

*French Experiments in Pioneering in Northern Pennsylvania*¹

IN THE fall of 1793, one hundred and fifty years ago, a group of refugees set out from Philadelphia, bound for the wilds of northern Pennsylvania. The route lay west to Harrisburg, thence up the valley of the Susquehanna by wagon or on horseback to Catawissa, twenty miles above Sunbury. At Catawissa baggage and refugees were embarked in Durham boats, capable of carrying a ton or more of freight, and poled fifty miles up the river to Wilkes Barre where there was an inn and trading post. The owner of the trading post, Matthias Hollenback, operated other posts for a distance of a hundred and twenty miles along the river and into the Indian country at Wyalusing, Tioga Point, and Newtown (now Elmira), New York. The boats were part of his equipment, the boatmen his employees.²

The destination of the group was a certain fertile terrace on the west bank of the Susquehanna, about thirty miles below the New York state line. Faced on the east by Rummerfeld Mountain along the side of which runs the modern highway, and encircled by the winding river as by a moat, the twenty-four-hundred-acre terrace sloped gently back into the western hill country. Today the spot where the little group settled is known locally as Frenchtown, and the township as Asylum, in the county of Bradford. The market place of the original town is indicated by a low boulder and tablet set by descendants of the refugees in an evergreen planting, while across the river on the highway overlooking the site a six-foot granite slab with bronze inset records the names of the French exiles of prominence associated with the venture: General Louis de Noailles,

¹ Prepared with the aid of a grant from the Penrose Fund of The American Philosophical Society.

² See L. W. Murray, *Old Tioga Point and Early Athens* (1908), 241f.

brother-in-law of Lafayette, Antoine Omer Talon, royal governor of the Châtelet, and many others.³

By the summer of 1793 the French Revolution which had begun so bravely in 1789 to restore the rights of man, razing the old political prison of the Bastille in Paris and sending the key to Washington in token of its progress, had gotten out of hand. In Paris one radical faction after another grasped at power, throwing its predecessors into prison. Men of liberal outlook were suspect, especially those representing the old families that had furnished France its military and cultural leaders. Those who in 1789 had labored for a constitution and reform were deserting the continent by hundreds. Many of them had fought in our War of Independence, and were sympathetic with the aims and ideals of our young republic. When the radical faction in France dethroned the king, and declared war on England these men turned naturally toward their former ally and their friends of the Order of the Cincinnati in America.⁴

In addition to the hundreds of European exiles seeking our shores by devious routes—for the Atlantic was aswarm with privateers—the ports were presently crowded with San Domingan planters, their families and household slaves. Premature publicizing by agitators of the French slogan of equality and fraternity had led to uprising of African-born slaves, to massacre and pillage. Worse atrocities still were to follow when mulattoes turned against blacks. Those planters who could obtain passage abandoned their coffee and sugar plantations and took ship for Charleston, Savannah, Boston, Philadelphia.⁵ Special relief agencies such as the Société Française de Bienfaisance de Philadelphie were organized to provide succor for the refugees, and sums from our debt to France were appropriated for this purpose. Yellow fever epidemics following the discharge of shiploads of exiles, broke out in the southern ports. In the summer of 1793 all who could deserted Philadelphia and fled to the country.

³ L. W. Murray, *The Story of Some French Refugees and Their "Azilum"* (1903 and 1917), 1-154 *passim*; A. W. Wood, "The Robinson Family and Their Correspondence with the Vicomte and Vicomtesse de Noailles," *Newport Historical Society Bulletin*, No. 42 (1922), 1-35; *Troisième et Quatrième Recueils* (of documents from the "armoire de fer" in the Tuileries, printed by the Convention Nationale in 1793), Nos. 36 and 56.

⁴ J. Turquan, *Les Femmes de l'Émigration* (Paris, 1911); J. G. Rosengarten, *French Colonists and Exiles in the United States* (1907), 86f.; and F. Monaghan, *French Travellers in the United States: a Bibliography* (1933).

⁵ F. S. Childs, *French Refugee Life in the United States, 1790-1800* (1940), 103f., 141.

On physical distress, political crises presently supervened. Hot-headed young Genêt, dispatched by a short-lived radical government as representative to the United States, to rouse sentiment in favor of the new French republic, and to arm privateers in our ports, protested Washington's friendly reception of distinguished officials of the old régime.⁶ Sentiment in America was divided. It was monarchical France that had come to our aid in the darkest hour of our struggle for independence. Should Americans now turn down old friends in favor of a government republican in name only—whose bloody “purges” were aimed at the very liberals who had launched the revolution? Street demonstrations for one side or the other became the fashion.

These circumstances, together with a personal pride that revolted at the prolonged acceptance of charity, led to a plan for colonization in the wilds of Pennsylvania. General Louis de Noailles had fought with ardor in our cause, and had long corresponded with American friends after his return to Europe. On his arrival in Philadelphia, he joined forces with another Royalist refugee, Antoine Omer Talon. Cordially received by Washington, the two appealed to Senator Robert Morris. Morris, who had recently acquired nearly all the western portion of present New York State, as well as sizable areas in northern Pennsylvania,⁷ sent two scouts up the Susquehanna, in August, 1793, to select a suitable site for a village about which an extensive settlement might be organized.

The scouts sent out were no novices in the work assigned them. Major Adam Hoops had accompanied Sullivan in 1779 up the Susquehanna and on through the Finger Lake region, home of the Iroquois Confederacy. Latterly, he had explored in detail the seven-

⁶ Genêt, when the coterie that sent him across fell from power, remained in the United States, himself a refugee, and married Governor Clinton's daughter Cornelia. See Papers of E. C. Genêt, 1793-1794, in The Library of Congress; and M. Minnigerode, *The Career of Edmond Charles Genêt* (1929).

⁷ See Robert Morris' Letter Books, 11-13, in the Manuscript Division of The Library of Congress; William Bingham's Letter Book, in The Historical Society of Pennsylvania; the O'Reilly Papers in The New-York Historical Society; the Nicholson Papers in the Pennsylvania Archives; O. Turner, *Pioneer History of the Holland Purchase of Western New York* (1849); P. Evans, *The Holland Land Company* (1924). The full story of our founding fathers' first efforts at expansion, and the settlement and development of our “back country” as a refuge for the oppressed of Europe has yet to be written. A. H. Sakolsky's *The Great American Land Bubble* (1932) gives a cynical and one-sided summary of these transactions.

million-acre area in western New York claimed by Massachusetts, sold to Phelps and Gorham, and later transferred to Robert Morris. With the sale of a million acres of this tract to an Englishman, Sir William Pultney, and the trials of the latter's Scottish agent, Captain Charles Williamson, who ran a road from the West Branch up to his holdings, Hoops was doubtless quite familiar.⁸ In addition he had spent two years in France, hence was equipped with some knowledge of the French temperament and mode of living.⁹ Of Charles Felix Bué Boulogne, the second scout or "viewer," little is known except that he was a commoner, and had been agent for the ill-fated Scioto immigrants of 1790-1791, a group of discontented bourgeois families gathered from all about France.¹⁰ This company had not only encountered malaria and Indians but a defective title in their extravagantly heralded and all but inaccessible Ohio purchase. Another set of clients from Étampes and Paris located by Boulogne in the Chenango valley in New York State, not far from the Oneida reservation, were querulously vocal over the severity of the winter, their isolation, absence of conveniences, and the proximity of savage neighbors.¹¹ Boulogne could be trusted to choose cautiously in his third venture.

The site selected on the Susquehanna was not only reasonably accessible by water, but all about it were other pioneer enterprises of promise. Judge William Cooper, whose son, James Fenimore, was presently to launch a vogue for Indian fiction, had established himself on Lake Otsego in New York State, a hundred miles up the Susquehanna.¹² His thirty-thousand-acre estate was already attracting French émigrés. Seventy-five miles upstream on a Chemung tributary, Captain Williamson would soon have his Bath colony going under better auspices. To the west of him, a group of Amster-

⁸ A. Parker, "Charles Williamson, Builder of the Genesee Country," *Rochester Historical Society Publications*, VI (1927), 1-34; and L. d'A. Engle, "The Williamson Road," *Northumberland County Historical Society Proceedings*, XII (1942), 77-107.

⁹ M. D. Brooks, *A Sketch of the Early Settlement of Olean and Its Founder Major Adam Hoops* (1898); and "History of Olean," *Historic Annals of Southwestern New York*, II, 642f.

¹⁰ Rosengarten, *op. cit.*, 125f.; H. Carré, "Les Émigrés Français en Amérique," *Revue de Paris* (1898), 311f.; and T. T. Belote, *The Scioto Speculation and the French Settlement of Gallipolis* (University of Cincinnati Studies, No. 3, 1907).

¹¹ D. Craft, *History of Bradford County, Pennsylvania* (1878), 98f.; and "A Day at Asylum," *Proceedings of the Wyoming Historical and Geological Society*, V (1900), 95.

¹² R. Birdsall, *The Story of Cooperstown* (1917), 66-97.

dam financiers, to be known later as the Holland Land Company, had acquired title from Morris for several million acres and would presently establish a land office at Batavia.¹³ The "flight of capital" from a distraught Europe was well under way.

Below the Pennsylvania line, Benjamin Franklin's old friend and host when he was minister at Paris, Jacques Donatien Le Ray de Chaumont, had purchased eighty thousand acres between the Susquehanna and the Delaware, in present Bradford, Susquehanna and Wayne counties. Le Ray, a French manufacturer, had jeopardized his fortunes by dispatching gunpowder to America during the War of Independence, and had been advised to recoup his finances by speculation in New-World lands. The Swiss banker and French minister of the exchequer, Jacques Necker, became involved in this transaction, and Madame de Staël, Necker's literary daughter, considered emigration.¹⁴ Farther south in Pennsylvania an enterprising Maryland Quaker, Samuel Wallis, had acquired possession of thousands of acres along the Muncy, the Loyalsock, and the Lycoming creeks. Through him the Priestleys, exiles also, became possessors of many acres on the Loyalsock, in present Lycoming, Sullivan and Bradford counties. Priestley Senior, however, set up his permanent home in the town of Northumberland where his house is preserved as a museum.¹⁵

The northern border of Pennsylvania, it is true, still labored under a heavy handicap. The New England States, Massachusetts and Connecticut, held paradoxically and tenaciously to the territorial rights laid down in their ancient charters as royal colonies. Literally interpreted these old documents gave the two colonies proprietary rights over a dozen or more of our forty-eight states as at present constituted. Accordingly when Connecticut began to feel overcrowded in the middle of the eighteenth century a Susquehannah Company was organized at Windham and £2000 paid to a group of Iroquois chiefs at Albany to clear the title. Seventy square miles thus appropriated along the river were laid off into seventeen townships, each containing about five square miles, running north from near

¹³ P. Evans, *op. cit.*

¹⁴ R. L. Hawkins, *Madame de Staël and the United States* (1930).

¹⁵ E. Lyon, "Priestley in America"; and C. F. Snyder, "Dr. Joseph Priestley the Chemist," *Northumberland County Historical Society Proceedings*, V (1933), 5-13, 14-29.

Wyoming (present-day Wilkes Barre) toward the forty-second parallel and the New York boundary. Bloody conflicts with Pennsylvania sheriffs and claimants, known as the Pennamite Wars, ensued.¹⁶ After the War of Independence was over, Connecticut ceded to Pennsylvania the rights of jurisdiction over her "Westmoreland" province, the inhabitants of which then numbered about three thousand. Pennsylvania at once set out to adjust land claims or "rights of soil" and reimburse dispossessed settlers. In 1786, to promote justice, she cut off a northern county, Luzerne, from old Northumberland, and appointed a trusted official of the Revolutionary era, Massachusetts-born Timothy Pickering, as its first clerk and prothonotary.¹⁷

The backers of the Asylum venture, wise in the endless and often fruitless boundary disputes of a new country, set about to ensure clear title to the village site by purchase both of the Pennsylvania warrants and of the rights of Connecticut claimants—or squatters, as the case might be. The latter negotiations they consigned to the competent hands of Matthias Hollenback, while Adam Hoops undertook to secure the Pennsylvania patents. As a further measure of security Noailles and Talon took out citizenship papers in Philadelphia, swearing allegiance to the commonwealth of Pennsylvania, so that no question of foreign ownership might complicate transfers of title.

Unluckily for their prospects, one of the irreconcilables of the old Susquehannah Company, Colonel John Franklin, after a session in a Philadelphia jail on the charge of high treason, had moved up from Wyoming and was making a last stand for Connecticut on his pitch at Tioga Point. Here an eighteenth township, Athens, had been laid out, and the threat aired of calling in Ethan Allen and his Green Mountain Boys to withstand the autocrats of Pennsylvania. Though Athens was thirty miles above the refugee village, some of the lands destined for the colony were not far from Franklin's. Others lay along Towanda creek, the special rendezvous of a certain turbulent group of "Wild Yankees." Sabotage, tar-and-feathering and sniping at rival

¹⁶ C. Miner, *History of the Wyoming Valley* (1845); J. P. Boyd, "The Susquehannah Company, Connecticut's Experiment in Expansion," *Connecticut Tercentenary Monographs*, No. XXXIV (1935); and the same writer's *The Susquehannah Company Papers* (Wyoming Historical and Geological Society, 1930-1934).

¹⁷ E. C. Blackman, *History of Susquehanna County* (1873), 1-23.

claimants had not been eliminated by the formal adoption of the Constitution.¹⁸

Meanwhile in Philadelphia an Asylum Company was hopefully organized. Wholesale guillotinings in France and the new laws against the property of émigrés, combined with the crash of European finances as the French army overran the Austrian provinces of the Netherlands, cut off the funds expected by the French principals. Morris and Nicholson therefore took over direction of the project, promising title to a million acres in northern Pennsylvania as the capital stock of the company. Articles of agreement were drawn up and printed in April, 1794. Shares representing two hundred acres each were to be issued and prominent refugees entered their names as subscribers: General Victor Collot, exiled Governor of Guadaloupe, and Captain Denis Cottineau, John Paul Jones' fellow commander in his exploits of 1779 among them. Louis de Noailles' name appears as one of the four managers, and Talon and Adam Hoops were appointed agents at salaries of \$3000 and \$1000 respectively. The sales price of land was set at two to three dollars an acre, with three years' initial credit before starting payment. Dividends on the shares were promised.

Minutes of the company, account books, shares, letters, receipts, patents and other documents that have escaped fire, the ragman, and assault by Connecticut claimants are preserved in historical society files and state archives in the Tioga Point Museum and in Wilkes Barre, Towanda, Philadelphia, Harrisburg and Washington.¹⁹ The land transfers involved are recorded in the deed books of more than a half-dozen counties, Northumberland, Luzerne, Lycoming, Bradford, Susquehanna, Sullivan and others. For warrants scattered over wide areas were turned in by Nicholson and Morris to make up the promised million acres.

The miniature town on the Susquehanna, presently christened Azilum, was laid out with a central market place, broad avenues running north and south and east and west, and a quay on the river. The plan, which has survived, was not dissimilar to that of Penn's Philadelphia, the copper plate for the engraving of which is preserved

¹⁸ L. W. Murray, "Colonel John Franklin and the Last Stand of the Connecticut Settlers," *Wyoming Commemorative Association Proceedings* (1917).

¹⁹ Some of the Minutes of the Company are preserved in The Historical Society of Pennsylvania, others in The Library of Congress.

in The Historical Society of Pennsylvania. On the meadowlands already cleared by Indians and white settlers building started in the fall of 1793. Forty or fifty houses are said to have been erected in the course of a year, as well as shops, an inn or two, a chapel and a "Grande Maison." Summerhouses and artistic planting enhanced the attractiveness of certain of the dwellings.

Speedier postal communication with ports of entry to expedite the arrival of news of relatives overseas was demanded by anxious colonists. A road from the village up over the hill and south toward the Loyalsock and the West Branch (a short cut toward Philadelphia) was energetically undertaken and partially completed. Back in the woods at a spot now known as New Era an inn and huge bake ovens were erected, to care for the needs of workmen and surveyors. Bridges were built, mills set in operation.

The route to Niagara, once the site of a French fort and a favorite tour for the exile, ran past Azilum, and a number of travelers have left accounts and sketches of the colony as they saw it in passing. The most notable of these records are those of the Duke de La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt, and of the Comte Colbert de Maulevrier. The duke, a benevolent gentleman interested in scientific farming, modernized industry, model prisons and the like, spent two weeks at Azilum in May, 1795, as the guest of his friend, the Marquis Lucretius de Blacon. In his published *Voyage* he devotes twenty pages to description of the colony and its prospects.²⁰ The Comte de Maulevrier sketched the village from the opposite shore of the river in 1798. A number of houses, the wharf, the girdled trees of the area blocked off in lots and partially cleared, and other features show in the sketch. We are indebted to him also for an account of the evening musicals conducted by the colonists with the aid of a gifted songstress, Mlle. Marin. Accompaniments for these were played on a piano which had been poled laboriously up the river.²¹

Among the visitors for whom special hunts and fêtes were arranged were the young Duke of Orléans and his two brothers, lately orphaned by the guillotine. To Pennsylvanians the duke is of special interest. Not only is he reported to have sued for the hand of a

²⁰ La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt, *Voyage dans les États-Unis d'Amérique fait en 1795, 1796, et 1797* (Paris, 1799), I, 151-170.

²¹ Colbert de Maulevrier, G. Chinard, ed., *Voyage dans l'Intérieur des États-Unis et au Canada* (1935), 33f.

Philadelphia beauty but a half century later, toward the close of his reign as King of the French, he proved a generous friend and patron of our Pennsylvania-born painter of Indian types, George Catlin. Meeting only mild encouragement in his native land, Catlin toured England, Belgium and France with his portraits of noted chieftains, specimens of Indian handicraft and a little band of devoted Chippewas. When Louis Philippe learned that the artist was a Pennsylvanian, native of Wilkes Barre where he and his brothers had been so hospitably received as exiles, he arranged for exhibits, ordered copies of paintings, and fêted the group in the château and park of St. Cloud.²²

One guest for whom an eighty-foot residence of hewn logs was especially designed in the fall of 1793 was never to set foot in the village.²³ Even as the framework of her house was rising the widowed Marie Antoinette passed to the guillotine. Her two children, Madame Royale and her little brother (Louis XVII), were retained as prisoners in the Temple in Paris—though fifty years later the possible identity of Eleazar Williams, a missionary among the Oneida Indians, with the lost Dauphin gave rise to endless argument and counter argument.²⁴

The colony so hopefully launched in 1793 was presently to encounter unlooked for obstacles. France and England were at war, embargoes closed European ports and damped off ocean traffic. With all Europe in turmoil the Atlantic never has been broad enough to bar trouble from our continent. When the Bank of England suspended payment, the resultant economic repercussion ran round the globe. In far off India the notes carried by Robert Morris' merchantmen were protested, and the old financier who had borne the burden of our Revolution barricaded himself against the law in his country house. Presently he found himself confined like any other debtor in the Prune Street jail. Some of his Asylum lands were put up for sale by the sheriff, and purchased by his rival Wallis. In 1795 his director-

²² G. Catlin, *Notes on Eight Years' Travel and Residence in Europe, 1839-1847* (1852), II, 282f.

²³ For plans to bring the royal family to America, see Beatrix Cary Davenport, ed., *A Diary of the French Revolution by Gouverneur Morris*, (1939), II, 472ff., 595f.; and E. H. de Goutel, "Le procès de M. Talon d'après des documents d'archives," *Journal des Débats*, August 21, 1908.

²⁴ T. W. Clarke, *Émigrés in the Wilderness* (1941), 179-232.

ship in the Asylum Company was transferred to his running partner Nicholson and the title vested in two trustees, Matthew Clarkson, mayor of Philadelphia, and Jared Ingersoll, attorney-general for Pennsylvania. Later, in 1801, when Nicholson in turn had gone down in the storm, a board of managers composed mainly of Philadelphia merchants who had backed the venture from the outset took over. After various shifts of management, during which much of the stock was divided among the McCalls, the Astleys, Ashleys, and Gibsons, the by no means inconsiderable remnant of the lands passed in 1843 to Susquehanna County proprietors, the Honorable William Jessup and Michael Meylert.

Other matters besides the bankruptcies attending the European wars, and the Susquehannah Company disputes (which endured up to the legislative decision in 1827 on the Welles-Matthewson case, and suffered sporadic outbreaks later) retarded the growth of the refugee city. General de Noailles' wife and many members of her family were jailed and guillotined during the ascendancy of the radical Jacobin party in Paris. Noailles, whose children were safely hidden away in France by a devoted aunt, abandoned all hope of establishing a home in Azilum, and went into business in Philadelphia with the well-known merchant William Bingham. Here he remained for ten years, acting as agent both for Asylum lands and for his partner's holdings in Maine and westward from Azilum along the northern border of Pennsylvania.

As for Antoine Talon, when the illness of his wife and various business matters called him back to Europe, he appears to have dropped his plans for a magnificent hunting lodge on the heights above Azilum. Once back in Europe he swung the investments of the Netherland bankers he represented from the Asylum area westward to lands owned by Bingham, and presumably beyond the reach of Connecticut disputes.²⁵ In order to avoid legalities as to foreign ownership, the title to the three hundred thousand acres purchased through Talon's agency was vested in three trustees all of whom were

²⁵ Apparently stimulated to activity by the new venture, the Susquehannah Company from 1796 to 1804 laid out five townships, two of them with French names, in the northwest corner of the purchase and along the border. For Bingham's sale, see M. L. Brown, "William Bingham Eighteenth Century Magnate," *PENNSYLVANIA MAGAZINE OF HISTORY AND BIOGRAPHY*, LXI (1937), 413-414. The location of the Ceres lands is inadequately defined by Miss Brown, however. They were principally in the present McKean and Potter counties.

registered as United States citizens, namely John Keating, an early Asylum agent, and two merchants, Richard Gernon of Philadelphia and John S. Roulet of New York. Hence though the county seats, Smethport and Coudersport, bear the names of two of the European bankers whose funds opened up the region, who paid surveyors and agents, built roads and schools and churches, the old county histories for the most part ignore their foreign benefactors.²⁶

The memory of John Keating, agent for the Ceres Company, as the new venture to the west was hopefully christened in 1797, is gratefully preserved, however, along with that of his local agent and surveyor, Francis King, a member of the Society of Friends who emigrated with his family from London in 1795. Keating, of Irish birth but French education and an ex-captain in the French army, had reached Philadelphia at the end of 1792, a fugitive from San Domingo. Able, intelligent and utterly trustworthy, he at once found favor with the organizers of the Asylum project and was made a manager. Marrying a refugee in 1797, he lived henceforth in Philadelphia, making the long journey out to the Ceres settlements on horseback at least once a year. In 1845 at the age of eighty-five, he made his last trip to the lands in the company of his grandson. When the long trusteeship of his family for the Ceres Company ended in 1884, the books showed a million dollar profit.²⁷ Keating's descendants number some of Philadelphia's eminent citizens, distinguished in science, exploration, medicine, law and in other scholarly pursuits, affiliated with the Franklin Institute, the Philosophical Society, and the Academy of Natural Sciences.

The story of the intimate daily life of the colonists of Azilum and Ceres, as preserved in letters, reminiscences, diaries and memoirs, has been told elsewhere.²⁸ What of the economic and social progress of the three sections of Pennsylvania disposed of in the seventeenth-nineties to refugees and foreign investors? A doubt which closer view may dissipate as to the fairness of treatment meted out to the latter sometime arises. The Le Ray de Chaumont purchase to the east, it is true, failed to save the family of Franklin's friend from the courts.

²⁶ F. W. Beers, *History of McKean, Elk, Cameron and Potter Counties* (1890).

²⁷ J. P. Keating, "John Keating and His Forbears," *Records of the American Catholic Society*, XXIX (1918), No. 4.

²⁸ E. Murray, *Azilum, French Refugee Colony of 1793* (1940); and M. King and M. W. Mann, *The History of Ceres* (1896).

The fact that the local agent, Joseph Kingsbury, proved a staunch if not a violent Connecticut adherent may have complicated matters. Whether the successors to the Le Ray title, Chastellux and Decatur—names famous on both sides of the water—fared any better is as yet unknown. In the Bradford County courthouse the record of deeds given in their names fills many pages. The Fourier colony in LeRaysville, Pike township, similar to Brook Farm in New England, proved unsuccessful—but so did many like attempts prematurely to achieve a millennium.

To the west we are on surer ground. The Ceres lands, distributed through present Potter, McKean, Clinton, Clearfield, Cameron and Elk counties, whatever else their merits, have hardly fulfilled the promise of their corporate name with its agricultural implications. On the great Allegheny plateau, cut by canyon-like gorges, a magnificent stand of white pine proved the fortune of lumbermen throughout the early nineteenth century. This area, and that just across the New York border, was favored by its French viewers and their agent Adam Hoops as controlling the sources of the Allegheny, the headwaters of the West Branch of the Susquehanna, and of the Genesee. And indeed, prior to the opening of the Erie Canal, the entire section played an active role in western migration, as well as in lumber transportation. Glass manufacture, which in pioneer days of necessity grew up near abundant supplies of firewood, was a fairly early industrial feature at various points. Natural gas, and in McKean County, oil, have speeded up later development. Nevertheless Ceres, designed as a metropolis on the plan of Philadelphia, and as the chief city in a great agricultural section, remains today a village; and Olean across the border, founded by Adam Hoops at the head of navigation of the Allegheny, though thriving has never lived up to its founder's expectations.

The Ceres pioneers of 1797 were members of the Society of Friends, and they succeeded in cooperating peacefully with their neighbors to the west, remnants of the Seneca and Delaware tribes who were segregated in the Allegheny National Park region, on the Cornplanter Reservation.²⁹ Subsequently John Brevost and other Azilum settlers transferred to the new site, but only in Clearfield did any considerable French colony develop. Today the block of six counties,

²⁹ Lately in the public eye as a key to the control of the Ohio floods.

much of the area of which rises to an altitude of two thousand feet, is largely state forest, game preserve, fishing and hunting grounds—a scenic and recreational rather than a farming or industrial section.

As for Azilum by the river and the Asylum Company holdings in the uplands and mountains of Bradford, Sullivan and Lycoming counties, these too passed through a lumbering and transportation era, but are best known today as a focus of interest to vacationist, health seeker, and sportsman. Harvey's Lake, Eagles' Mere, Lake Mokoma and many small bodies of water lie within or close to their boundaries. Coal and iron, it is true, have been found as anticipated within their limits: at Bernice, near Captain Du Petit-Thouars' cutting; on the Loyalsock near the termination of the old French road; and in the Barclay mountain south of Towanda creek.

An added impetus to the development of transportation facilities was given both by this discovery of coal within the bounds of the company lands, and by the expansion of anthracite mining in the Wyoming Valley to the south. It was doubtless part of Robert Morris' plan to use the French refugees to open up a thoroughfare to his new lands in western New York, as well as in Pennsylvania, and this phase of the project was not without results. A post road toward the West Branch connecting with the Wallis pack-horse trail, attractive inns at Azilum and nearby, active promotion of road building, later of canal and railroad construction, were among the achievements of the French colonists who remained when their titled comrades returned to a reorganized France, or joined earlier groups of French exiles in Charleston, Savannah or New Orleans.

For the Homets, Prevosts, Le Fevres, D'Autremonts, La Portes and others threw in their lot with local pioneers. Their descendants became the leading farmers, lumbermen, and professional men of the section. The son of a refugee, John La Porte, first in the state legislature, later in Congress, kept the welfare of the northern tier of counties before the public eye. He became surveyor general for Pennsylvania, and when Sullivan was cut off from the adjoining counties in 1847 its county seat was named La Porte in his honor. A Napoleonic exile, Joseph M. Piollet, joined the colony about 1806 and along with other members of his family actively promoted canal building. Descendants of French refugees and their kin played a prominent part in the purchase, in 1858, of the North Branch Canal

which was operated from Bradford County, and in the construction of the Junction Canal which connected it with the Erie. When the rails of the Pennsylvania and New York Canal and Railroad Company, later assimilated by the Lehigh Valley, were laid along the old towpath, it was this same group which sponsored the undertaking. John Keating, agent first for the Asylum, next for the Ceres Company, was in 1823 one of the commissioners of the Jersey Shore and Coudersport Turnpike. And Keating's son was one of the early promoters of the Pennsylvania and Reading Railroad.

Among the lesser innovations introduced to the northern border by the French we may list better designed houses, the use of window glass, Franklin stoves, improved grape and orchard stock, and blooded cattle. Through their agency, too, the transition from the more primitive system of barter to a money economy was effected. Schools the Connecticut emigrants had been foremost in founding; but the Tioga Point Museum, with fireproof storage for old newspapers, books and documents, was primarily the project of a La Porte descendant. All in all, the debt of Pennsylvania to the French pioneers of 1793 deserves more attention than any historian of the commonwealth has yet accorded it.³⁰

Tioga Point Museum

ELSIE MURRAY

³⁰ See, however, "Paris in the Wilderness," in *Pennsylvania Cavalcade* (1942), 258f., an account fairly accurate in detail if not in general perspective.