FIRST LINE OF DEFENSE, 1755-56

By WILLIAM A. HUNTER

BEFORE the French and Indian War, military establishments were almost unknown in Pennsylvania. A Proprietary proposal in 1750 to protect the Pennsylvania fur trade by building a "Fort or Block-House" on the Ohio had been rejected by the Provincial Assembly; and as late as 1755 William Smith could report that:

In Pennsylvania, we have but one small Fortification, and that raised and supported at the Expense of private People. The Proprietors, indeed, generously made us a Present of twelve large Cannon, part of the twenty-six we have mounted, and they have also given the Gunner of the Fort a Salary of twenty Pounds per Annum towards his Support.

This solitary fort mentioned by Dr. Smith was the "Association Battery" erected below Philadelphia a few years earlier. The inland reaches of the Province, on which, only a year later, Pennsylvania's first and most elaborate system of frontier defenses would be erected, lay wide and unprotected in 1755, from the upper Delaware River west and southwest across the Susquehanna to the Maryland line.

Pennsylvanians need now to be reminded that before the 1750's the idea of a western frontier marking the line of conflict between hostile peoples was strange; for this pattern, once established, has become so familiar that romancers and even historians have as-

*Mr. William A. Hunter, Senior Archivist, Division of Public Records, Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, will be remembered by readers of Pennsylvania History for his "Provincial Negotiations with the Western Indians, 1754-58" (Pennsylvania History, July, 1951) and "The Horses in the Moon" (ibid., April, 1955).

1 A Brief State of the Province of Pennsylvania . . . , 2d ed. (London, 1755), 11-12.
sumed its earlier existence. The reality of 1755 is better reflected, however, in an observation made by General Shirley, writing to Secretary Fox on December 20 of that year:

I can't but Attribute, Sir, the present Confusion and Distress of Pensilvania, principally to the Government's being just now beginning to recover from it's principales of non-Defence, & the people's being unaquainted to Attacks from the Indians, & making a stand against them.

Life on the margins of the settled areas had its attendant hardships and dangers, it is true, and here and in the lands between the white and the Indian settlements lawless and violent deeds were sometimes committed, as elsewhere in the Province; but so far as there was an early pattern of conflict on the Ohio it was one of rivalry and occasional clash between English and French interests, and not one of warfare between white and Indian.

Indeed, the strength of Pennsylvania's position on the Ohio during the quarter-century before the French and Indian War—and the subsequent weakness of that position, as well—resulted from the settlement there of Delaware Indians from the southeastern parts of the colony. A background of generally peaceful relations with William Penn's settlers, and the adoption of an economy dependent upon European trade goods, made these Indians natural collaborators with the Pennsylvania traders who accompanied and followed them westward. Friendly relations between these Indians and the English were further encouraged by the Ohio representatives (and especially by Tanagharisson, their "Half King") of the Six Nations, conquerors of the Ohio lands, to whom these Delawares were subordinate and by whose permission they had settled here.

The first Pennsylvanian frontier defenses of the French and Indian War were magazines, not forts, established in Cumber-

---


3 Loudoun Papers (Huntingdon Library; microfilm copy in collections of Historical and Museum Commission, Harrisburg).
land County; and they were designed for the protection of supplies rather than of settlers. General Braddock’s army advanced from Virginia in 1755, by way of western Maryland. However, Pennsylvania was a supply base for the expedition; and the efforts of this province were directed toward accumulation of these supplies and the opening of a road over which they could be carried to the advancing troops. On June 13, Edward Shippen wrote to Governor Morris offering the use of “a Strong Stone House 30 feet Square at the back Run at Shippensburg” for storing supplies; and in July he wrote again, recommending to the Governor that cattle for the expedition be kept at Tobias Hendricks’ (present Camp Hill), on the Proprietors’ own Manor of Lowther. Charles Swaine, who arrived at Shippensburg on July 9, supervised the storage there of supplies which by July 3 had amounted to 213 barrels of pork, 56,000 pounds of flour, and 100 head of oxen. By this date it had been decided to establish an advanced “Magazine at or near McDowalls mill” (present Markes, Franklin County), which, Shippen thought, “ought to be protected by at least 20, or 30 Soldiers, and there shou’d be a Blockade [Stockade] built.” It was while on a trip to Cumberland County to supervise the establishment of this advanced depot that Governor Morris received the news of General Braddock’s defeat on July 9.4

This defeat, though its full implications were not at once apparent, called for further precautions. Governor Morris accordingly “at the request of the People laid the Ground for a Wooden Fort in the Town of Carlisle and directed one of the same kind to be formed at Shippensburgh . . . and formed four Campanies of Militia to whom I distributed some Powder and Lead.” He also requested Colonel Dunbar to post the remains of Braddock’s army at Carlisle, Shippensburg, and McDowell’s Mill; and James Burd, who had supervised the opening of the supply road, thought “that a Fort wou’d be inmediately erected” at Ray’s Town (Bedford) to bar that road to the French.5

Withdrawal of Dunbar’s men to New York increased the apparent need for Provincial defense of this region. Incomplete in-

---

5 *CR*, VI, 500, 516-517.
formation indicates that the four militia companies proposed by
the Governor represented Carlisle and vicinity, under William
Buchanan; Lurgan Township (northern Franklin County), under
Alexander Culbertson; Hamilton Township (west of Chambers-
burg), under Joseph Armstrong; and Peters Township (about
Mercersburg), under William Maxwell. For greater security,
local officials later proposed additional forts to supplement the
two ordered by the Governor. In general, these preparations on
the Province's first armed frontier seem to have anticipated at-
tack by a French military force advancing by way of the Potomac
and southern Pennsylvania, rather than trouble with the Indians.

The traditionally friendly Indians on the Ohio now found
themselves in a precarious situation, however, unable to trade
with the English and threatened by the French and their Indian
allies. The Six Nations Half King and his pro-British followers
had removed to the English settlements, but this course was im-
practical for any large number of Indians; so, of necessity, the
Ohio Indians, their faith in British power shaken by Washing-
ton's failure in 1754 and broken by Braddock's defeat in 1755,
became more or less active collaborators of the French.

Even before the French victory at the Monongahela there had
been warnings of trouble. On June 22-24, 1755, "Two Parties of
French and Indians, to the amount of 130 men," had raided the
borders of Virginia and Maryland, killing more than twenty per-
sons near Fort Cumberland; and on July 3 a few Indians had
attacked Burd's road builders. John Harris had warned that "for
want of small Block Houses, or Forts, and Men to guard our
Back Inhabitants" Pennsylvanian settlers might suffer similar
raids. But to some people the trouble at Fort Cumberland seemed
comfortably distant; and Edward Shippen, writing on July 4
of the Indian attack at "our Fort" (Fort Cumberland), had ob-
served that "of all the Persons I have talked with, John Harris
at Pexton is the greatest Coward, and discourages the Folks most
... I hope I have put a Stop to his silly Proceedings." Never-
theless, in this same letter, Shippen had recommended a guard and
stockade at the Cumberland County supply depot. By this date the
raids on the settlers were believed to have been the work of the
once-friendly Delawares and Shawnees.7

* Ibid., 533; PAI, II, 385-386, 392.
7 CR, VI, 457-460; 466-467; PAI, II, 362-364.
On July 31 the Provincial Assembly received petitions from Paxton, Derry, and Hanover townships, Lancaster County (now Dauphin and Lebanon), "setting forth the great Danger they apprehend themselves to be in since the late Defeat of the Forces under General Braddock, and praying that this House would
furnish them with Arms and Ammunition for Defence of their Houses and Families”; on the following day it received similar petitions from Chester County. On August 22 the Assembly granted a thousand pounds “for the King’s Use,” and appointed a committee of five members (of whom Evan Morgan and Benjamin Franklin became the active members) to dispense the money. By the end of October this committee had purchased five hundred guns and a supply of ammunition which were distributed in Cumberland, York, and Lancaster counties.

George Croghan, whose trading post at Aughwick (Shirleysburg) stood “30 Miles back of all Inhabitation on ye fronteers,” began to build “a Small Stockade fort,” as he wrote William Johnson on September 10; by October 9 he hoped to have his stockade finished “by the middle of next week,” and asked Charles Swaine, at Shippensburg, to “Lend me 6 Guns with powder, 20 of Lead by the bearer,” which he promised to repay.

Then, on Thursday, October 16, the first hostile blow fell on the Pennsylvania settlements—not on the western reaches of Cumberland County, as anticipated, but on the Susquehanna. “A Dutch Woman,” going to visit relatives at Penns Creek, near present Selinsgrove, first discovered the bodies of the victims; and on October 20 John Harris wrote to inform the Governor of the attack. Twenty-five persons had been killed or carried off; and the Delaware Indians who committed the massacre had transferred the field of battle from the remote woods of the Monongahela to the bounds of the settled countryside.

Among the varied consequences of this attack, the first and most terrifying, a report that an army of French and Indians was advancing down the Susquehanna West Branch, proved a false alarm. The creation of an open breach between Pennsylvania’s white settlers and her once-friendly Indians, on the other hand, was of grave and lasting consequence; for these Indians’

8 CR, VI, 679; Pennsylvania Archives, Eighth Series (PA8), V, 3935, 4004, 4354-4357; Penn MSS, Indian Affairs, III, 28-29 (Historical Society of Pennsylvania).


10 CR, VI, 645-648, 654-655; see also “Narrative of Marie LeRoy and Barbara Leininger,” PA2, VII, 401 ff.
knowledge of eastern Pennsylvania, to which most of them were native, made them especially useful allies of the French, whose raiding parties, composed of Delawares and other Indians, commonly accompanied by a few Frenchmen, soon terrorized the unprotected Pennsylvania frontier. Finally, the period of confusion and terror that followed these Indian attacks saw the first attempts to organize the frontier defenses which now had become necessary.

From Penns Creek a wave of alarm spread southward and eastward over the Province. A party of about forty men who went up to bury the victims of the attack were fired upon near the scene of the massacre, on October 25, and had several of their number killed or drowned; and the two incidents won credence for the report, widely circulated a few days later, that fifteen hundred French and Indians were on the march.11 The people of Cumberland County, within whose limits the two incidents took place, apprehensive before of attacks along their western frontier, now fully expected heavy blows upon their northern borders. Isolated settlers retreated into more populated areas; and those who stood their ground improvised loopholes and raised stockades to transform houses, mills, and even churches into the "private forts" which, in Cumberland County especially, became a commonplace of frontier life. In Lancaster County the effect of the attack at Penns Creek seems to have been fully as great as in Cumberland County; the impact upon Lancaster County was perhaps the greater because the threat of attack here had seemed less immediate.

A proposal (anticipating the later Shamokin venture) to establish a fort at Penns Creek proved short-lived. A shipment of arms for this purpose, on October 28, including the last weapons bought with the Assembly's thousand-pound grant, and two cannon donated by William Allen, was opened at John Harris's and distributed locally, some of them being sent to Samuel Hunter's mill, near present Rockville.12

On October 20, Tobias Hendricks wrote from "Fortt Pleasent" to Secretary Richard Peters, asking arms "for the Defence of this Fort and the Psons that has Joyned to it which is upwards of one hundred." Possibly Hendricks' fort was the proposed one up the river, but it seems more probable that it was at his own home,

11 CR, VI, 649, 653-656, 659, 673, 682.
12 Ibid., 655-656; PA1, II, 392, 441; Pennsylvania Gazette, Oct. 30, 1755.
in present Camp Hill. In response to this appeal, George Steven-
son reported from York, on November 5, that “We have sent 53
Men well fited from this Town last Monday [November 3] 2
o’clock P. M. & a Doctor, some Medicines & what Ammunition
we could spare to Tob’s Hendrix’s to join the main Body of Eng-
lish Forces on the most needful Part of the Frontiers, Mr. Adlum
is with them.” Another York County company, under Hance
Hamilton, marched to Carlisle.15

In Lancaster County matters were reported in such confusion
that James Hamilton, Governor Morris’s predecessor and now a
member of his Council, was sent to that county with a dedimus,
dated November 3, to commission militia officers. Edward Shippen
reported, on November 4, that “The People of this County are
very willing to join in repelling the Invadres, but are without
order, and many want arms. There are five Companies now in
this Town from the Lower end of this County and the upper
end of Chester County, besides three Companies belonging to the
Town.” Two days later, he wrote that “there are about a Thou-
sand Men in Arms gone up to John Harris’s within these two
days; and this morning Mr Hamilton took horse to meet them
There”; however, “before the Army would move Mr Hamilton
& Mr James Wright were obliged to promise to bear their charge
upon ye road and to support them During their Stay abroad”.
Shippen also reported that “Eleven Companies were Stopt coming
up . . . by a Lye . . . that ye Govr declared that if any of ye Com-
pany should kill an Indian Or a frenchman they would be prose-
cuted according to Law.” Shortly, this accumulation of men was
dispersed; a year later, however, “sundry Tavern-keepers in Lan-
caster” petitioned the Assembly to repay them “for Diet furnished
the voluntary Militia on their March last Year to Harris’s Ferry.”14

Temporarily, attention had been diverted from the western
frontier of Cumberland County. It is true that Sheriff John Potter
had called a meeting, on October 30, at which it had been decided
to maintain five forts, at Carlisle, Shippensburg, Colonel Cham-
bers’ (Chambersburg), Mr. Steel’s Meeting House (east of Merc-
cersburg), and William Allison’s (Greencastle); but the first two

15 PA1, II, 438, 514; see also 466.
14 Ibid., 463-464, 472; PA8, VI, 4439; Shippen Papers, E. Shippen to Jo-
seph Shippen, Nov. 7, 1755 (American Philosophical Society).
of these had been authorized in July, and mention as early as November 2 of "the Fort at Mr. Steel's Meeting House" suggests that this fort also was of previous origin. The plans were late. Referring on November 5 to Hendricks' district as "the most needful Part of the Frontiers," Stevenson had written unaware that on Saturday afternoon, four days before, a hundred Delaware and Shawnee Indians, led by "King" Shingas and Captain Jacobs, had descended upon the Big Cove (present McConnellsburg, Fulton County) and Tonoloway Creek, near the Maryland line, and had wiped out the settlements there. Sheriff Potter subsequently reported that of a total of ninety-three families, forty-seven had been wiped out, and twenty-seven plantations burnt.15

The news spread rapidly along the valley. James Burd, building Fort Morris at Shippensburg, heard Saturday night that Indians had been seen at William Maxwell's, on Conococheague; and on Sunday afternoon word of this new massacre came to John Armstrong at Carlisle. After consultation, Armstrong, John Smith, and William Buchanan decided that Hance Hamilton and his company should march for Shippensburg on Monday morning, and that Burd should, if possible, precede him. Meanwhile, Sheriff Potter and Adam Hoops, at Conococheague, had summoned their neighbors, about a hundred of whom met at McDowell's Mill on Sunday morning and scouted among the still burning plantations.

Reinforcements arrived that afternoon; but Potter, Hoops, and the Reverend John Steel, who wanted to pursue the Indians up the valley, were outvoted by those who wished to return to McDowell's Mill, whereupon Potter and his men went home. "I will not guard a man that will not fight," Potter declared, and urged the Governor to give arms to "such persons as would go out upon Scouts after the Indians rather than for the supply of Forts." Burd and Hamilton arrived at McDowell's on Monday, and called upon the local militia and others to join them. By Thursday, November 6, according to Hoops, four hundred men had assembled, half from Cumberland County, half with Hamilton from York County; but Shingas' warriors and their captive had by then recrossed the Allegheny Mountains, and the troops could

15 CR, VI, 673-676, 706-707; Lamberton Scotch-Irish Collection, I, 23 (Historical Society of Pennsylvania).
only search the Cove and Path Valley and bring in whatever live- 
stock the Indians had.

This second invasion of Cumberland County intensified the de-
mand for adequate protection. Reporting the attack to the Gov-
ernor, John Armstrong wrote, on November 2, "I'm of opinion,
that no other means than a Chain of Block Houses along or near
the south side of the Kittatinny Mountains, from Sasquehannah
to the Temporary Line, can Secure the Lives and properties even
of the old Inhabitants of this County, the new Settlements being
all fled except Shareman's Valley"; and on November 17 the
Assembly had before it "A Petition from sundry Inhabitants of
the County of Cumberland, praying that a Line of Forts may be
erected from Potowmack to Susquehanna, and properly gar-
risoned, for the Preservation of the Inhabitants of the said
County, from the Incursions of the French and their Indians."

Governor Morris continued meanwhile to commission militia
officers, and on November 3 had asked the Assembly to estab-
lish a regular militia. The Assembly, while delaying action on this
request, voted on November 19 to appropriate the stores of flour
and cattle then in Cumberland County, intended originally for
Braddock's army, for the relief of the distressed inhabitants, as
John Armstrong and John Smith judged proper; and in addition
the Assembly made small grants of money to individual sufferers
from Indian attacks. The Governor entrusted a quantity of pow-
der, lead, and shot to Edward Shippen, who during the next few
months distributed them in Cumberland, York, Lancaster, and
Berks counties; and more arms were distributed, on a "lend-lease"
basis, to frontier settlers. Meanwhile the establishment of "private
forts" continued, the best known in Cumberland County probably
being that at John McDowell's mill.

Settlers east of the Susquehanna also reacted to the attacks and
alarms west of the river. In Berks County, Conrad Weiser had
heard on October 26 that the enemy had "crossed Susquehannah

16 CR, VI, 673-674; PA1, II, 462-463; Mississippi Valley Historical Re-
view, XIII (1926), 58 ff.; Edward Shippen Thompson Collection, Armstrong
et al. to Burd, Nov. 2, 1755 (Division of Public Records, Harrisburg); 
Shippen Family Papers, Corresp., II, 9 (Historical Society of Pennsylvania).
17 PA1, II, 451-452; PA8, V, 4119.
18 CR, VI, 672; PA1. II, 613-615; PA4, II, 695-696; PA8, V, 4131-4132,
4144; Penn MSS, Indian Affairs, III, 77.
and killed a great many people, from Thomas McKee down to Hunter's Mill” (“within five Miles of Harris' Ferry,” as Governor Morris observed). No doubt this alarm explains the stoppage at Harris's of the shipment of arms and cannon intended for Penns Creek.

In Berks County, the general dismay occasioned by the first Indian attacks was perhaps best expressed by James Read of Reading, who, as he wrote the Governor, on October 27, had “the misfortune of being Major of two associated Companies” of militia. In Heidelberg Township, near the Berks-Lancaster County Line, Weiser assembled two hundred of his neighbors on October 27 and set out to meet the enemy. Directing fifty men toward Tolheo (present Bethel, Berks County), Weiser led the others toward the Susquehanna. Arriving next day at Adam Reed's (near present Indiantown Gap), he learned that a party led by Thomas McKee, Harris, and others had gone up to Penns Creek and Shamokin; so, their number now increased to 320, Weiser's party turned homeward. Meantime, the party sent to Tolheo, their number grown to a hundred, had met William Parsons, who instructed them to go on to the mountain pass, construct defenses, and keep watch while he got ammunition. In Parsons' absence, however, this party, apparently overcome with relief when they found no Indians at the pass, marched back down the mountain, firing guns on the way and terrifying the settlers, who of course thought the enemy was upon them. A few days later, however, three settlers were killed north of the mountain; and on October 31 Governor Morris commissioned Weiser “Colonel of the Forces that were raised & should be raised” in Berks County.”

In Lancaster and Berks, as in Cumberland County, people reacted to danger by establishing “private forts.” John Harris had as early as June 30 advised such protection; and on October 23, after the massacre at Penns Creek, he wrote Richard Peters: “If I had some little Encouragement I could raise a Stockade Fort here but for me to Maintain a Number of Men I am not able in sd Place if Built.” Six days later, garrison or none, Harris cut

---

239 CR, VI, 650-651.
loopholes in his house, around which he afterwards erected "an excellent Stockade."\footnote{\textit{CR}, VI, 655-656; \textit{PAI}, II, 635; Penn MSS, Official Correspondence, VII, 127.}

On November 8, only six days after John Armstrong recommended a chain of forts west of the Susquehanna, the Provincial Assembly received "a Petition from divers Inhabitants of Paxton-Narrows, in the County of Lancaster," asking for a militia law or for funds to maintain troops and build forts; and while the Assembly debated these matters, the people proceeded to establish their own line of defense. Unlike the early defenses west of the river, these in Lancaster and Berks coincided with the line of the later Provincial chain of forts. The earliest mentioned is Hunter's Fort (present Rockville), to which was sent part of the October 28 shipment of arms intended for Penns Creek. Eastward, at the mountain passes, were Samuel Robinson's at Manada Gap, Adam Reed's near Indiantown Gap, Peter Hedrick's at Swatara Gap, and Dietrich Six's at Tolheo.\footnote{\textit{PAI}, II, 480, 503, 545, 552-553; \textit{PA8}, V, 4104, 4357.} Manned by patrols set up on November 19, these stockades constituted a defense system extending from the Susquehanna to the Schuylkill, established through local initiative and with little official aid beyond a share of the arms purchased with the Assembly grant of August 22 or lent by the Provincial authorities.

An Indian attack, November 15, on a party standing watch at Dietrich Six's (where Fort Henry was later built) stressed the need for organized defense; six men of the watch were killed, and on that and the following day nearby settlers were also killed and their houses burnt. On November 19 some of the landowners, led by Conrad Weiser, Emanuel Carpenter, and Simon Adam Kuhn, agreed to support a body of 150 men who were to station themselves in houses along the foot of the Blue Mountain, half of their number in the part of Berks County west of Schuylkill River, the other half in Lancaster County. They were to serve for forty days, until about the end of the year; and on Governor Morris's orders the guard in Berks County continued a month longer, until replaced by Provincial garrisons. Of the officers who served in this county, the names of Captain Jacob Morgan (later of the Provincial service) and Captain Die-
fenbach are on record. In Lancaster County, the original guard was replaced; on December 10, George Reynolds of Lebanon Township and Henry Wagoner of Bethel were commissioned captains of companies which succeeded the previous groups. Elsewhere in Lancaster County, Captain Peter Hedrick and Captain Adam Reed served in Hanover Township, and Captain Thomas McKee in Paxton. In this last township, John Harris, acting on the unauthorized orders of Captain George Croghan, maintained a guard of men for eighteen days.

The Governor’s mind was meanwhile occupied with plans to fortify Shamokin (present Sunbury), at the forks of the Susquehanna. Rumors of a French army descending the West Branch had caused miscarriage of the plan to fortify Penns Creek in October, and had inspired a surmise that the French themselves intended to fortify Shamokin. Such a feat, had it been possible, would have been disastrous to Pennsylvania; and to forestall this threat seemed a pressing matter. Inconveniently for the Province, the land at Shamokin was not yet purchased from the Six Nations, though it appears that these Indians’ representative there, Shikellamy, had sold some sort of claim to the Penns. The difficulty was accommodated, however, when John Armstrong reported that Andrew Montour and Scarroyady, successor to Tanagharirson as head of the Six Nations refugees from the Ohio, had on November 1 advised “that a Fort should immediately be Erected at Shamokin.” Undoubtedly aware that these Indians could not speak for the Six Nations council, Governor Morris gave them, on November 14, a somewhat evasive reply to their request; but on the following day he wrote to William Johnson: “I intend to build a Fort at Shamokin this Winter, of which be pleased likewise to acquaint the Six Nations, & I doubt not they will approve this measure.” Winter was to give place to summer, however, before Morris’s plan was put into effect.

East of the Schuylkill and in Northampton County, defense plans lagged. Remote from the French posts and apparent threat

23 CR, VI, 755; PA1, II, 503-505, 511-512, 543, 551-552; PA8, V, 4359, VI, 5385, 5390; Pa. Gazette, Nov. 20, 1755; Papers of the Provincial Council, Morris to Prov. Commissioners, Mar. 12, 1756 (Div. of Public Records).

of invasion, the settlers in this region reacted less promptly. The Moravians at Bethlehem were concerned over the narrow escapes of some of their missionaries from Shamokin, Wyoming, and Lackawanna, it is true; and the Scotch-Irish settlers presented to the Assembly, on November 4, "A Petition from Thomas Craig and Hugh Wilson, of the Forks of Delaware," apprehensive of danger and asking for arms. A few days later it was rumored at Easton that the fictitious "Body of 1500 French & Indians" was within sixty miles of the town; and on November 10 the Assembly had another petition, from the "Forks of Delaware, Lower and Upper Smithfield," for passage of a militia law. But a day later, Timothy Horsfield wrote from Bethlehem: "As far as I can learn, the People who were lately much frightned in these parts are pretty much composed, and I cant hear of any Mischief being done, nor of any French or Indians being seen any where near us." It is possible that the composite nature of the population of this county made cooperation less easy and may account in part for later complaints about the difficult attitude of the people here.2

Indian troubles on this part of the frontier were an aftermath of the attack at Penns Creek on October 16, and of the effect of this attack upon the Indians resident along the Susquehanna North Branch under Six Nations supervision. Excepting a few Six Nations Indians and a Shawnee settlement (headed by Paxinosa) at Wyoming, these Indians were chiefly Delawares of various bands. The Schuylkill Indians (Unames) and Munsees excepted, these Delawares were remnants of bands of confused or uncertain identity. Unlike the Indians of the southeastern part of the Province, many of them had been roughly dispossessed in consequence of the "Walking Purchase" of 1737; and, to a greater degree than the Indians on the Ohio, they felt themselves hemmed in by the whites to the south and east and the Six Nations to the north. The efforts among them of Moravian missionaries from Bethlehem and of the Presbyterian Brainerds in New Jersey had contributed religious disunity to their confusion, and called forth reaction in the form of "nativist" religious movements.

The mood of most of these Indians was unstable; and after the first attacks upon white settlers all Indians were more or less

---

2 PA1, II, 458-460, 480, 488-489, 491-493, 500; PA8, V, 4097, 4109.
The Indians at Shamokin abandoned their settlements and moved up to Nescopeck, on the North Branch; but the hostile Indians from the Ohio moved, too, and made this place their headquarters. Silver Heels, a friendly Six Nations Indian whom Hamilton sent up the river for news in November, 1755, reported that at Nescopeck “he saw one hundred and forty Indians, all Warriors; that they were dancing the War Dance; expressed great bitterness against them, and he thought would go to the Eastward” to attack the settlers.

On November 21, Bishop Spangenberg, at Bethlehem, received a letter from a missionary at Gnadenhütten (present Weissport and Lehighton, Carbon County), reporting the threat of attack and asking that the mission Indians be escorted to safety. The county officials, to whom Spangenberg forwarded this letter, called upon the townships, on November 24, to maintain a guard along the line of the mountain; and on the same day a Northampton company, followed by New Jersey troops under Colonel John Anderson, set out for the mission. However adequate this help, it arrived too late; when David Zeisberger, who had gone in advance with the news, arrived at the town, at dark, the mission farm west of the river was in flames. While the troops stopped for the night near the mountain pass a few miles away, a party of hostile Indians from Nescopeck fired the buildings and massacred the missionaries. Of fourteen persons, three escaped.

As elsewhere, the attack was followed by dismay and by hasty efforts at defense. A Bucks County company under Captain Wilson, which was joined by local units, set out from Bethlehem on November 26 to patrol the mountain line. Three days later Bishop Spangenberg urged to the county justices “that Gnadenhütten is of as great importance to our Government as Shamokin. . . If the Government should think well to build there a fort, we will give of the land we have there, ten acres, for that purpose.” By William Hays, of this county, the Commissioners of the recently passed Supply Act (November 27) sent a shipment of a hundred guns and ammunition for Easton, the Moravians at Bethlehem, and residents of Lehigh Township and other parts of the fron-

26 CR, VI, 783.
27 Ibid., 736-737; PAI, II, 520-523; Horsfield Papers, I, 65 (American Philosophical Society).
 Meanwhile, behind these emergency measures, plans developed for the system of Provincial defenses undertaken soon afterward in Northampton County.

Of the numerous appeals for aid presented to the Governor and the Assembly in consequence of the first Indian attacks on the outlying settlements, few were so explicit, or so well anticipated the subsequent course of official action, as the petition from Paxton Narrows presented on November 8, 1755, which asked the Assembly “that this House would either enact a Militia Law, or grant a sufficient Sum of Money to maintain such a Number of regular Troops as may be thought necessary to defend our Frontiers, and build Fortifications in proper Places.” By the close of the month both the recommended measures had become law: “An Act for the better ordering and Regulating such as are willing and desirous to be united for Military Purposes within this Province” was signed by Governor Morris on November 25; and “An Act for granting the sum of Sixty Thousand Pounds to the Kings Use, and for striking Fifty five Thousand Pounds thereof in Bills of Credit and to provide a Fund for sinking the same” was passed two days later.29

As early as December 24, 1754, the Governor had submitted to the Assembly a Proprietary recommendation to “provide at this Time for the Defence and Safety of the Province . . . by establishing a regular Militia . . . , and providing Arms and Stores of War, and building proper Magazines in the most convenient places.” Enactment of such measures in a province where Quaker tradition and political position were so strong presented obvious difficulties, however; and the Assembly refused to act on the recommendation, on the grounds that the French forts at Presque Isle and Le Boeuf were not known to be within this Province.30

So matters rested until arrival of the news of Braddock’s defeat, in July, 1755, when the Governor, then at Carlisle, authorized the two forts and four militia companies in Cumberland

28 PA1, II, 521; Wm. C. Reichel, Memorials of the Moravian Church (Philadelphia, 1870), I, 208; Northampton County Papers, 1727-1758, William Hays to William Parsons, Dec. 6, 1755 (Historical Society of Pennsylvania).
29 PA8, V, 4104; Statutes at Large of Pennsylvania (Harrisburg, 1896-), V, 197-212.
30 CR, VI, 213, 233-234.
County. These companies, like all other militia organized prior to November 25, were voluntary associations commissioned under terms of the royal charter authorizing the Proprietor “to doe all . . . which to the charge and office of a Captaine generall of an Army belongeth.” Renewed appeals, on August 9 and afterward, for a militia law having failed to move the Assembly, the Governor “caused the Inhabitants of the several Counties to be told that if they would enter into associations, form themselves into Companies, and recommend fit persons for their Officers, he would grant them Commissions.”

The bill submitted by the Assembly on November 20, and signed five days later, was so loosely drawn, to satisfy conscientious objectors, that a crown committee later pronounced it “rather calculated to exempt Persons from Militia Services than to encourage and promote them.” On February 13, 1756, it was determined that companies formed under this Act should be regimented by counties, Philadelphia to have its own City Regiment, however, and no regiment to comprise fewer than eight companies; and an order to this effect was issued a month later. A preliminary draft of the order, dated February 13, presumes one regiment in Philadelphia County (8 companies), one in Northampton (9), a combined regiment for Bucks (6) and Berks (3), one each for Chester (7) and Lancaster (10), and a combined regiment for Cumberland and York.

That this Militia Act was voided by the King on July 7 was of little practical importance; for Provincial Council minutes do not record this invalidation until October 15, fifteen days before the expiration of the Act by its own terms. The deficiencies of the Act, moreover, were all too apparent; and although Benjamin Franklin had defended it ably in “A Dialogue between X, Y, and Z concerning the Present State of Affairs in Pennsylvania,” printed in the Pennsylvania Gazette of December 18, 1755, Franklin himself was within a few days of that date engaging paid troops to defend the Province. It was the Supply Act of November 27, 1755, rather than the Militia Act, that provided an effective means of defense.

In contrast with the companies set up under the Militia Act,

---

31 Ibid., I, 24 (1852 ed.), VI, 680.
32 Ibid., VII, 40-41, 60-62; PA2, II, 697-698.
associated companies like the four commissioned in Cumberland County in July, 1755, had a longer and more useful life. Such companies continued to be created even while the Act was in force, and were not affected by its invalidation. A list dated November 4, 1756, after dissolution of the regular militia, lists 5 associated companies in Philadelphia City, 9 in Bucks County, 8 in York, and 9 in Lancaster. Several associated companies had by then been taken into Provincial pay; and others served on various parts of the frontier without benefit of Provincial pay. On August 24, 1756, for example, "the Remaining part of the Inhabitants of East Pensborrow township, in Cumberland County," reported that they had "agreed with a gard of fourteen men in number," whom, however, they were unable to pay. On November 5, John Harris reported that Paxton Township had kept a guard for twelve months past; by May 16, 1757, Derry Township had for eighteen months maintained a guard in Hanover Township, its neighbor to the north, at a cost of three hundred pounds; and in this same month a guard of twenty-five men ranged the frontiers of Lehigh and Allen townships, in Northumberland County.\(^{33}\)

With the signing of the Supply Act on November 27, 1755, two days after passage of the Militia Act, it became possible for Provincial officials to plan for an effective system of defense; for the authorized fund, administered by a group of seven commissioners (two from the Governor's Council, five from the Assembly), could be used to maintain paid troops and to build and garrison forts. Richard Peters sounded very optimistic when, the day after passage of the Supply Act, he wrote to the Proprietors:

... The Govr goes among the Back Settlers as soon as the Plan of Operations shall be concerted between him & ye Committee. And I hope he will regain ye Affections of all ye Country People, & build Block-Houses, establish companies of Rangers, under Regular Pay all along ye Blue Hills, & perhaps We can hire a Company or two to act on ye offensive to go to the Indian Towns. These Things done ye Province will be well defended. ... \(^{34}\)

\(^{33}\) \textit{PA1, II}, 758-759, III, 19-21, 34, 159, 164. The Hanover guard, captained by Hedrick and Reed, was taken into Provincial pay, May-August, 1757; see \textit{PA8, VI}, 4626.

\(^{34}\) Peters letter book.
Governor Morris's plan, as described by Peters in a letter of December 4, was "to build a Fort at Shamokin immediately, & for that Purpose to raise 500 Men who will serve some for a Garrison & Others for Companies of Rangers. The Plan will be compleated in a day or two." However, this scheme, to which we have already referred, had the practical defect of providing no immediate protection for the frontier settlers, already badly shaken by the first Indian attacks and unable to organize or to finance any really effective resistance; and numbers of these people were reported ready to march on Philadelphia. With affairs in this state, Governor Morris left for New York, where General Shirley had invited some of the governors to confer with him on plans for defense; and in his absence the Provincial Commissioners named in the Supply Act took the first active steps to establish a system of Provincial defenses.

In compliance with the frontier demands for immediate protection, these Commissioners dismissed for the time the Governor's plan and took up the one which had been proposed in Cumberland County, calling for a chain of frontier forts between which patrols should pass and repass in an unbroken line of defense. On November 2, as we have observed, John Armstrong had advocated such a chain extending from the Susquehanna to the Maryland line; and his proposal had been incorporated into the Cumberland County petition presented on November 17 to the Assembly. The Provincial Commissioners now proposed to extend such a chain eastward to the Delaware. Some six months later, when a more aggressive policy was being advocated, the Commissioners defended their decision:

When the Indians first began to Infest our Frontiers, the Commissioners were of Oppinion that the best means of Securing our Inhabitants was to carry the warr into the Enemy's Country and hunt them in all their Fishing, Hunting, Planting, & dwelling places; But having sent for Croghan & others in order to obtain their Opinion, and they advising that by a Chain of forts the Frontier should first be in some degree secured before we acted Offencively, the same was agreed to—the Building of Forts immediately set about, which took up much more time than was expected. . . .

20 Ibid.
26 CR, VII, 153.
The Commissioners were spurred on by new Indian incursions; on December 10 raiding parties attacked at several places in Northampton County, both above and within the Blue Mountain. Four days later William Peters wrote to the Governor, then in New York:

Mr. Hamilton Orders me to send you the enclosed papers, by wch you will see What a Miserable Situation ye Province is in; he desires me to Apologize for his not writing to you himself (being busily engaged wth the Rest of ye Comissrs at the State house) & to tell you that the Whole Country from the Minesinks quite to Easton is Deserted by the Inhabitants, & that the Indians are Wasting & Destroying all before them as fast as they Can, Runing from Plantation to Plantn the Comissrs talk of Raising & takeing 500 Men into ye Govnts Pay, & to send immediately to one Lesher (who they say has 100 Men Already Raised) & to Another of ye New Captains to Carry 300 Men into those parts to make head against those Indians; And Mr. Hamilton, Mr. Franklin & Jo. Fox, (if he can be prevail'd on) Propose to set out Next Thursday towards ye Parts where ye Indians are Committing those Ravages, in Order to Spirit up the People to Act Vigerously agains them, & then to Proceed to ye Building Block Houses all along ye Borders, & to Station Sufficient Numbers of the 500 Men at all proper places to Secure ye Country, they talk of going as far as Shamokin to Build a Fort there, And dont Propose to Return till they have, in some Measures Guarded the Whole Frontier—

By the time Hamilton himself wrote, on December 18, provision had been made for Cumberland County as well: “Our present Scheme is to take 500 men into Constant Service, half on this & half on the other side of Sasquehanna, & to erect Five Block Houses on Each Side, and the space between them to be continually ranged by the respective Garrisons. I have given Geo. Croghan a Captain’s Commission; He is to raise the men immediately, and Superintend the building over Sasquehannah.”

Having given Croghan his instructions, three of the Commissioners, Hamilton, Franklin, and Fox, set out for Northampton

57 Penn MSS, Indian Affairs, II, 50.
58 PAI, II, 537-538.
County. Between December 20, when they arrived at Easton, and December 31, when they left Bethlehem to meet Governor Morris at Reading, they took into the Provincial pay several companies of troops, some three hundred men in all, including units raised locally and some militia companies brought up from Bucks and Philadelphia counties, and placed them under the direction of William Parsons, commissioned as major. They assigned companies captained by George Aston and John Trump to build two blockhouses between Dupui's, on Delaware River, and Gnadenhütten; and directed another company, under Captain William Hays, to build a third fort at the latter place. Hays' company, however, was routed by an Indian war party, on January 1, 1756; so Franklin was sent back from Reading to reorganize and complete the county's defenses. He returned to Bethlehem on January 7, and remained in the county until February 5, when he left for Philadelphia. Establishing himself at Gnadenhütten, Franklin supervised the construction there of Fort Allen, and directed the building of three other forts in the county, all on the northern side of the Blue Mountain. On his departure, he placed the further defense of Northampton in the hands of Captain William Claplan, commissioned a colonel. How far defense needs had grown since December is shown by the fact that on January 26 Franklin had 522 paid troops in this county alone; and that at the conclusion of his work, with the forts completed, he still had 389 soldiers in pay.  

The situation in Berks and Lancaster counties at this time was less grave, thanks to the efforts of Weiser and others who had established the line of guardposts extending from the Schuylkill to the Susquehanna. Arriving at Reading from Philadelphia on January 1, Governor Morris reported that: "There are I find above one hundred and thirty men upon the Frontiers of this County, besides the Guard in this Town, and I shall consider in what manner to post them, so as best to contribute to the Public Safety." The Governor made only minor changes during this brief visit of January 1 to 6, before going on to Carlisle; further orders issued January 25 to 27, when he stopped again in Read-
ing on his homeward journey, completed arrangements for the defenses of these two counties, which included four forts and two secondary outposts. Unlike the forts in Northampton County, all but one of these stood at the southern foot of the Blue Mountain. The three chief forts east of the Susquehanna, in the Governor’s opinion, were Fort Allen in Northampton County and Lebanon and Henry in Berks, Fort Henry being “ye most considerable of them.”

West of the Susquehanna, Captain Croghan had been ordered in December to erect “three Stockadoes, viz, One back of Patterson’s, One upon Kishecoquillas, and one Near Sideling Hill.” Croghan having already fortified his own trading post at Aughwick, this would provide four forts on the frontier of Cumberland County. When Governor Morris and his company arrived at Carlisle, about January 10, 1756, Croghan had enlisted men “in a very Expeditious manner, but not so frugally as the Commissioners for disposing of the Publick money thought he might have done.” According to Richard Peters:

> It appeared by his Returns y⁴ he had raised 300 Men, y⁴ he had in part built a Fort at the Sugar Cabbins on the new Road cut for the Use of Gen¹ Braddock, . . . & had left 70 Men there. The Govr has since called this Fort after M³ Lyttelton. M⁴ Croghan’s own House at Aucquick distant 20 Miles East of Fort Lyttelton was fortified last Fall; here he had posted 100 Men, & this is named Fort Shirley—At 20 Miles distant Eastward from this another Fort called Fort Granville is laid out at a Place called Coshicoguillas, distant 20 Miles Eastward of Fort Shirley, & here he had posted 50 or 60 Men.

In addition, the fort at Patterson’s probably was completed or nearly so.⁴¹

As we have seen, the Commissioners originally had planned for five blockhouses west of the Susquehanna, garrisoned by 250 men in all. On January 15, 1756, the Governor wrote from Carlisle that “The Commissioners and I have agreed to engage three hundred Men for the Protection of the Western Frontier, who are to be stationed in Five forts, extending from the Sugar Cabins near

⁴⁰ CR, VI, 770-771; PAI, II, 544-545, 547-556, 561, 565.
Sideling Hill to a place within twenty Miles of the Sasquehannah, and probably we may order a [sixth] Fort on the West side of that river." The plan finally adopted, however, provided only four forts. With one exception, these were the forts on which Croghan's men had worked; however, Morris decided to evacuate the fort at Patterson's, and ordered Captain James Patterson (on whose land this fort stood) to build a fort farther northeast, on Mahantango Creek. The Governor took a special interest in these four Cumberland County forts, and special credit for them; he lost no time in circulating somewhat premature reports of their construction, and noted with satisfaction that the garrisons were composed of regularly enlisted men and not (like some of the eastern companies) of militiamen taken into pay. 

These Cumberland County forts were more widely separated than those east of the Susquehanna; and, unlike the latter, they lay outside the more settled country, beyond not only the Blue Mountain but also the Tuscarora Mountain. The earlier local defenses, following the line of the Cumberland Valley, were not supplanted by the Provincial chain, as those of Lancaster and Berks counties were, but survived for a time as a separate system with distinct functions. While local forts, like those at Carlisle and Shippensburg, served as refuges for settlers, the Provincial forts served as military outposts to ward off threatened invasion. This was consistent with the Governor's plan for a fort at Shamokin; even so, these outposts were less advanced than had been proposed by Lieutenant Colonel Adam Stephen, a Virginian officer who on November 9, 1755, had written from Winchester to advise that:

The proper Steps to be taken to secure your Frontiers, are to set about a Chain of Forts directly. One at Ray's Town [Bedford], another in the Fork of the North and south Branch of Juniata [near Huntingdon], some others up Sasquehanna, at the proper Passes. Unless this is done, the pacifick Gentlemen [Quakers] of your Colony will either from Necessity change their Principles, or have their Throats cut. 

By the end of January, 1756, therefore, the Provincial plan of defense relied upon a chain of forts garrisoned by paid troops who

---

43 Pa. Gazette, Nov. 20, 1755.
were to patrol constantly between the forts. East of the Susque-
hanna this chain followed the line of the Blue Mountain; west of
the river it lay beyond that ridge and was supplemented by the
five county forts along the line of the Cumberland Valley. Between
and behind these forts were scattered the "private forts" which,
without official status or garrison, nevertheless encouraged some
of the people to resist rather than to flee. From northeast to south-
west the chain, as planned, included, in Northampton County, Fort
Hamilton (present Stroudsburg), Fort Norris (east of Kresge-
ville), Fort Allen (Weissport), and Fort Franklin (south of Snyders). The first two of these sites are in present Monroe
County, the third in Carbon, and the last in Schuylkill. In Berks
County were Fort Lebanon or William (near Auburn, present
Schuylkill County), with an outpost at Northkill (near Shartles-
ville), and Fort Henry (near Bethel). Lancaster County had Fort
Swatara (near Lickdale), with an outpost at Manada (near
Manada Hill), and Fort Hunter (near Rockville). The first of
these places is in present Lebanon County, the others are in
Dauphin. In Cumberland County were Fort Pomfret Castle (prob-
ably near present Richfield), Fort Granville (near Lewistown),
Fort Shirley (Shirleysburg), and Fort Lyttleton (Fort Littleton).
Of these four sites, the first is on the present border of Snyder and
Juniata counties, the second in Mifflin, the third in Huntingdon,
and the last in Fulton.

Up to this point, the plan of the forts was purely defensive. It
was not until the summer of 1756 that the Province undertook the
bolder step of establishing a fort where Sunbury now stands; and
by that date minor changes had been made in the defensive chain
itself: In Northampton County secondary posts were set up in an
attempt to remedy defects of the original plan; and in Cumber-
land County, at the other extreme of the line, severe enemy attacks
were responsible for revision. Fort Pomfret Castle remained un-
built. An additional fort "at an equal Distance between Fort
Lyttleton at the Sugar Cabbins & a Maryland Fort near the North-
ern Bend of Patowmec," was ordered built in February; but in
March this order was rescinded and a Provincial garrison placed
at McDowell's Mill.44

"CR, VII, 161; PA1, II, 602; Peters letter book, Peters to Proprietors,
Feb. 23, 1756."
In design, these first Provincial forts were not drastically different from such "private forts" as that devised by John Harris; and some of them were, like the private forts, adaptations of older structures. Their prototype was the "Wooden Fort in the Town of Carlisle," laid out in July, 1755. Although this fort and the one
ordered at Shippensburg remained long unfinished, Morris's letter of July 3 to General Braddock, describing the proposed magazine at McDowell's Mill, reflects the Governor's ideas of fortification:

"Inclosed I send you a plan of the fort or stucado, which I shall make by setting Logs of about ten foot long in the ground, so as to inclose the store houses. I think to place two swivel guns in two of the oposite Bastions, which will be sufficient to guard it against any attack of small arms."\(^{45}\) Materials other than logs and planks were used sparingly, as when stone was used for fireplaces and wells, or when parts of previous buildings were utilized. Fort Henry was remarkable for having the roofs of its buildings "all covered with Tyle."\(^{46}\) Croghan's orders in December, 1755, were to build the "Stockadoes" in Cumberland County "Fifty feet Square, with a Block-house on two of the Corners, and a Barrack within, capable of Lodging Fifty men."\(^{47}\) Franklin's ground plan of Fort Allen, enclosed in a letter of January 25, 1756, presents a similar but larger rectangular structure; and a comparable figure must have accompanied the orders to Captains Busse, Schmitt, Morgan, and McKee, in Berks and Lancaster counties, who were instructed to erect stockade forts "of the form and dimensions herewith given you." These captains were to make use of existing buildings, if satisfactory, but were cautioned "to take care that there be no hill near it that over looks or commands it, . . . and that there be a Spring or Running stream of water, either in the fort or at least within the command of your guns."\(^{48}\) In practice, as surviving descriptions show, there was considerable variation in arrangement, determined by the terrain, the availability of earlier buildings and of building materials, and the ability and industry of the officers and garrisons.

By the spring of 1756 this chapter of Pennsylvania's military history had been written. A Province unprepared for the consequences of Braddock's defeat and without a military tradition had established a chain of defense posts along its exposed frontier, raised troops to man these posts, and steadied itself to resist enemy

\(^{45}\) PA1, II, 372.
\(^{46}\) Loudoun Papers, Major Parsons' "Notes and Observations," under date of May 29, 1756.
\(^{47}\) PA1, II, 536.
\(^{48}\) Ibid., 552-555, 563-564.
Benjamin Franklin's Plan of Fort Allen

As copied into the manuscript minutes of the Provincial Council from a letter of January 25, 1756, written to Timothy Horsfield (?) and forwarded to Governor Morris. (Manuscript Provincial Record, vol. O, p. 7; compare the printed version in Colonial Records, VII, 16.)

Courtesy Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission

Attack. Still awaiting action were the plan to establish a fort at Shamokin and the problems of military discipline and organization. Thus far the story was one of defensive measures only; and efforts at more aggressive action belong to a later chapter of the story.