at the level of the surrounding ground, and ran in an excavation horizontally 111 feet, when he came to a vault that had been excavated in the earth before the mound was commenced. This vault was 12 feet long, 8 wide, and 7 in height. It was dry as any tight room. Along each side and the two ends,