THE ENGLISH EYE THE FRENCH IN NORTH AMERICA

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THE French-English dispute which culminated in the French and Indian Wars was as old as the English colonization of North America, and it increased in intensity in direct proportion to the western expansion of those colonies.

As early as 1613 the Lord Ambassador of France complained to the English Privy Council "touchinge spoyles and other violences supposed to be committed by His Mates subjects of Great Brittaine upon the subjects of France on the coast of Greenland and Canada."¹ Captain John Smith in his description of New England written after the voyage of 1614 remarked of the peltry trade: "of Beuers, Otters and Martins, blacke Foxes, and Furres of price, may yeerely be had six or seuen thousand, and if the trade of the French were preuented, many more: 25,000. this yeere were brought from those northerne parts into France, of which trade we may haue as good part as the French if we take good courses."²

In 1631 France challenged English right to Virginia by a recapitulation of the records of the discoveries of Ribaut and Laudonnière in Carolina in 1564-66. The English right to Newfoundland they invalidated by citing the discovery of Verazzano in 1523 and Jacques Cartier's voyage up the St. Lawrence River as far as the "Great Sault Saint Louis" in 1535.

The French had taken possession of the region around the Great Lakes and the Mississippi and Ohio River valleys. According to custom, priests and explorers had erected crosses, attaching to them the king's coat of arms and a statement of posses-


¹ Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York (Albany, 1853-87), III, 2. Hereafter cited N.Y.C.D.


316
sion; also, they had built forts and established missions. Although the King of France was pleased with the acquisition of more and more land in the New World, in 1666 he warned Talon not “to embrace too vast a quantity, a portion of which we may perhaps be obliged one day to abandon, to the decrease of his Majesty’s reputation and that of his crown.” This admonition may have been well founded, for only four years later Talon in a proposal to recover the beaver trade from the west, at the time diverted by the Five Nations to the English and Dutch, remarked that such a check on those Indians “would make the first openings toward Florida across the interior.”

With the first acquisition of New York from the Dutch in 1664 the English envisioned an English North America. On July 6, 1666, Governor Nicolls of New York wrote to the Council of Massachusetts. Since he had heard that “His Matie hath authorized and required yow to reduce Canada to His Maties obedience,” Colonel Nicolls wished to inform the Massachusetts governor of the opportune time for “the reduction.” The governor had been informed that according to Indian computation 700 Frenchmen were marching on Albany. He remarked that he could not “imagine any reason to the contrary why so faire an advantage against the French, should be let slip, since His Maties directions therein are so positive.” By 1673 the English had gained control over all the Dutch possessions which included the Five Nations or Iroquois lands; later the Iroquois reaffirmed this English possession by the Dongan Treaty. The next year the governor “put the Arms of the Duke, now his Maty upon all the Indian Castles near ye Great Lake, and that by their own consent who have submitted to this Government.”

Always, there were charges and counter-charges by the French and English of infringement upon the rights of the other country. In the beginning the fur trade was of primary interest. Actual possession of the Ohio Valley by right of settlement came in the eighteenth century.

The equilibrium between the two contending powers in North America which should have been established by the Treaty of Neutrality, concluded in November, 1686, did not materialize. By that treaty, France and England were bound to keep peace be-

\[N.Y.C.D., \text{IV, 41, 65.}\]
\[Ibid., \text{III, 120, 363.}\]
tween their subjects and "not interfere with the other in his war upon 'wild Indians.'" Since no mention was made of the status of the Five Nations—that they were under British control—France was given a free hand to pursue her war against them and the English were prohibited from interfering in the affair. However, in the conflict the English supplied the Indians with arms and ammunition. Governor Dongan of New York wrote of the affair to the governor in Canada: "Sir, I hope you have a better opinion of me than to think I cannot see as far as another man, and let me tell Monsr Denonville [the governor] I know what he aims at as well as he does himself and do assure him he shall not obtain his ends for I will stand by those Indians who have submitted themselves their lands and conquests under the obedience of the King of England to the last . . . 'tis a very hard thing that all the Countrieys a Frenchman walks over in America must belong to Canada." By a warrant issued November 10, 1867, the king vested Governor Dongan with authority to demand of the governor of Canada the release of all Iroquois prisoners. He also informed him those tribes were under English jurisdiction and any act of hostility against them was an act of hostility against the English. If the French persisted in "annoying those Indians" the governor was ordered to protect them, even to the extent of levying, arming, and employing all persons residing within New York to resist and withstand the invasion or attempts of the French. The governor was also authorized to erect "Forts, Castles and Platforms" where he needed them.5

With the turn of the century came new English activities. The Earl of Bellomont, royal governor of New York, expressed his views on French expansion. He reported to the English Lords of Trade that the measures recently taken by the king of France would "quickly extend his dominions in this part of the world, further than is consistent with the interest of England." To offset this expansion the governor suggested that 1,000 regular troops sent to New York and two men-of-war, one each at Boston and New York, would be sufficient help from the mother country. With this assistance Bellomont believed that if another war occurred the French could be driven out of Canada. In the same report he suggested that New York should be looked upon as the

5 Ibid., 503-504, 513-515.
capital province or the "Cittadel" of all the colonies. Although New York did not gain that distinction, it did become foremost in relations between the Indians and the Crown. As late as 1752 the governor of New York complained to Governor Dinwiddie of Virginia that Virginia should not treat with the Six Nations without receiving his permission.\(^6\) New York, however, was not concerned with the *drang nach westen* to the upper Ohio Valley so far as settlements were concerned; her interest was the fur trade siphoned from the West through the Six Nations Indians who claimed the region.

After almost one hundred years Virginians who had been content in the tidewater region began to move westward. Virginia's first legislative recognition of the region beyond the Blue Ridge was in 1705, when the Assembly passed an act permitting free and open trade with the Indians; also, it provided that, should anyone discover a town or nation of Indians westward of or between the Appalachian Mountains, they would have the sole right to trade with them for fourteen years. Another act of 1705 permitted naturalization of aliens and foreigners who had already settled, or would settle, in the colony.\(^7\)

Governor Alexander Spotswood was responsible for the first organized effort to extend the frontier beyond the Blue Ridge. In 1716 he and other Virginia gentlemen made an Elizabethan Progress over the mountains into the Shenandoah Valley to discover the source of the rivers and to establish favorable trade relations with the Indians, thus checking the rising power of the French. The governor was so pleased with the adventure that he organized the party into a fraternity, the "Knights of the Golden Horse Shoe." Its insignia worn on the breast of the adventurers bore the inscription, *Sic juvat transcendere montes* (Thus it is a pleasure to cross the mountains).\(^8\)

The erection of Spotsylvania and Brunswick counties was the outgrowth of Spotswood's exploration. The preamble for the act


\(^7\) *Virginia, Laws Statutes, etc., The Statutes at Large . . . of Virginia*, edited by W. W. Hening (Richmond, 1809-23), 111, 434, 468-469.

\(^8\) *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* (Richmond, 1893-date). XIII, 125.
states "That the frontiers toward the high mountains are exposed to danger from the Indians and the late settlements of the French to the westward of the said mountains." Two years later (1722) the governor at the treaty with the Six Nations held at Albany obtained the Indians' recognition of the Potomac River as the boundary between the Northern and Southern Indians; also, their promise to keep their people west of the Blue Ridge. At the conference Governor Spotswood unpinned from his breast the golden horseshoe insignia and gave it to the spokesman for the Indians assembled, with the message that their kinsmen who traveled through Virginia should carry it with them, thus identifying themselves as friendly. The Virginians believed this treaty was the safeguard they needed to have before permanent settlements could be made beyond the tidewater region.

Explorers, missionaries, hunters, and traders had crossed the Blue Ridge before 1727. In 1725, John Van Meter of New York traded in the Shenandoah Valley; two years later he and his son secured large tracts of land in the lower part of it. For the most part, however, this valley was settled first by Pennsylvania Germans and Marylanders. William Beverley, a principal early land broker or jobber, in a letter of April 30, 1732, wrote that the Pennsylvanians came because they could buy land cheaper in Virginia (by £6 or £7 per 100 acres) than in Pennsylvania; also, the best farms along the coast of Maryland and in eastern Pennsylvania had been taken up. In a single year (1736) Beverley was granted 118,000 acres of land in the Shenandoah Valley.

Certainly, aggressiveness of the Pennsylvania Indian traders spearheaded rapid western expansion for both Pennsylvania and Virginia. Before the Proprietary of Pennsylvania was forty years old Pennsylvania traders were actively engaged in trading with the Indians in the Upper Ohio Valley. However, an unusual migration of the Shawnee Indians may have hastened this activity. The group of Shawnee whom La Salle found on the Illinois River where he built Fort St. Louis in 1662 had migrated via Kentucky, the Carolinas, and Virginia to Maryland, near the headwaters of the Potomac. Gradually, in the early 1700's, they moved into

6 N.Y.C.D., V, 677.
Pennsylvania, settling on both sides of the Susquehanna River; according to their own statements, some went directly to the Allegheny and Kiskiminetas valleys. In time the Shawnee living along the Susquehanna moved west into the Upper Ohio Valley. Delawares living in eastern Pennsylvania followed the Shawnee in their trek westward, and many Six Nations Indians had migrated from the Lake Erie and Mohawk regions. The Pennsylvania traders, ever eager for more lucrative fur trade, followed them.

By 1720 the Pennsylvania traders were ranging the Upper Ohio Valley. Chief among them were the Bezaillon brothers, Edmund Cartlidge, Jonah Davenport, James Le Tort, and Peter Chartier, son of Martin Chartier (the Frenchman who came from the Illinois with the Shawnee). Reports show that those traders kept the Pennsylvania government informed of French activities in the region. A census of Indians living west of the Susquehanna and in the Upper Ohio Valley taken by Pennsylvania traders in 1731 lists 217 Delaware, Shawnee, and Six Nations families with a male population of 716.11

This activity of the Pennsylvania traders did not go unnoticed by the French. In 1730 they reported “that in the country round Lake Erie the English are found scattered as far as the sea, trading with Chaouenons, the Miamis and the Onyatanous.”12 The western fur trade was vital to France for the king’s revenue was one-fourth of the beaver pelts and one-tenth of the moose hides.

The Penns bought land piecemeal from the Indians; yet many settlers took up land not purchased of the Indians. Such acts were of grave concern to the officials who were trying to maintain amicable relations with all the tribes living in Pennsylvania and with the Six Nations who claimed ownership of the land. In 1731 James Logan, secretary for Indian affairs for the proprietors, was confronted with another perplexing problem. He learned that former Lieutenant Governor Sir William Keith and associates were soliciting a grant from the Crown in order to establish a new province west of the Penn grant. Although James Logan was most desirous that the English should take possession of the land and

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11 Pennsylvania Archives (Harrisburg, 1852-56), I, 301-302.
12 Michigan Pioneer and Historical Society, Historical Collections (Lansing, 1855-82), XXXIV, 75-76.
make good the possession, he feared that the act would give umbrage to the French. In a letter to the proprietors, June, 1731, he assured them that the land desired by Keith's company "lies within the bounds of the King's Grant to your father but is claim'd by the French as lying on the Water that runs into the mississippi viz the River Ohio and I am much mistaken if they ever parte with it till as well beaten in America as ever they were in Europe which I think now is scarcely to be expected." Logan continued his warnings to the Penns, February 27, 1732, by writing that the Mingoos or the Six Nations held absolute claim to the territory and since they had sold so much land they had nowhere else to go; he was positive that Indian trouble would ensue. On August 10, 1731, the Board of Trade received Keith's petition "praying to have a grant of a tract of land to the West of the ridge of mountains behind Virginia, in order to be settled by several protestant families from Switzerland." Because the Penns, Lord Baltimore, and Lord Fairfax opposed the grant, claiming it infringed upon their respective grants, Keith's petition was denied.

Secretary Logan was relieved of worry about a new colony west of the mountains, but he was not relieved of the troublesome problem of Pennsylvania traders ranging the Upper Ohio Valley. Evidently he feared the inevitable clash between the traders and the French. The French were exerting every effort to secure the Indians in their interest, especially the Shawnee. Now Pennsylvania began to exert great effort to bring the Shawnee and Delaware back to their former homes along the Susquehanna River and in eastern Pennsylvania, away from French influence. The Provincial Council enlisted the efforts of the Six Nations to try to persuade those tribes to leave the Allegheny region. At a conference held with the Six Nations Indians in Philadelphia, 1732, the Pennsylvanians asked that "all our Indians, the Delawares, Shawanese, & others should be recalled from Ohio, for we knew not then but there might be War with the French." The Six

Nations speaker suggested that the only way to draw the Shawnee and Delaware away from the Upper Ohio Valley was to prevent the Indian traders from going there. As long as the Indians were supplied with goods they would be unwilling to return and it would be Pennsylvania's fault if they remained on the Ohio. In September of the same year two Shawnee chiefs from the Allegheny, Opakethwa and Opakeita, came to Philadelphia to confer with the governor. When he asked why they had gone so far as the Allegheny, the Shawnee replied "that formerly they lived at Patowmack, where their King dyed; that having lost him, they knew not what to do; that they then took their Wives & Children and went over the Mountains, (meaning Allegheney,) to live." Recently these chiefs had been entertained by the French governor at Montreal who told them that the French and English traders could live in peace at the Allegheny and trade together. French action was incongruous to this statement, for in 1728 they had influenced one group of Shawnee to move nearer their settlements.

During the 1732 conference Thomas Penn negotiated with the Six Nations for the purchase of "all the lands lying on the Schuylkill or any of its branches between the Lehigh Hills and the Kittatinny range; otherwise called the Endless Mountains." Although they were expected to return the next year to confirm the sale, they did not come again to Philadelphia until September, 1736. General sessions of the 1736-conference were held at the Great Meeting House; the chiefs met privately with the proprietors and James Logan, superintendent of Indian affairs, at his home, Stenton. On October 11, the chiefs "released all the lands on both sides of the Susquehanna, eastward to the heads of the tributary streams and westward 'to the setting of the sun' and to extend northward to the Endless Mountains." Of this meeting Dr. Julian P. Boyd in his preface to the volume, Indian Treaties Printed by Benjamin Franklin 1736-1762, wrote: "When Thomas Penn met the deputies of the Six Nations at Stenton in 1736 he entered upon the most momentous quarter of a century in the whole history of Indian affairs. England was temporarily at peace with France, though Utrecht was twenty years in the past and the stage was being set for the third conflict. The Indian threat had up to then

been confined to New England and the frontiers of New York, but Pennsylvania traders had already begun to tap the rich Ohio Indian trade." Had Dr. Boyd been writing of Indian affairs in all the English colonies he might have added a phrase about Virginia's western expansion and Maryland's claim to certain land on the west side of the Susquehanna River.

Settlements in Virginia had expanded beyond the Blue Ridge into the Shenandoah Valley. For several years there had been periodic skirmishes along the Great Warriors' Trail in Virginia, some between northern and southern Indians, others between northern Indians and whites. In one of the clashes fifty-five northern Indians were killed or wounded, one of whom was Robert Hunter, or Carondowana, husband of Madame Montour. Pennsylvania protested vigorously against Maryland's claim to land west of the Susquehanna, claimed to be within the Penn Grant, inhabited by the Conestogas and not as yet purchased from the Six Nations. At the general conference (1736) the Seneca chief, Kanickungo, speaker for the Indians, asked the governor of Pennsylvania to write to the governors of Virginia and Maryland asking them to pay for the settled land not already purchased from the Six Nations. The Six Nations renewed their request of Virginia and Maryland in 1742. Before negotiations were completed for the treaty another skirmish took place in Virginia in which both Indians and Virginians were killed. By the efforts of the great diplomat, Conrad Weiser, Lieutenant Governor Gooch of Virginia "healed the Wounds of the Hearts of those families in Mourning," thus clearing the way for the conference held at Lancaster, June 22-July 4, 1744.

The Treaty of Lancaster could be called a milestone in western expansion. At this conference the Six Nations relinquished their right to the vast region west of the Allegheny Mountains. The

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\textsuperscript{17} Indian Treaties Printed by Benjamin Franklin, 1736-1762 with \ldots Historical & Bibliographical Notes, by Julian P. Boyd (Philadelphia, 1938), pp. XXI, XXV.

\textsuperscript{18} New York (Colony), An Abridgment of the Indian Affairs \ldots Transacted in the Colony of New York, from the Year 1678 to the Year 1751 by Peter Wraxall. McIlwain edition (Cambridge, Mass., 1915), p. 117; Pennsylvania Archives, I, 24-25.

\textsuperscript{19} Correspondence on this subject is printed in the Pennsylvania Colonial Records, III, 463 ff., and Pennsylvania Archives, 311 ff.

\textsuperscript{20} Pennsylvania Colonial Records, IV, 92.

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., 666.
Maryland commissioners at the conference did not recognize the Indians’ “Right” to any land in Maryland. However, since they were “so resolved to live in Brotherly Love and Affection with the Six Nations,” the commissioners gave the Indians “a Compensation to the Value of Three Hundred Pound Currency” for a “Release in Writing” of all the Six Nations’ claim to any land in Maryland. For goods valued at £200 Pennsylvania money and £200 in gold, the chiefs assembled signed a “Deed recognizing the King’s Right to all the Lands that are, or shall be, by his Majesty’s Appointment in the Colony of Virginia.” The Virginia commissioners promised Chief Canasatego that, “when the Settlement increased much further back,” they would ask the king for more presents for the Six Nations.22

Metaphorically, the “three Shouts” given by the “Gentlemen and Indians” when the deed was signed awakened the Virginians to the rich opportunities in the West. On April 26, 1745, the Executive Council granted 300,000 acres of land to four companies comprising forty-eight persons. Extant documents of the Ohio Company of Virginia23 reveal, further, that this treaty paved the way for the organization of that partnership. Thomas Lee, who presented the first petition to the Virginia Executive Council, October 20, 1747, was one of the Virginia commissioners at the treaty. By this petition Thomas Lee and eleven others asked for the right to take up 200,000 acres of land “to be laid out from ye Branch called Kiskomanett’s and Buffalo Creek on the South side of the River Alligany, and between the two creeks and the yellow creek on the North side and on the Main River of Alligany als Ohio.” It was the first request made of that body for land along the Ohio River. Although not recorded in the printed Executive Council Journals that the petition was presented and action upon it postponed, such a record was preserved and is printed in the *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, volume V, page 241. Thomas Lee and Lawrence Washington circulated the peti-

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23 Unless noted otherwise the source for the pages to follow is the George Mercer Papers Relating to the Ohio Company of Virginia, edited by Lois Mulkern (Pittsburgh, 1954). Page references may be found by consulting the index.
tion; Lawrence Washington paid the clerk of the council for inscribing it for presentation to the Executive Council; and Thomas Cresap, another of the "eleven others," solicited or lobbied for the grant in Williamsburg, a service for which he was paid £12.5.

This petition for land in the Ohio River Valley was a matter of grave concern to Lieutenant Governor William Gooch. He must have expressed that concern to Mr. Lee, for on October 24, Thomas Cresap, George Fairfax, Francis Thornton, Nathaniel Chapman, and Lawrence and Augustine Washington asked Thomas Lee to write to John Hanbury, influential merchant in England, inviting him "to be a Partner" and "to encourage him to solicit our Petition to his Majesty." At the same meeting they proposed their number should be limited to twenty and that John Hanbury should present their petition in the following names: John Hanbury, Thomas Lee, Thomas Nelson, Thomas Cresap, William Thornton, William Nimmo, Daniel Cresap, John Carlisle, Lawrence Washington, Augustine Washington, George Fairfax, Jacob Giles, Nathaniel Chapman, James Wardrop, and associates.

On November 6, 1747, Governor Gooch wrote to the Board of Trade and Plantations asking for specific instructions for granting land west of the great mountains and along rivers which, although unmentioned, was known to be land claimed by the French. When asked in exchange correspondence why he thought it necessary to have additional instructions about matters which were covered by his general instructions, Gooch replied he believed that the Crown was desirous of effecting peace with France in Europe, and since these lands were claimed by the French, he did not wish to create a situation which might give umbrage to the French, thus creating a difficult and unpopular situation for the Crown.

John Hanbury accepted the invitation, became a partner, and presented the petition to the King in Council. The name Ohio Company does not appear in it. The members of the Board of Trade and Plantations acted favorably upon Governor Gooch's request and issued an additional instruction permitting him to grant the group 500,000 acres of land, 200,000 acres to be granted immediately and the remaining 300,000 when the partners had fulfilled the terms of the grant. Before the instructions were dispatched to Virginia the Board of Trade was requested to consider
John Hanbury's petition. Upon learning the two requests were for the same land the instructions were changed to include John Hanbury's name, and were sent to Virginia. On July 12, 1749, the Virginia Executive Council granted the partners named in the John Hanbury petition (except William Nimmo) permission to take up and survey "two Hundred thousand Acres betwixt Romanetto's and Buffalo's Creek, on the South Side of the River Alligane, otherwise the Ohio, and betwixt the two Creeks and the yellow Creek on the North Side of the River, or in such other Parts of the West of the Great Mountains, as shall be adjudged most proper by the Petitioners for making Settlements thereon. . . ."

The first formal meeting of the partnership (now called the Ohio Company) of which the minutes are extant was held October 20, 1748, one year after Thomas Lee presented his petition to the Virginia Executive Council. Those present were Lawrence Washington, James Wardrop, James Scott, and John Carlyle, a committee appointed to transact business between annual meetings of all the partners. Lawrence Washington and Thomas Cresap were paid for services rendered; the committee decided to postpone sending for trade goods until they had obtained the grant for land; and the members recorded the opinion that as soon as they received notice of the grant having been approved each member should "furnish the committee with Letters of Credit on Mr. John Hanbury for One hundred pounds Sterling or Bills of Exchange . . . except what shall be adjudged necessary for Wampum &c." The committee discussed the problem of "procuring Foreign Protestants to settle the Land." By June 20, 1749, almost three weeks before the land was granted, Thomas Lee had received a copy of the petition which John Hanbury presented to the king and John Hanbury's report of his success in lobbying for the grant. The next day the members met at Stafford County Courthouse. Five resignations were accepted; George Mason became a member of the partnership, now called the Ohio Company; and the members resolved to make their capital stock £4,000 sterling. They composed a long letter to John Hanbury asking him to solicit the Duke of Bedford not only to be a member of the company but to be the head of it; to get a letter of recommendation from the king to Virginia's governor enabling the com-
pany to have a surveyor appointed by the College of William and Mary; and to obtain from the Crown treaty goods, thus enabling Virginia to carry out the promise made at Lancaster to give the Six Nations additional presents as the land was settled. The company ordered £2,000 sterling worth of Indian trade goods to arrive the last of November (1749) and another cargo to arrive by the first of March, 1750. Although the matter of incorporation is not mentioned specifically, the committee must have discussed it because they drew up specifications for a common seal and sent them to John Hanbury in London. The company, however, never was incorporated. The seal was delineated first in 1952 and is the frontispiece of the *George Mercer Papers*. Mr. Hanbury was also requested to try to have a part of the instructions altered "which Obliges the Company to build and Garrison a Fort, as it is impracticable for them to do it out of their private fortunes the thing being of a public nature and a fort there will guard the
On the domestic scene the partners agreed to employ Thomas Cresap and Hugh Parker to cut a road from Wills Creek to a landing on the Monongahela River; to build trading houses; and “to discover the parts beyond the Mountains, so that we may know where to Survey our Land, and that this may be done as soon as possible.” The company built their first storehouse at Thomas Cresap’s in order to “secure the Goods better and give leisure for building proper houses at Wills Creek the cheaper.”

But all was not clear sailing for the company. Although Virginia had granted them the right to take up 200,000 acres of land along the Ohio River, they knew that the land first must be purchased from the Indians. Machinery had been set in motion for the treaty for this purpose in 1749, but it did not materialize until 1752. By 1752 the company had received at least two consignments of trade goods from England; had negotiated with Lord Baltimore, the Penns, and the Earl of Granville for additional lands not covered by the grant; had sent Christopher Gist on two exploratory trips to the Western Country; had storehouses on the headwaters of the Potomac River; had bound themselves in partnership by “Articles of Agreement and Co-partnership for the space of 20 years,” May 23, 1751-May 23, 1771; and had entered into an agreement with Christopher Gist for settling company lands. By this agreement, signed September 11, 1750, Gist engaged to settle 150 or more families on “Ohio Company’s Land on the Branches of the Mississippi to the Westward of the great Mountains” contiguous one to the other within two years from the date of the agreement, each family to be allowed one hundred acres of land for every person not exceeding four, and fifty acres for each person additional. In order to have their deeds signed the settlers were to pay the Ohio Company £4 sterling per hundred acres within three years after seating the land. They were to hold the land for five years quitrent free before paying the usual quitrent to Virginia.

Until the Virginia-Indian conference held at Logstown in June, 1752, Pennsylvania had been the chief link in the chain of Indian-White relationship in the Upper Ohio Valley. For years Pennsylvania traders had gone to the Allegheny. The tempo of trading
was stepped up considerably in 1744-45 with the advent on the western trading scene of George Croghan, a recent Irish emigrant. Croghan's deposition of occurrences on his first trading trip to "Guyhawga on the borders of Lake Erie in April, 1745" gave Pennsylvanians first notice of the largest migration of Shawnee to French controlled territory. According to Croghan seven or eight hundred Indians under the command of Peter Chartier were going down the Ohio "to a place the French had given them on the second branch of the Wabash." Undoubtedly, Croghan's aggressiveness in trade was responsible, at least in part, for the increased anxiety on the part of the French government and also for the decision of the Indians living along the Ohio River to seek recognition from the colony of Pennsylvania. Before 1752 Croghan had at least five trading houses on the frontier. His keen understanding and his sympathy for the natives, as well as the trade goods with which he supplied them, established friendly relations with the Delawares, the Shawnee, the Miami, the Wyandots, and the Six Nations in the Ohio Country. Pennsylvania employed him for the conferences on the Ohio in 1748 and in 1751. In 1750 he was entrusted with Pennsylvania's mission to the Miami at Pickawillany; in June, 1752, he represented the colony at Virginia's conference with the Six Nations at Logstown on the Ohio.

The Executive Council ordered their commissioners at the conference to "signify to, and satisfy the Indians that the Present from his Majesty, is in Consequence of the Treaty at Lancaster, and intended as a further Consideration for the Lands they then Sold to this Government and an Inducement for them to protect, and secure a peaceable Possession to the Ohio Company."

The colonial officials of Virginia, however, had been unsuccessful in arranging a well-ordered conference. According to Six Nations custom only chiefs from the parent Onondaga Council could negotiate a sale of land. The Virginians were unable to persuade those chiefs to come to treat at Fredericksburg (Virginia) in 1750; they evaded the journey to Albany to treat with them at the recognized seat of their ancient council fire; and they were unsuccessful in bringing them to the conference at Logstown, June, 1752. As a result, the Half King, deputed by the Six Nations to watch over the Indians living on the Ohio, accepted the
present and gave limited approval of Ohio Company exploitation of the land along the Ohio River. Nevertheless he stated definitely at the conference that full power to sell the land rested solely with the Onondaga Council.

The members of the Ohio Company were so eager to begin their land and trading adventure that they were willing, if necessary, to violate a ruling of the Crown by purchasing land directly from the Indians. On April 28, 1752, the committee of the company issued secret instructions to Christopher Gist, their agent at the conference. If the Virginia commissioners were unable to treat successfully with the Indians, Gist was authorized to treat with them separately in the name of the company. His orders were to solicit "a Deed or other written Agreement from the Indians" in the names of the individual members of the company, and "in the said Deed or Agreement you are to mention the Bounds of the Land as expressly as possible that no dispute may arise hereafter, and we would have the Indians clearly understand what Land they sell us, that they may have no Occasion to complain of any Fraud or underhand dealings, as is often the Custom with them." In return Gist had permission to promise presents agreeable to the Indians and to agree to deliver those gifts on the Ohio.

The members chose to consider Virginia's agreement with the Indians final. Therefore, they proceeded with vigor to execute their well-laid plans. At a meeting of the full membership in September, 1752, they pressed Gist to carry out his agreement ("to remove one hundred and fifty or more Family's to the Ohio Company's Land on the Branches of the Mississippi to the Westward of the great Mountains") and appointed William Trent their factor for Indian trade on the Ohio.

Trent was familiar with the Western Country. He had been with Conrad Weiser at Logstown in 1748, was a trading partner of George Croghan, and had taken the Twightwee or Miami portion of the Logstown present to them. When the Twightwee were attacked by the French in 1751 they had asked Virginia for aid. The present sent from Logstown was in fulfillment of a promise made by the governor in the fall of 1751. On his journey Trent had learned of the strength of the French and of their aspirations; he had seen the principal Miami town which had been
laid waste by them; and he had talked with the few survivors of
the massacre.

On September 19, 1752, the company agreed to enter for the
first 200,000 acres of land. This petition to the Executive Council
for permission to survey a tract had several innovations. Con-
trary to orders of the Board of Trade and Plantations the com-
pany asked leave to have the land surveyed in small tracts and
to permit persons other than Ohio Company partners to take up
the intervening land in tracts of not more than 1,000 acres. The
same day the company presented the petition to the Executive
Council, Andrew Montour, Christopher Gist, Michael Cresap,
Thomas Cresap, Jr., William Trent, Lunsford Lomax, and eight-
een others, not members of the company, petitioned for 310,000
acres of land, of which 280,000 were to be bounded in part by
Ohio Company lands. The council took no action on these peti-
tions. The Ohio Company petitioners apprehended it “would be
of great advantage to his Majesty and his plantations as it would
be the most effectual means to encrease and secure their first
settlements which the encroachments of the French and especially
the new fort built by them on the west end of lake Erie and on
the Southside thereof the last year render necessary the same
manifestly tending to interrupt your petitioners grant and your
petitioners in order to settle a sufficient force must without such
permission be obliged to part with all their own land. . . .”

ROBERT DINWIDDIE
Lieutenant Governor of Virginia
Although Lieutenant Governor Dinwiddie did not recognize the company's petition of November 6, 1752, he did make a direct move to help. In December he wrote to the Board of Trade of the desperate French threat on the Ohio and mentioned that the “Indians are fond and solicitous that we should build some forts on the Ohio, etc.,” and if this were done Virginia would “want some small cannon, carriages, and powder, etc., proportionable.”

As matters grew more desperate Governor Dinwiddie appointed William Trent to keep him personally informed on frontier matters. In the triple role of George Croghan's partner, Ohio Company agent, and Virginia representative, William Trent rendered outstanding service in 1753 and the first months of 1754. As a French task force came nearer and nearer the proposed base of operations for the company's adventure, Trent tried to bolster the morale of the Indians. In 1753 he came to the Western Country, promised the Half King arms with which to resist French aggression, informed this chief that the Virginians recognized the Upper Ohio Valley as Six Nations territory, returned to Virginia and brought the arms promised to the Indians, and conducted half of the Indian population to Winchester (Va.) to receive additional supplies. The other half went with the Half King to warn the French to stop building forts in Indian territory.

Meanwhile the Ohio Company worked feverishly to effect a settlement before the French army came down the Allegheny to take possession of the entire Upper Ohio Valley. On July 27, 1753, at the time Trent was treating with the Six Nations at Logstown, Gist received the company's boldest proposal. In the face of the steady advance of the French the company gave him specific directions to establish a fort and a town (Saltsburg) on the Ohio River at the mouth of Chartiers Creek (McKees Rocks). According to the agreement of September, 1750, Gist had already established a few families on company land in present Fayette County. On July 25, 1753, the Committee of the Ohio Company “Resolved that it is absolutely necessary that the Company should immediately erect a Fort for the Security and protection of their Settlements on a hill just below Shertees Creek upon the South East side the River Ohio that the Walls of the said Fort shall be twelve feet high to be built of Sawed or hewn loggs and to inclose a piece of Ground Ninety feet Square, besides the four
Bastions at the Corners of sixteen feet square each, with houses in the middle for Stores Magazines &c. according to a plan entered in the Company's Books, That Col. Cresap Capt. Trent and Mr. Gist be appointed and Authorized on behalf of the Company to agree with Labourers Carpenters and other Workmen to build and compleat the same as soon as possible, and employ Hunters to supply them with Provisions and agree with some honest Industrious Man to overlook the Workmen and Labourers as Overseer, and that they be supplied with Flower, Salt, and all other Necessaries at the Company's Expence, That all the Land upon the Hill on which the said Fort is to be built to be appropriated to the Use of the said Fort, and that two hundred Acres of Land exclusive of Streets be layed off for a Town Convenient and adjoining to the said Fort Land, in squares of two Acres each, every square to be divided into four Lots so that every Lot may front two streets, if the Ground will so admit and that all the Streets be of convenient width that twenty of the best and most convenient Squares be reserved and set apart for the Company's own Use and one Square to build a School on for the Education of Indian Children and such other Uses as the Company shall hereafter think proper and that all the rest of the Lots be disposed of, upon the following Terms. Every person taking up a Lot shall be obliged to build upon it in three Years, upon which they shall be intitled to Deeds for the same without any other Consideration than paying a Yearly Acknowledgment of one Ear of Indian Corn to the Company and furnishing an able bodied labouring Man to work sixty days if required about such Fortification, as the Company or their Agents shall judge necessary for the Defence and Security of the Inhabitants and at all such times and places as the Company, or their Agents shall judge fit and also perform all requisite Duty at the Fort by Watching and Warding one Month in the Year computed at twelve months according to the Course of Rotation to be Settled and appointed by the commanding Officer at the Fort and attending all Musters when required and in Case of any Assault attending on Notice to defend the Settlement from time to time with sufficient Arms and Ammunition, which are to be found and provided by the Company's Store keeper on every such Occasion. Provided that any professed Quaker or other protestant Dissenter not permitted
by the Law of England to bear Arms instead of performing Duty
in or about the Fort or Defence of the Town may instead of that
Service be allowed to take up their Lots upon working or send-
ing an able man to work in.”

After the conference at Winchester in September, William
Trent returned to Ohio Company business. The first of January,
1754, he set out for the West with “17 Horses loaded with Mate-
rials and Stores for a Fort at the Forks of Ohio.” The present
allotted to the Indians at Winchester—14 horse loads of “Powder,
Lead and Flints”—was not given to them at the conference but
was taken to the Ohio by Trent at this time. On January 6, George
Washington, returning from a diplomatic mission to the French
at Fort Le Boeuf, met Trent a few days out of Wills Creek
(Cumberland, Maryland) and informed him of the strength of
the French at Le Boeuf and of the immediate danger to Britain’s
title to land on the Ohio. Consequently, Trent sent by Washing-
ton to Governor Dinwiddie a message expressing confidence that
“he could stop them this Winter, if properly impowered to do
so.” Governor Dinwiddie gave him that power—a captain’s com-
mission, dated January 27, 1754.

Trent was ordered to muster one hundred militia on the frontier
and to proceed “to the Ohio, where a fort is proposed to be built.”
He was to protect and assist in finishing the fort, and to be on
his “guard against any attempts of the French.”

The toehold the British were able to gain on the Ohio, before
French occupation, was made possible by the Ohio Company.
When Trent received the captain’s commission he was at Red-
stone (Brownsville) on the Monongahela River, about thirty-five
miles from its confluence with the Ohio (Pittsburgh). There he
had built the company storehouse. Between February 15 and
April 12 Trent enlisted fifty-two men “which he was also obliged
not only to maintain but to arm several and supply them with
other Necessaries from the Companies Store.” He delivered the
Winchester gift to the Half King early in February and with as-
sistance of the Indians had partially completed a storehouse at
the fork of the Ohio (Pittsburgh) before March 11.24 “The
Ohio Company’s stores; and what provisions he could purchase

24 St. Blin to Contrecoeur, March 11, 1754; printed in Fernand Grenier,
from the Indians, and other people in those parts" maintained Trent and his little band until April 12, when he was obliged "to come in to Will's Creek, to procure provisions for his company, whom he left without any thing but corn, and of that barely enough to subsist on, till he could send them a supply." While Trent was at Wills Creek, Contrecoeur, in command of a French force more than a thousand strong, came down the Allegheny and summoned the English to evacuate what he claimed was French territory. In the four days between the time Ensign Ward learned that the French were near and the time they actually appeared before the installation, the forty-one Virginians and the Indians stockaded the storehouse. The English were so outnumbered that Ward had no alternative to capitulation. Governor Duquesne of New France commended Contrecoeur for his great achievement: without firing a single shot he had forced the English to leave the Ohio Valley.25

Thus on April 17, 1754, ended an era in the history of the Six Nations. For many years they had held the Ohio Valley by right of conquest; now it was lost to them without the firing of a single shot. Only a year before, William Trent, in the name of the governor of Virginia, had assured the Half King that the Virginians considered the Ohio Valley belonged to the Six Nations. The Half King and his kinsmen helped the Virginians build the fort; the chief himself laid the first log.

At Logstown in August, 1753, Trent had assured the Indians the Ohio Company's fortified storehouse would be a magazine for Indian supplies and, in the event of French attack, a haven of refuge for their women and children. Up to this time the basic struggle between the French and English had been competition for the Indian trade; but, when a French army took possession of an English fort, built on Indian land notwithstanding, the scene changed. The Indians living along the Ohio were no longer being assisted by one European power to ward off aggression of another European power; they were, so to speak, on the "outside looking in." Now it was Great Britain versus France on the Ohio. In the four succeeding years raiding parties from Fort Duquesne laid waste the frontier, George Washington's militia was defeated

at Fort Necessity, and General Braddock's British and colonial forces met defeat less than ten miles from the French fort; but, on November 25, 1758, General Forbes without firing a volley took possession of its smouldering ruins. The French had withdrawn and set fire to it. A second plan for an English town on the Ohio was made by John Campbell in 1764. From this plan, two streets square, grew the city of Pittsburgh.

It is mere speculation that but for two occurrences the Ohio Company might have given the English a firm foothold and not a mere toehold on the Ohio before 1754. If Thomas Lee had not mentioned the Ohio or Allegheny rivers specifically in his petition of October 20, 1747, the Virginia Executive Council might have acted favorably upon it. If Virginia had scheduled the treaty with the Six Nations for Albany, the accustomed meeting place, it might have been a total success. Then the Ohio Company's plan to settle “one hundred and fifty or more Family's . . . on the Branches of the Mississippi to the Westward of the great Mountains” could have been executed even before the king of France issued his famous order, April, 1752, to Marquis Duquesne, newly appointed governor general of New France, “to make every possible effort to drive the English from our territory, and to prevent them coming there to trade.”