An Indian Trade Failure
The Story of the Hockley, Trent and Croghan Company, 1748-1752

During the first part of Pennsylvania’s history her fur trade was known as the Indian trade. This was so because the white traders did not obtain skins and furs through trapping or shooting, but by barter from the Indians. Long before the beginning of the present story those who sought the Indians for this purpose had pushed far afield from the settled parts of the Province, across the Susquehanna, over the mountains, to the Ohio and beyond. As early as 1715, Peter Bezaillion was trading on the Allegheny.1 James LeTort, another Pennsylvanian, operated on the “Branches of Mississippi” in the early 1720’s.2 By the 1730’s, traders, such as George Miranda, sometime “Shopkeeper over against the Sign of the George in Second Street,” and many others, were dealing with the Ohio Indians.3 In exchange for the red man’s peltries the traders offered powder, lead, fineries, the myriad articles which can be classified as Indian goods and, all too often, rum.

These goods were often advanced to the Indians in expectation of the furs they were to trap. Such transactions formed the last link in a chain of credit originating with merchants in London.4 The goods

1 Thomas Penn stated that the English were trading on the Allegheny in 1713. In 1751 and 1752, James Hamilton attempted to find out when the trade was first established there, but no one knew. He heard that Bezaillion used to trade there thirty-five or forty years before. Thomas Penn to James Hamilton, Feb. 12, 1749, Penn Letter Book, II, 295; James Hamilton to Thomas Penn, Nov. 20, 1751, and March 18, 1752, Penn Manuscripts, Additional Miscellaneous Letters, I, 72, 76. All manuscripts unless otherwise noted are from the collections of The Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

2 James Logan to Isaac Taylor, Feb. 23, 1724, Taylor Papers.


4 Albert T. Volwiler, George Croghan and the Westward Movement 1741-1782 (Cleveland, 1926), 31. Mr. Volwiler makes a valuable contribution to the knowledge of the Indian trade in his opening chapter.
they shipped on credit to their Philadelphia counterparts were extended by the latter, also on credit, to the trader-merchants of the frontier. By this group they were divided into small cargoes and entrusted to employees or indentured servants, or allowed on credit to independent traders. Through the hands of such servants and traders the goods at last reached the Indians. So it was that the white man’s products, shipped from England to Philadelphia, carted from there to the frontier, and packed by horses over the wilderness trails to the Indian country, were passed on from hand to hand by credit and at increasing prices.

Although beaver and other fur-bearing animals were much sought after, the staple of the trade was deer hides. To obtain these hides the traders concentrated their efforts during the winter and summer seasons. Those who left their homes in October or November to engage in the winter trade established themselves at Indian settlements usually located on river courses. There they spent the next few months exchanging their goods for the results of the Indians’ winter hunt. This was the valuable hunt of the year since fall and winter deer skins sometimes sold for twice as much in the London market as did summer skins.

In March or April, the traders reappeared at the settlements, leading their burdened pack horses. The more enterprising or affluent of them journeyed down to Lancaster or Philadelphia to arrange the purchase of their summer goods, while the others remained on the frontiers, refitting for the coming season and awaiting the merchandise which would be supplied them. Before long they were back in the woods again, returning with new cargoes to their favorite trading places. There they would repeat the process of the previous season before returning once more in the early fall with a second supply of skins.

Such in brief is a general description of the trade; variations on this pattern were infinite.5

Never before had Pennsylvania’s prospects for success in the Indian trade seemed brighter than in 1748. The war between the

5 Those interested in the Pennsylvania Indian trade down to 1755 will be pleased to know that a detailed study of it is being prepared by Mr. Albright G. Zimmerman as a doctoral dissertation for Columbia University.
French and English concluded in that year\(^6\) had severely injured French trading interests. The scarcity of their goods resulting from England's control of the sea lanes had forced them to raise their prices so high that many Indians, long in alliance with them, had come over to the English. The heaviest blow of all was the desertion of the powerful Twightwee or Miami nation, which sought confirmation of English alliance at Lancaster in July, 1748. This tribe controlled one of the richest fur-bearing countries known to the white man.

Richard Peters, Provincial Secretary of Pennsylvania and Thomas Penn's right-hand man, managed the treaty at Lancaster and was profoundly impressed with its significance. The vision of huge fortunes to be made in the Indian trade danced in his mind, for it was at Lancaster that he fell under the spell of two of the frontier's most energetic speculators, George Croghan and William Trent.

George Croghan, an Irishman, was probably born in Dublin, where he received his meager academic education. His father apparently died within a few years of his son's birth, thereby making him the heir at law of his grandfather, Edmund Croghan, also of Dublin, who seems to have had some landed property.\(^7\) A short while later his mother remarried, this time to a man named Ward. Edward Ward, Croghan's half-brother, was a child of this union.

According to Croghan's own statement, he entered the Indian trade immediately upon his emigration to this country in 1741. Although records of his early activities are very scarce, we do know that he was employed by the Allegheny trader, Peter Tustee, in 1742.\(^8\) By 1744, the year he is first listed as having obtained a trader's license, Croghan had achieved an independent status, and was purchasing large quantities of trade goods in his own name from the Edgells, Joseph Shippen, and Jeremiah Warder of Philadelphia. That winter he traded with the Iroquois near Lake Erie and employed traders on the Ohio River.\(^9\)

In many ways he was admirably fitted for a frontier life. Possessing a sturdy constitution and a head hard enough to deflect the blow of

\(^6\) King George's War, 1743-1748.
\(^7\) Letter of attorney, George Croghan to Michael Bourke, Sept. 4, 1764, Cadwalader Collection.
\(^8\) Shippen Papers, XXVII, 71.
\(^9\) Bills in the Cadwalader Collection for 1744, Peters Manuscripts, II, 32.
a tomahawk, Croghan was physically capable of withstanding the hardships attending his calling. In addition, he was endowed with an astute mind, a dominating personality, wide and sanguine vision. Devoid of fear, tactful and understanding, he soon became the idol of the Indian traders. A hard drinker but a hard worker, Croghan accumulated considerable frontier capital—horses, trading posts, indentured servants, farms, a tannery, as well as all the necessaries of a self-sufficient frontier existence.

During his first years in this country, based at some point near the frontier, he ventured repeatedly into the wilderness to his favorite trading territory which lay along the southern shores of Lake Erie and the upper reaches of the Allegheny River. By 1747 he was recognized as the authority on Ohio Indian affairs. His relations with the Indians were excellent. He learned their languages and was honored by an appointment to the Six Nations' Onondaga Council. The leading white men who knew him regarded him as able, honest, and the most influential of the western traders.

William Trent came from a different mold, although he possessed many of Croghan's characteristics. He was the son of an outstanding Philadelphia merchant whose name he bore. The elder Trent had been a man of character, prominent in the public councils and foremost in church affairs. His son, William, offspring of a young second wife who was to outlive the father by forty-eight years, was probably born in Philadelphia during the year 1715.

Prior to this event, William Trent, Sr., had purchased large holdings in West Jersey, on the Delaware, to which he moved his family a few years later. There he built his handsome brick house, the "William Trent House," still standing in the city which perpetuates his name. The expensive improvements which Trent erected on his plantation may well have been the cause of the debts which mounted against him in his old age. He avoided Philadelphia where his creditors lived and, finally, departed this life as the result of an attack of apoplexy on Christmas Day, 1724. As Isaac Norris feared, he left his affairs much entangled.

10 Croghan was actually tomahawked in 1765, "but my skull being pretty thick, the hatchet would not enter, so you may see a thick skull is of service on some occasions." Volwiler, 185.
James Trent, his oldest son by a prior marriage, was appointed administrator of the estate.\textsuperscript{12} It was undoubtedly with reluctance that he felt obliged to offer his family home and the other Jersey holdings for sale. Some five years later the bulk of this property was disposed of to their cousin, William Morris, a member of a prominent Philadelphia family.\textsuperscript{13}

Within several years of Morris' purchase of the Trent home, James Trent, Mrs. Trent, and, it is assumed, her only child, William, moved to Philadelphia.\textsuperscript{14} There James set up as a merchant, but had barely started his business before he died in 1734. At this point the creditors of his father's estate took action, and letters of administration were granted to Nathaniel French, who, in addition to being the principal creditor, was also the husband of Trent's half-sister, Mary.\textsuperscript{15}

It is doubtful that young William Trent inherited much property from his father. Fortunately for him, his mother, the former Mary Coddington of Newport, came from a moneyed background. Moreover, she had friends of prominence in Philadelphia, including the Morris family to which she was connected by her mother's second marriage, and the Shippens, one of whom had served as administrator during her minority.\textsuperscript{16} Circumstantial evidence suggests that William Trent entered the firm of Logan and Shippen, at that time the outstanding fur-trading company. Examination of clerical entries among the company's papers which appear to be in Trent's hand lends some credence to this theory. In addition, the first three unquestionable evidences of his activities which I have seen all relate to this concern. Trent's earliest signature of which I know appears as that of a witness to a financial transaction concerning George Miranda and Peter Tustee, Indian traders, and Edward

\textsuperscript{12} Hamilton Schuyler, \textit{A History of St. Michael's Church} (Princeton, 1926), 339.
\textsuperscript{14} Mortgage of Samuel Carpenter "of the City and County of Philadelphia" to "Mary Trent of the same place widow," Sept. 30, 1735, Deed Collection. Mrs. Trent continued to live in Philadelphia for many years. By 1769, however, she had returned to Trenton where she was joined by her son's wife on the occasion of William Trent's trip to England. The two women apparently lived together until the death of the elder in 1772.
\textsuperscript{15} On October 22, 1734, James Trent is referred to as "lately dyed Intestate," and "late of Phila Mercht." Letters of Administration "B," No. 117, 1734, Register of Wills Office, City Hall, Philadelphia; Hanna, II, 84.
\textsuperscript{16} Moon, I, 94, 95.
Shippen, James Logan's partner. This document is dated at Philadelphia, October 31, 1740. Another document involving a purchase made by Logan and Shippen was witnessed by Trent the following month.\textsuperscript{17} His next signature is on a deed of January 1, 1743, involving the sale of a piece of ground by Edward Shippen to James Logan. This deed is of special significance since it appears to be entirely in Trent's hand.\textsuperscript{18} His subsequent career bears out the likelihood of an early connection with the firm.

Nowhere else could he have received a more thorough grounding in the Indian trade from the merchant's point of view. While Croghan was first an Indian trader and secondarily a merchant, Trent was always predominantly the merchant. Records of this period do not show that he engaged in actual barter with the Indians in the wilderness as did George Croghan. "He understands the Indian trade exceeding well," Peters later recorded, "and knows ye Indians having been partners with George Croghan," however, Trent did not know the Indians well enough to speak their language.\textsuperscript{19} Trent was by training the middleman, the bookkeeper. At Shippen's in the thirties and early forties he would have met all those of prominence in the trade, and would have learned the merchandising end. Edward Shippen regarded him highly and held him as a friend. When Trent removed to the frontiers, Shippen sent him news of his "mama's" health.\textsuperscript{20} Finally, it was to Shippen that Trent turned during a later financial disaster.

Trent was a man of ability, possessing some address and a pretense to the manners of the great world. Peters found him honest and sensible. Like Croghan, he was something of a visionary. Above all he was a persuasive talker, enthusiastic in his words as he poured forth his thoughts on the wealth in lands and promise which lay to the west. The religious convictions which he received from his

\textsuperscript{17} Shippen Papers, XV, 33; Lancaster County Miscellaneous Papers, 23. Trent may have finished an apprenticeship with Logan and Shippen earlier in the year, at which time Shippen took on a new apprentice. James Logan to Edward Shippen, Jan. 4, 1740, Logan Papers, I, 62.

\textsuperscript{18} Ashmead Papers, 5. Since writing the above, the author has been informed of another early Trent signature appearing as that of a witness to a deed of Edward Shippen, dated July 1, 1741. Shippen Papers, Box I, Library of Congress.


\textsuperscript{20} Edward Shippen to William Trent, March 9, 1752, Shippen Letter Book.
parents remained with him all his life. When his children were born he saw that they were baptized, and carefully entered the vital statistics in his family Bible. Despite the rough frontier life in which he engaged, Trent maintained a character remarkable for moral worth, the antithesis of that enjoyed by Croghan and the majority of his associates.

Trent's forte lay in his organizing ability, and his tragedy in the fact that his major endeavors, whether as soldier, Indian trader, or land speculator, were ever to be thwarted by failure. He never rose to first-rate importance. Trent lacked Croghan's force of character, and much of his life was passed in Croghan's shadow. In the vast land speculations in which he played an important part, he was secondary to the adroit Samuel Wharton. Yet Trent's importance must not be discounted; he was a capable executive officer.

As an essentially active man, nearing his thirtieth year, William Trent doubtless longed to establish himself in a business of his own. The West beckoned to him, and it is possible that in his eyes the robust personality of George Croghan represented its embodiment. At all events, they met and agreed on a partnership.

Tradition has it that the two men were brothers-in-law, but details of the relationship are lacking. Croghan, in fact, was claimed as half-brother, uncle, cousin and kinsman by a surprising number of prominent frontiersmen. In every case the genealogy remains obscure. One fact we do know—the relationship which existed between Croghan and Trent was of no ordinary sort.

The date of their first partnership is unknown. It may have been entered into a year or two prior to October, 1745, when they made a joint purchase of lands west of the Susquehanna on Conodoguinet Creek, Pennsborough Township. This purchase, strategi-

21 "I am told by John Hart, that the Indians often informs him that there is no man at this place clear of lying with the Squas but Captain Trent & myself and him—that we are the Honestest men here." Entry for Oct. 15, 1762, Journal of James Kenny. Students of this period should take notice that the published version of Kenny's Journal, appearing in this Magazine in 1913, contrary to its editor's statement that he had made "but few expurgations," is in fact drastically expurgated. The above quote appears only in the original manuscript as does much other material of peculiar interest.

22 Deed Book 1A, 19, Recorder of Deeds Office, Carlisle. Nearly all the lands on Conodoguinet Creek had been taken up as early as 1737. At the time that Croghan and Trent made their purchase its lands were worth about £50 per hundred acres. Richard Peters to Thomas Penn, Sept. 28, 1750, Penn Papers, Official Correspondence, V, 59; hereafter referred to as PPOC.
cally located near the beginning of the Allegheny trail, was to serve for many years as the home base for large trading ventures. By June, 1746, the partnership was dissolved. Concerning Trent's part in it, Peters later wrote that "before he engag'd in the King's Service he carried on the Indian trade successfully in partnership with George Croghan who is one of the most reputable and sensible traders, & Trent might by this time have made a fortune but ambition seized him so violently that he broke up the Partnership in hopes to be a man of figure in the conquest & settlement of Canada." At the time he entered the military service as captain of one of the Pennsylvania companies, Trent sold out his share of the properties, held jointly with Croghan, including the October, 1745, purchase which was to serve as his partner's home for seven or eight years. We know little of this early partnership, except that it was successful, and that both its principals were termed merchants, which, in the hierarchy, was a more elevated title than that of Indian trader. Largely on the basis of the experience they gained at this time, Peters wrote that "they two can do more with ye Indians yn all the other Traders put together."

It was from this background that Trent went off to the war which proved in his case to be principally one of supply. For the greater part of his service, June 4, 1746, to November 19, 1747, he was stationed in upper New York. During this period he maintained a correspondence with Croghan, who seems to have kept him advised of conditions on the Ohio. When it was all over, Trent had little to be pleased with. No glory or advancement had come his way, nor had he even been paid. The division of authority between Crown and Province was such that there was no telling when he would receive his money.

Croghan meanwhile extended his trading business into French territory. As he did so, he came to realize that its very existence

26 James Sullivan, The Papers of Sir William Johnson (Albany, 1921), I, 100; letter of William Trent, Albany, April 21, 1747, Society Collection.
would depend on the manner in which the Anglo-French-Indian triangle resolved itself. To win the Indians over to the English thus became one of his major endeavors. Meanwhile, he appears to have turned back his profits into his capital investment. He multiplied his trading posts in the Ohio country and bought a great amount of goods to further the trade. Ominously, however, his accounts current with the merchants remained open, their balances rising against him. By 1748 he owed his Philadelphia creditors alone over £3,000.27

No one is known to have played a greater role in alienating the Ohio Indians from the French than Croghan. In 1747 he conveyed their messages to the Pennsylvania Assembly, which heeded his recommendation that an Indian present should be sent out. From this time forward Croghan became increasingly occupied in official duties as an Indian agent. On behalf of the Province he delivered the present on the Ohio in April, 1748, and conducted a conference calculated to hold the Indians in the English interest. It was Croghan who gave the authorities the first notice that delegates of the Twightwee Indians were approaching Lancaster to discuss an alliance.28 He attended the ensuing conference, caring for the Indians during its course and signing the Treaty at its conclusion.

William Trent appears to have been in Lancaster at this time. Having returned from New York the previous winter in want of employment and unpaid for his military services, Trent sought Croghan, and together they discussed a renewal of their partnership. Their principal need was capital. Trent had some money but not enough, while Croghan, overextended and owing large sums, was also unable to advance a suitable amount to start a new venture. Peters heard these discussions and pondered them. News that the Virginians were planning to build trading houses at Allegheny had reached him, and he wondered whether Croghan and Trent, if properly financed, could not counteract the southerners’ efforts to divert part of the newly promised fur trade from Pennsylvania.

27 Richard Peters to Thomas Penn, Nov. 24, 1748, Peters Letter Book. Further evidence of Croghan’s hand-to-mouth financing may be seen in the case of his borrowing from Hugh Parker in 1748, giving as security a bond on his anticipated pay from the Province for transporting an Indian present. Hugh Parker to John Reynell, Jan. 27, 1749, Reynell Papers.

Trent, meanwhile talked of going to England in the fall to solicit his army pay.\(^{29}\)

Now at this time there lived in Philadelphia a certain Richard Hockley. This gentleman, one of the children of Thomas Penn's deceased partner, had been under the Proprietor's virtual guardianship for years. Penn it was who supervised the young man's education and who was to obtain for him certain offices and sinecures in Pennsylvania. After the manner of the times the two exchanged portraits, and maintained a close relationship throughout their lives. In 1748 Hockley was desultorily employed in operating a dry goods store. His efforts were not aggressive, however, and his friends worried how he could keep afloat. Vaguely, Hockley planned to enlarge his business. Entry into the Indian trade did not form any part of his plans.\(^{30}\)

It was Peters who had this scheme in mind. The more he thought it over the more attractive it seemed. An opportunity for him to take an active step in that direction presented itself when William Trent called upon him in Philadelphia that autumn. Trent had engaged passage on the Beulah for London, where he was going in an effort to collect his back pay, and was desirous of a letter of introduction to Thomas Penn. As Peters thought highly of Trent he was glad to provide the letter, at the same time questioning him about his plans. These were most interesting. Trent and Croghan were on the verge of agreeing with some of Philadelphia's principal merchants to enter into a major partnership in the Indian trade. Begging Trent to hold off, Peters hurried to see Richard Hockley. Together the two planned to raise £1,000 sterling, to be borrowed by Hockley from Thomas Penn, with which to buy goods in London as a trading stock for the use of a partnership which would include Croghan and Trent. In exchange for the capital put up by the Philadelphians, Trent and

\(^{29}\) Richard Peters to Thomas Penn, July 28, 1748, Peters Letter Book. After the Lancaster Treaty, Croghan carried the Virginia and Pennsylvania Indian presents out to the Ohio where he delivered them to Weiser in September. Trent was not officially engaged in this transaction, but appears to have been on the expedition. Thomas Penn to Richard Peters, Feb. 20, 1749, Penn Letter Book, II, 255. While Croghan was transporting the presents to the Ohio, he was indicted for not having taken out a trader's license for 1748. William H. Egle, Notes and Queries (Harrisburg, 1881), Part III, 89.

\(^{30}\) Richard Hockley's statement, undated, Cadwalader Collection; Richard Peters to Thomas Penn, Nov. 24, 1748, Peters Letter Book.
Croghan would run the business; all would share in its profits. Trent was not impressed by the idea, for he believed that £1,000 was not enough. His countersuggestion was to the effect that if they would agree to put up £2,000 sterling, half for the purchase of spring goods and half for fall, he would take a trip up country to fetch Croghan and they could then enter into a partnership. Peters, therefore, promised to obtain the second thousand, hoping to borrow it also from Penn.\textsuperscript{31}

Articles of partnership were drawn up and signed by Hockley, Trent and Croghan on November 24, 1748. Richard Peters was not included, as he had not obtained clearance from Thomas Penn to enter the trade—a clearance necessary in Peters' case because of his official position in the province.

The partnership articles stipulated that Hockley was to advance £1,000 sterling to be laid out by William Trent in Indian goods in London. Each of the three partners put up £368 Pennsylvania currency to enable Croghan to purchase some goods and horses so that no delay in entering the trade would ensue upon Trent's return. Croghan and Trent were to attend to all matters of business and keep the books, although any business transacted in Philadelphia was to be done through Hockley, to whom the books were to be shown once a year.\textsuperscript{32}

Within a week of the signing of these articles Trent sailed from Philadelphia in the \textit{Beulah}, James Child master.\textsuperscript{33} The \textit{Beulah}, a large, new, Philadelphia-built ship displacing some hundred and forty tons, was owned jointly by the local merchants, Samuel and Benjamin Shoemaker, and by Elias Bland of London.\textsuperscript{34} Despite the unpleasantness generally attending winter voyages, Trent probably enjoyed a comfortable passage since the vessel possessed "extraordinary accommodations for passengers." By December 31 her English co-owner was daily expecting her arrival.\textsuperscript{35}

Trent thus appeared in the metropolis around the first of the year

\textsuperscript{31} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{32} Articles of partnership, Nov. 24, 1748, Cadwalader Collection.
\textsuperscript{33} \textit{The Pennsylvania Gazette}, Dec. 1, 1748.
\textsuperscript{34} Entry dated Nov. 27, 1747, Ships Manuscripts, 1747-1760, Vol. 16, Register Book of Shipping.
\textsuperscript{35} \textit{The Pennsylvania Gazette}, Oct. 6, 1748; Elias Bland to John Reynell, Dec. 31, 1748, Reynell Papers.
1749. There he was to remain for nearly three months. During the first part of his stay he had a disappointing visit with Pennsylvania’s principal Proprietor.\textsuperscript{36} Although Thomas Penn was agreeable, and although their conversation ranged over the western situation, including such subjects as Lewis Evans and his map, Trent soon found that Penn could not be won to his purpose. Others might catch fire at his description of the great possibilities which lay in the Indian trade, but not Penn. Always the businessman, Thomas Penn did not care to invest in enterprises which he did not thoroughly understand. He flatly refused to allow Peters to enter the trade, even as an investor. “Trade ought to be left to Traders. Government & offices to Governors & officers. . . . I must totally disapprove of your engaging in it.” He was willing to advance only £500 sterling for Hockley’s share.\textsuperscript{37}

Penn’s £500 was invested in Indian goods through the firm of Thomas Hyam and Son. Included in the purchase was a set of books with which to establish the company’s accounts. At this time Trent was assiduous in cultivating the friendship and confidence of the London merchants. No doubt his entry into their circles was assisted by his friend of early Philadelphia days, Elias Bland, to whom he was “Dear Billy.”\textsuperscript{38} At all events, he met these men of property on terms of intimacy and was introduced to their wives and children. If Penn’s metal was unmalleable, Trent found these others made of a stuff which he could mold to his purpose. They listened to his prospectus and subscribed. John Samuel advanced him £500 worth of goods as did Elias Bland, who hoped to become the company’s London agent. From others, Trent borrowed an additional £500.\textsuperscript{39}

Failing in his efforts to obtain his pay, Trent was obliged to leave its collection to Bland at such time as Parliament should order


\textsuperscript{37} Thomas Penn to Richard Peters, Feb. 20, 1749, Penn Letter Book, II, 257-258. At this time the English pound sterling sold at an advance of seventy per cent over the value of the Pennsylvania pound. Thus £1,000 sterling equalled £1,700 Pennsylvania currency.

\textsuperscript{38} Elias Bland, a London Quaker, served a five-year term of apprenticeship to John Reynell in Philadelphia. When this was completed in 1743, he returned to England and set up in business for himself. The Reynell Papers contain much information on Bland.

\textsuperscript{39} William Trent to Elias Bland, Oct. 8, 1749, Cadwalader Collection; Richard Hockley to Thomas Penn, July 21, 1749, and Feb. 15, 1750, PPOC, IV, 215, 185.
the pay certificates honored. It was a sizable sum he was owed, over £250 sterling, on the security of which he obtained credit.\footnote{Colonial Records (Harrisburg, 1851-1853), V, 135.}

In the latter part of March, as he journeyed down to Gravesend to embark on the \textit{Myrtilla}, Trent had reason to congratulate himself on his successful negotiations. He had purchased enough goods to get the company started in trade, and had established a number of important business connections. Safely stowed on board the \textit{Myrtilla} was the merchandise bought by order of Thomas Penn and consigned to Richard Hockley. These linens, nails, calicoes, Indian hoes and hatchets, looking glasses, thimbles, knives, flints, kettles, guns, vermilion, strouds and twenty barrels of cannon and pistol powder should bring in handsome profits for the new firm.\footnote{Thomas Penn to James Hamilton, March 17, 1749, Penn Letter Book, II, 268; Thomas Hyam & Son's invoice of Indian goods shipped on the \textit{Myrtilla}, March 20, 1749, Cadwalader Collection. The \textit{Myrtilla}, which displaced about one hundred tons, was a new ship, built in Philadelphia in 1748 for David Franks and Nathan Levy. On her voyage to England she had nearly foundered during a violent gale off Newfoundland.}

There is reason to suppose—certainly the partnership articles demanded it—that Hockley originally believed his two partners were not to engage in the trade except as members of his company. It was also thought that Croghan would liquidate his debts in order to come into the partnership as a free man. But what actually happened was quite the reverse. Not only did Croghan fail to liquidate his debts, but a few days after signing the articles increased his obligations by borrowing a large sum of money.\footnote{Peters Manuscripts, II, 113, 114.} Trent, too, lost no time in opening personal operations. While in London he borrowed largely on his personal account for trade goods which were not destined for the company's use. In March, 1749, Croghan assigned John Mitchell close to £200 of Indian goods "To be sold & ye proffetts be devided between him & me."\footnote{Cadwalader Collection.} Moreover, during the course of the year, Croghan and Trent associated in large undertakings with the active Indian traders, Robert Callendar and Michael Teaffe. Finally, both Croghan and Trent throughout their association with Hockley appear to have carried on individual trading ventures. Consequently, when the Philadelphian put goods in their hands, it became very difficult to trace them. The situation was such that Hockley was completely exposed to his partners' honesty.
Prior to Trent's return from England, Croghan and Hockley, financed by the £1,200 Pennsylvania currency which the partners had advanced at the outset, had already embarked in the trade. From this start Croghan promised a £1,000 sterling return of skins by fall.\(^{44}\) Meanwhile, on about May 18, 1749, the Myrtilla docked in Philadelphia.\(^{45}\) For safety's sake the twenty barrels of powder were stored in the town's powder magazine,\(^{46}\) while the other goods were prepared for shipment to Croghan's headquarters on the Conodoguinet Creek, five miles west of Harris' ferry.

It was at this time that Peters, having received Penn's veto, wrote the proprietor, "I have absolutely refuse'd to be concerned in the Indian Trade."\(^{47}\) But his interests were to run parallel to the trade. The following month he loaned Croghan £1,000 in return for mortgages on the latter's Pennsborough lands.\(^{48}\) To offset Hockley's disappointment at receiving only £500 sterling from Penn, Peters assisted in raising the sum to the amount originally promised Croghan and Trent.\(^{49}\) Throughout the partnership's existence, Peters served as its banker. This position tended to put him in a bad light, since goods shipped on his credit from London sometimes came over bearing his mark, \(\mathcal{RP}\), thus misrepresenting the part he was actually playing.

Although the partners were undoubtedly concerned at the formation of Virginia's Ohio Company which sought to build trading posts, that worry was secondary to the threats received from the French. These well-organized neighbors claimed all trading rights in the Ohio country and warned the English to remove themselves. Alarming intelligence of a French sortie reached Governor James Hamilton at Philadelphia in June, 1749, causing him immediately to request Croghan to investigate the report.\(^{50}\) The occasion of the scare was the sizable military expedition under Céloron de Blainville which visited the Ohio that summer. Céloron's efforts to win the Indians back to a French alliance, however, were of no great effect. His reconnaissance

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\(^{44}\) Richard Hockley to Thomas Penn, July 2, 1749, PPOC, IV, 215.
\(^{45}\) *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, May 25, 1749.
\(^{46}\) William Hill's bill to Richard Hockley, June 20, 1749, Cadwalader Collection.
\(^{48}\) Peters Manuscripts, II, 120.
\(^{49}\) Richard Hockley to Thomas Penn, July 2, 1749, PPOC, IV, 215.
\(^{50}\) *Colonial Records*, V, 387; *Pennsylvania Archives, First Series*, I, 31.
in force is best remembered for the lead plates he buried, plates which stated the French territorial claims to La Belle Rivière, Ohio.

Croghan arrived at Logstown shortly after Céloron had passed by and found the Indians still loyal to the English. It was at this time that the Six Nations, by a deed bearing the doubtful date of August 2, 1749, sold Croghan 200,000 acres in the neighborhood of the forks of the Ohio. The purchase price was an immense quantity of Indian goods. Considering Croghan's indebtedness it is little short of amazing that he could have financed such an investment. Were any of Hockley's goods used for this purpose?

The pattern of the company had by now become well formed. Croghan's time was spent, as much as possible, in the trading country, while Trent remained at his home “on the other side of Susquehanna,”51 near Croghan's in Pennsborough Township. From this middle ground he controlled the shipment of skins to Hockley in Philadelphia and dispatched trade goods to Croghan on the Ohio. That he kept the books is evidenced by his neat endorsements on all the company's papers. It is probable that he also helped run a trading post on Croghan's property, assisted by Edward Ward and Roger Walton, Croghan's clerk.

Trent and Croghan came down to Philadelphia early in October to admit that they had not yet arrived at a profitable basis, since it had been “impossible to get a return of skins from the woods this fall of any consequence.” There had been some hard luck. Trent had been severely ill of a malarial fever all summer and unable to get about. Croghan had suffered from the same complaint. They were deeper than ever in debt, as “we have been obliged to buy a great many goods in order to fit out our hands.”52 Although the firm was not able to satisfy its English creditors that season, Trent promised John Samuel “some skins on my own acct to pay for the goods I had of you while in London.”53 Completing his business in town, Trent returned to his home to dispatch a party of men to bring in hides which were supposed to be lying at the Allegheny.54

Disappointment at this time was of no special consequence. Money

51 William Trent to Elias Bland, Oct. 8, 1749, Cadwalader Collection.
53 William Trent to John Samuel, Oct. 8, 1749, Ibid.
54 William Trent to Elias Bland, Oct. 8, 1749, Ibid.
was easy, and the merchants were eager to engage in the Indian trade. Peters wrote Penn that “If the Trade was to remain in its present state unmolested by the French the Traders woud in a very few years be rich men, and indeed supposing the worst, as Mr. Croghan is to be in the Indian Country, they cannot fail of making very considerable gain.” An air of prosperity hung over Water and Front Streets where Philadelphia’s principal merchants lived in their three-story, brick homes. Claret, burgundy, and champagne flowed freely at their tables. The appearance of their ladies at the Assemblies was but little inferior to those in England, “no woman of fashion here, but what has a rich suit of brocade & Brussels laced Heads from 20 to 30 Guineas price.” Crops had been good and the price of grain remained high because of the competitive bidding of those in the West Indian trade, “almost any price is given by those who trade to the French & Spanish Islands.” Costs in the market rose prodigiously, and what a short while ago could be had for ten shillings had now advanced to fifteen. Philadelphia was enjoying a strong market, and her credit was extended liberally in the Indian trade. A warning note came, as might be expected, from Thomas Penn, who expressed alarm at the vast quantity of goods Pennsylvanians were importing from England; he feared that it would be the ruin of his province.

Meanwhile Pennsylvania continued to control the Ohio trade despite the efforts of the Virginians. Thomas Lee in a letter to Governor Hamilton complained that Pennsylvania traders had so prejudiced the Indians against the Ohio Company that it could not begin operations. But Croghan denied that this was the case, and placed the blame on the tactics of the Virginia agents, Thomas Cresap and Hugh Parker.

56 Richard Hockley to Thomas Penn, Feb. 15, 1750, Ibid., 185; Edward Shippen to his cousin Greenough, Nov. 6, 1752, Shippen Letter Book.
57 Thomas Penn to James Hamilton, July 18, 1750, Penn Letter Book, III, 11. Charles Norris wrote John Samuel on July 12, 1750, that “we have Enough English Goods now in Town to serve us this Ten years, a miserable prospect!” Norris, Griffets Letter Book. Six months earlier Penn noted that profits in the Indian trade would not be great, since “I am told there are more Deer Skins imported here than are wanted.” Thomas Penn to Richard Peters, Feb. 24, 1750, Penn Letter Book, II, 41.
58 Thomas Lee to James Hamilton, Nov. 22, 1749, PPOC, IV, 257; Richard Peters to Thomas Penn, July 12, 1750, Ibid., V, 33.
The great challenge to the trade continued to be the French menace. Late in 1749, Croghan felt the force of their threats when they seized two of his men, seven horses, and "500 Bucks worth of Goods @ 7/6 Pr Buck." These goods belonged to Croghan, Trent, Callendar and Teaffe, so that the loss should not have affected Hockley's investment.\(^5\)

During the winter of 1749–1750, Croghan established himself at an Indian village, a "Twatwes Town on a branch Desinding into the River Ohio,"\(^6\) about fifty miles from Lake Erie.\(^6\) There he was active not only in trading, but in counteracting French efforts to win over the Indians. In this latter endeavor he was so successful that the commandant at Detroit put a $1,000 reward on his head.\(^6\)

Trent meanwhile passed the winter at his home in Pennsborough Township where he supervised the company's affairs. Indicative of a popular method of doing business is a document endorsed by Trent, "Invoice of Goods sent to our Store att Marsh Creek to be sold by Joshua Drummond upon half Profitts November 30th 1749."\(^6\)

In January, 1750, Trent visited Philadelphia to arrange for a shipment of skins on the Amphitrite, consigned to John Samuel, the ship to sail as soon as the Delaware ice broke up. Trent excused himself and Croghan for keeping their personal accounts open, blaming it upon their illnesses and promising that as soon as the roads grew passable in the spring skins would be sent down in order to make a remittance. At this time Trent requested a parcel of goods for the summer and fall to the value of six or seven hundred pounds "for which I can pay you in twelve months and not in less."\(^6\) This

\(^5\) List of French losses in Trent's hand, Cadwalader Collection. A similar document, also in Trent's writing, is to be found in the so-called Ohio Company Papers, which appear to be largely composed of Trent's business papers. Another volume of Trent's papers are bound up as Papers Relating to Indian Losses, but should be grouped as part of the former collection. Although much of the material in both collections is original, a large part of it consists of true copies apparently made by Trent prior to leaving London in 1775. The originals of this latter group were presumably left with Samuel Wharton in England.

\(^6\) Bond of George Croghan to Francis Waser, Feb. 20, 1750, Cadwalader Collection.


\(^6\) Colonial Records, V, 483.

\(^6\) Cadwalader Collection.

\(^6\) William Trent to John Samuel, Jan. 10, 1750, Cadwalader Collection.
transaction does not appear to be related to Hockley’s firm for which, at this time, it was necessary to borrow £130 in order to support the company’s interests along the Allegheny. The money was had from the useful Richard Peters.  

Hockley still remained in blissful ignorance of the true state of his affairs. Although mortgaged, as a result of his entry into the Indian trade, for £1,000 sterling and £400 Pennsylvania currency, his hopes were high. In his ignorance of Croghan’s actual operations, he wrote to Penn that “that gentleman was concerned in the trade before he gave it up to serve the Company.” But Croghan was by no means as exclusively interested in the company as Hockley thought. The Philadelphian’s confidence in the trader was rather touching: “we dont only sell to ye Indian Traders and pick & choose ye best of them but are really Indian traders ourselves which is a great advantage. Mr. Croghan has an eye over all he trusts, and so well esteemed by the Indians generally that if he has a sortable cargo not one Trader in the Woods at ye Indian Towns can sell anything till he has done.”

Croghan returned from his winter among the Indians in late April or early May, 1750, “with the greatest quantity of skins ever heard of.” All the traders had enjoyed a season of extraordinary success. A few days later both he and Trent were appointed justices of the peace of the newly established Cumberland County. As such they were called on to assist Richard Peters during May and June in expelling squatters who had established themselves on lands as yet unpurchased from the Indians. These “vile people” had settled themselves from Juniata and its waters, along the Indian path over halfway to the Allegheny.

Prior to the expedition against the squatters, Trent had visited Philadelphia to inform Hockley, and their mutual friend, Richard Peters, that, since the original shipments were nearly all sold, orders should immediately be sent to London for goods to the amount of £500 sterling. It was unhappily true that sufficient skins had not yet been received to pay for the first cargo, nevertheless Trent, in his

65 It was shipped to the Allegheny in pieces of eight. Cadwalader Collection, Peters Accounts.
66 Richard Hockley to Thomas Penn, Feb. 15, 1750, PPOC, IV, 185.
persuasive way, was able to prevail on Peters to raise the necessary sum. Consequently a bill was obtained from Charles Willing payable to Elias Bland in London for £500. This was done on Trent's repeated assurances that skins would soon be sent down to pay off the debts on the first stock and to discharge Mr. Willing's bond. The list of goods required by Trent was forwarded to Bland through Hockley, and during the summer and early fall they were brought over in various vessels.\(^68\)

Around this time and earlier some rather strange transactions took place. Croghan and Trent were in constant need of goods to be used for their other partnerships. Inadvertently, it seems, a number of their purchases, placed with various merchants, were charged to Hockley's firm. But this situation was not revealed to Hockley until some time later when the bills were long overdue.

Trent and Croghan continued through the year, optimistic as ever. Although Trent indulged himself in the purchase of some expensive English furniture, several of his creditors were becoming uneasy.\(^69\) Bland agreed to ship him more goods, though "your returns are so slow it disheartens me."\(^70\)

In July, 1750, Trent was once more in Philadelphia, visiting his mother and arranging for the shipping of sizable returns of which he wrote to the London merchants. Earlier in the year the firm had sent a consignment to John Samuel, and in April, 830 summer and thirty fall skins had gone off to Elias Bland. During Trent's present stay in Philadelphia the firm shipped 1,371 fall skins to Hyam and Son and a consignment to Bland. In September another consignment to Bland consisted of 2,360 fall skins. These last three shipments were valued at £1,176 Pennsylvania currency.\(^71\) The mechanics of the process were such that the summer skins did not come into the market until the spring of the year, and fall skins were not shipped until summertime.

The method employed by Hockley, Trent, and Croghan in marketing their goods in London was no doubt standard procedure. They

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68 Richard Hockley's statement, undated, Cadwalader Collection.
69 James Samuel's bill to William Trent, June 30, 1750, Ibid.
70 Elias Bland to William Trent, July 9, 1750, Ibid.
71 Hockley, Trent, and Croghan folder for 1750; William Trent to John Samuel, Jan. 10, 1750, Ibid. "I shall send in the ship Mr. Taylor goes in [in July] 5 chests of skins and expect a large parcel in the fall." Richard Hockley to Thomas Penn, June 23, 1750, PPOC, V, 25.
retained a merchant, in this case Elias Bland, who had full authority to receive and sell the firm's products. It was Bland who arranged to pay duty and port fees, lighterage, wharfage, landing, loading, cartage, housing, landwaiters, cooperage, warehouse rent and freight. Bland chose the broker, who sold the skins for a fee of one half of one per cent. After deducting all these expenses, which generally ran between one fourth and one third of the selling price, Bland credited the net proceeds to the firm's account. For his pains he received a commission of two and one half per cent of the gross sales price.

While the market varied, in 1750 a price of three and one half shillings sterling per summer deer skin, and five shillings for winter and fall skins was deemed fair enough. Skins in poor condition, damaged by worms, sold at half price or less.  

Trent left Philadelphia on July 21, 1750, and hurried homeward, spending the first night at White Horse, and pausing at Lancaster long enough to write Peters that he had forgotten to pick up "some Marriage & Traders' Lycenses" which he wished forwarded to him. These were, no doubt, part of his stock in trade as a justice of the peace. He spent that night at Harris' ferry and was home the next day.  

A new development in the company's affairs may have crystallized during this visit of Trent's to Philadelphia—Hockley had decided to go to England. At the very time the firm was feeling the pinch of undercapitalization, its London agent failed. Elias Bland had been too heavily engaged in an extensive commerce with Greenland, Honduras, Campeche, the West Indies and North America, advancing large credits on poor risks. Although his creditors permitted him to continue in business, under their direction, it was felt that Hockley should re-examine the London end of the firm's business for new credits and, conceivably, a new agent. He sailed from Philadelphia in the fall of 1750, and did not return until the following

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72 This information is based on business papers in the Cadwalader Collection.
74 Charles Willing to Richard Peters, Nov. 16, 1750, Peters Manuscripts, III, 22. But Bland's misfortunes continued; before the year was out he was again forced to suspend. In the summer of 1751 he came to Philadelphia to adjust his affairs and did not return to his home for nearly two years. Elias Bland to John Reynell, Dec. 29, 1750; David Barclay & Co. to John Reynell, Aug. 15, 1751; John Reynell to Robert Plumsted & Co., May 31, 1753, Reynell Papers.
autumn. During his English visit he conversed with the London merchants, enjoyed the company of Thomas Penn, and sojourned at Bath, where he repaired "the weakness of his Stomach" by taking the waters. Richard Peters had the management of his affairs while he was away.

Although the rumors were as alarming as ever, 1750 saw no major French incursion on the Ohio. About a month after his return to Pennsborough, Trent wrote Peters that a French deserter had revealed that the extension of the English trade was putting his people out of business. Weiser noted in September that Joncaire, the French interpreter, was on his way to the Ohio with five or six Frenchmen bearing gifts and under orders to spirit up the Indians to drive the English traders away. But the Pennsylvania Assembly remained unruffled, its Quaker spokesman, Isaac Norris, hoping that the danger might "blow over, and from the Caution and Unanimity of the Indians in our alliance, the French may be obliged to alter their measures."

The Assembly, however, had provided a small present for the Twightwees, and in the fall of 1750 voted large additional gifts for the Ohio Indians, totaling seven hundred pounds. Croghan and Montour had been charged with the delivery of the Twightwee present, but both had fallen ill and were unable to make a timely start. When informed in October that he was to deliver the new gifts also, Croghan notified Peters that his men and horses had already set off for the Ohio and that he could not bring out the Assembly's present that season. Instead he offered to supply it from his own stores which were already in the trading country. His goods could be provided at an advance of thirty per cent over their Philadelphia value. Since the Assembly's gift had already been purchased, Croghan's offer was not accepted. Instead the Philadelphia goods were shipped to the trader's house where they were stored for the


76 Colonial Records, V, 461.


78 Colonial Records, V, 459.
winter. Peters suspected that Croghan was annoyed that the Assembly had not purchased the present from his firm.

Taking leave of his infant daughter, Susannah, or Sukey, Croghan followed Montour to Logstown, from where he wrote Hamilton that the Indians had requested a fort on the Ohio to protect them from the French. Joncaire was reported as being one hundred and fifty miles up the river from the forks of the Ohio. There the Frenchman was attempting to influence the Indians by dispensing presents to their chiefs. A customary note to be found in Croghan's letters from the West is that he can be reached through Trent who will forward his mail.

The trader spent the winter traveling extensively through the Ohio country, assisting Montour in informing the Indians of the large present to be given them at Logstown the following spring. In February they delivered the Twightwee present at Pickawillani. Earlier they had been joined by Christopher Gist, agent for the Ohio Company, who sought their protection and help. Throughout the winter Croghan was assiduous in furthering the English interest, and was also in direct contact with his own trading ventures.

The affairs of the Hockley trading partnership had not been going well. Croghan and Trent had been very slow and irregular in sending skins to Philadelphia, and the firm's debts had mounted. This greatly worried Peters, who was responsible for bringing Hockley into the Indian trade. When the promised skins did not reach Philadelphia in October, 1750, Peters accused Trent of diverting them to other purposes.

Peters went further and struck at the very roots of the partnership.

79 Trent wrote the Governor late in 1750 that it would cost £245 to have these goods delivered to the Ohio. This sum was considered too high by Hamilton, and was later referred by the Assembly to Weiser. Apparently Weiser concluded that £200 was sufficient, and that was all that was paid. Trent was simply working for his partnership with Croghan in this instance, as it was Croghan who was to deliver the present, not Trent. Minutes of Council for December 10, 1750 (erroneously recorded as 1749), Colonial Records, V, 489–490, 498; minutes for Jan. 19, 1751, and Feb. 8, 1751, public accounts approved Aug. 24, 1751, Votes and Proceedings of The House of Representatives (Philadelphia, 1774), IV, 174, 182, 199.


81 George Croghan to James Hamilton, Nov. 16, 1750 (letter erroneously dated Dec. 16), Colonial Records, V, 496–497. See Reuben G. Thwaites Early Western Journals (Cleveland, 1904), I, 53; also PPOC, V, 121; Volwiler, 26.

agreements which both Croghan and Trent had violated consistently. He urged Trent that "you and Mr. Croghan shoud put an end to your own private trading and in lieu thereof that the capital should be augmented. This was undoubtedly one of the principal Reasons which induced Mr. Hockley to give himself the Trouble of a voyage to London and I am a witness for Mr. Hockley that Mr. Croghan declared over and over to me that he woud not owe a Groat of his old Debts by Christmas Day, nor take up any more goods on his private account, nor trade separately any more, and engaged for you that you shoud do the same, instead of that I am told that Mr. Croghan and you have jointly gone into a larger Trade than ever, and that both you for yourself and He for his self likewise taken up goods to trade on your own private accounts. That the Debts of Croghan and Trent amount to three or four thousand and if so why not five thousand Pounds. That besides this you have bought of the merchants of this city abundance of goods on your own private account independent of Croghan and of Croghan and Hockley, and are in debt for these. Add to this that the Country Debts of Trent and Croghan are very considerable. Now Sir let me ask you was you in Mr. Hockley’s Place or in the Place of any of his Friends, is it possible if this be so, not to believe that Mr. Hockley is likely to come off loser, nay must do it. Are not all the Horses used promiscuously? are not many things which at an estimate of your own he paid his Part for used in common? and will not all mankind say that the bad Debts will be thrown upon the Partnership Account, nay is it possible to make up accounts? and if not who must suffer? where lies the Risque? on you or Mr. Croghan? No. On Mr. Hockley entirely.” Peters begged Trent to send him the true state of the accounts.

In January, 1751, Croghan wrote Governor Hamilton that the Ohio Indians in general remained true to the English and reiterated their desire for a fort. The Governor took up this matter with his Quaker Assembly, whose answer was that to provide anything of that kind would be to act against the principles they professed. The Province’s large official Indian present still remained at Croghan’s. To William Trent at “Pennsboro” Peters addressed a letter in March requesting information as to when it would go out to the Ohio. At

83 Richard Peters to William Trent, Nov. 13, 1750, Cadwalader Collection.
84 James Hamilton to Thomas Penn, Feb. 3, 1751, PPOC, V, 129.
the same time Peters reported a rumor that a Lancaster merchant, to whom Croghan was said to owe £3,500, was going to demand his money. To protect the sum for which Peters stood security for the company, the Secretary requested Trent to assign skins in its value to his name so that other creditors would not seize them. 85

The following month, April, Croghan came to Philadelphia to see Governor Hamilton. It was time to think about getting the Indian present on the road and to decide on what was to be said to the Indians when it was given to them at Logstown in May. As Weiser was unable to attend this treaty, Croghan was placed in charge of it, and visited Weiser to work out the agenda. The program upon which the two decided was approved by Hamilton, who specified that no official request to build a fort should be made. Croghan was instructed, however, to sound out the Indians in a private manner, as from himself, to ascertain their feelings regarding the construction of an English stronghold on the Ohio. 86

During the last two weeks in May, Croghan and Andrew Montour conducted the Indian conference and gift-giving for the Province at Logstown. Immediately following it Croghan returned to his home from where, on June 10, 1751, he forwarded the minutes of the meeting to Governor Hamilton. 87 The matter of greatest note recorded in these minutes was the request of the Six Nations' speaker, who dwelt on the French danger and who urged the English to build a strong house on the Ohio for their mutual protection. The Indians again expressed their allegiance to the English, taking special joy in doing so in the presence of the French agent, Joncaire. 88

85 Richard Peters to William Trent, March 11, 1751, Cadwalader Collection. An unusual activity of the firm took place in the previous month when the partners obtained a warrant to survey 300 acres on the Susquehanna in Paxtang Township, Pennsylvania Archives, Third Series, II, 180.

86 Richard Peters to Conrad Weiser, April 13, 1751, Peters Manuscripts, III, 35; Weiser to James Hamilton, April 22, 1751, Colonial Records, V, 518; Hamilton to Weiser, April 27, 1751, Peters Manuscripts, III, 38.

87 George Croghan to James Hamilton, June 10, 1751, PPOC, V, 147.

88 Croghan and Montour's account of the conferences, Colonial Records, V, 630–639. Penn was delighted with Croghan's journal of the treaty, and thought that Croghan should be placed in charge of building the fort. Thomas Penn to Richard Peters, Sept. 28, 1751, Penn Letter Book, III, 105. Hamilton, in an informal attempt to get backing for the fort, called in some of the Assembly leaders and pointed out to them Penn's offer of financial assistance. Hamilton further "urged the expediency of it upon them, by all the arguments I was master of; and tho' they had not the desired success, yet I must do the gentlemen the justice to say, they..."
While Croghan was employed in this official manner, Trent continued his residence in the middle ground of the partnership’s enterprise. During the summer of 1751, he was occupied with Thomas Cookson in erecting a sawmill at Mountain Creek in Cumberland County and in supplying it with the necessary equipment. He was also much interested in the laying out of the new town of Carlisle, near which he may have settled at this time. 89

When the Pennsylvania Assembly reconvened in August, Hamilton presented Croghan’s account of the Indian conference and recommended that a strong trading house be erected on the Ohio. The legislative body found itself in an embarrassing position. Opposed to the building of a fort for various reasons, its members were now informed that unless the fort were built, the English might lose not only Indian support, but the important fur trade as well. They considered the matter carefully, giving the Governor’s message three readings and calling in Conrad Weiser and Andrew Montour for testimony on the subject.

This moment represents the acme of Pennsylvania’s prestige on the Ohio. Its retention of this position of pre-eminence now depended on its decision with regard to the fort, for only by an adequate defense of this sort could the French be kept out. If the testimony of Weiser and Montour was to bear out the truth of Croghan’s journal, the Assembly might conceivably be forced to circumvent its scruples, as it had done in the past, and vote the necessary funds. Unrealized by any of those considering the problem was the fact that not only Pennsylvania’s interest in the Ohio country, but England’s herself, hung in the balance.

Before a hostile Assembly in the State House, Andrew Montour, Croghan’s close friend and colleague of the Logstown conference,

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89 Receipt of Trent to Cookson, Aug. 14, 1751, and advertisement, Dec. 7, 1762, in Captain Richard Peters Papers; Thomas Cookson to William Trent, “at Carlisle,” June 1, 1751, Cadwalader Collection. Trent’s name is listed in 1751 among the taxables of Middletown Township, south of Carlisle. Lancaster County Historical Society Publications (Lancaster, 1919), XXIII, 175.
appeared as a witness. To the amazement of the Quaker body, Montour contradicted Croghan's account of the Indians' statements. This was an astonishing difference of opinion to exist between the provincial interpreter and the agent who had recorded the minutes. The half-breed Montour flatly denied that the Indians had consented to a fort; they had merely taken it under consideration. Montour did not believe they would ever consent to such a proposition. 

Needless to say, this testimony damaged Croghan's reputation severely. Hamilton felt that he had been imposed upon, while the Assembly, which had never thought well of Croghan, was highly offended. It now rejected the necessity of the fort, stating that fair dealings and occasional presents would hold the Indians as allies.

In an effort to recover himself, Croghan obtained a signed statement from Montour substantiating his journal of the conference. No doubt their meeting was not an amicable one; they were reported as having fallen out. Naturally enough, no one was convinced by Montour's shift, least of all Conrad Weiser, who stated that Andrew had a guilty conscience and was avoiding him. Meanwhile the trader demanded a hearing before the Assembly and offered to bring down the Indians and Indian traders to prove the truth of his version of the Logstown meeting. It was to no avail.

The sands of Pennsylvania's western leadership had, in fact, run out. Her Governor was the first to recognize it as he relinquished the colonial rivalry to Virginia. Encouraging Andrew Montour to serve the more aggressive southern colony, he instructed him to tell the Indians that "the kinder they are to the Virginia people, and par-

90 James Hamilton to Thomas Penn, Sept. 14, 1751, PPOC, V, 173. Montour was illiterate, and it does not appear that Croghan's journal was read to him for his approval. Although the former was listed as the interpreter, Croghan could also understand the Indian language. It may justifiably be said that Croghan was too self-interested to be a proper person for this mission, yet the fact that the Virginians were granted authority to build a fort the very next year lends some credence to his account, as well as does a reading of the minutes of the Virginia treaty of 1752. According to Croghan's story the Indians were to notify the Pennsylvanians within two months where the fort should be located. This they did not do.

91 Colonial Records, V, 547.

92 Richard Peters to Conrad Weiser, Sept. 19, 1751, and Sept. 25, 1751, Peters Manuscripts, III, 47, 48; Conrad Weiser to Richard Peters, Feb. 1752 (date mutilated), Correspondence of Conrad Weiser, I, 17. As a result of this episode, Penn expressed his opinion of Croghan to Governor Hamilton: "It is extremely unfortunate that you cannot find people to be depended upon in your negotiations with the Indians, I think Indian Traders are very improper." Thomas Penn to James Hamilton, March 9, 1752, Penn Letter Book, III, 113.
particularly to those who are minded to trade with them, the more agreeable it will be to me.”\(^{93}\) Virginia’s Ohio Company had little trouble the following summer in obtaining permission to build a fort. But Virginia’s own slowness, combined with the years she had been halted by Pennsylvania’s previous position and her own ineptitude, was too much. The Virginia fort was only partially completed in 1754 when the French arrived to seize it. With its loss went British control of the Ohio fur trade. One wonders if all this might not have been much different had Croghan prepared Montour to support his minutes of the conference.

The deflation of Pennsylvania’s Ohio hopes did not affect the firm of Hockley, Trent and Croghan. That company was already ruined. A few days after the Assembly had denied the Governor’s application for the fort, Richard Peters, as Hockley’s attorney, wrote Trent to inquire “whether any skins are to go this year to London either in discharge of past debts or to purchase fresh goods.”\(^{94}\) Trent’s reply was no doubt of the same discouraging tenor that had prevailed for so long. Realizing that matters had reached a crisis, Peters acted to forestall damaging moves by the other creditors. He foreclosed mortgages he held on five of Croghan’s Pennsborough tracts and on one in Lancaster County.\(^{95}\) It was in this wise that Croghan lost the title to his home. Peters made the move to protect the trader as well as Hockley and himself. But as events were later to prove, Croghan

\(^{93}\) *Colonial Records*, V, 568. The Pennsylvania government had been far more co-operative with Virginia than is generally recognized. Boyd presents the facts on this entente. The moment just described, however, may well have convinced Hamilton and the more intelligent of the traders of the futility of Pennsylvania’s leadership in western affairs. In a letter commenting on Croghan’s services, Penn writes: “As we cannot expect our Assembly will do anything in this matter, I desire you will enter into any reasonable measures to assist the Governor of Virginia to build a fort there.” Thomas Penn to James Hamilton, March 9, 1752, Penn Letter Book, III, 113.

\(^{94}\) Richard Peters to William Trent, Aug. 24, 1751, Cadwalader Collection.

\(^{95}\) October 15, 1751. Deed Book 1A, 19, Recorder of Deeds Office, Carlisle; Croghan had already attempted to save the stock in his tanyard from his creditors by assigning it to his clerk and his half-brother. Later it was assigned to Hockley. Croghan’s deed to Roger Walton and Edward Ward, Sept. 17, 1751, with supporting papers relative to the tanyard, Cadwalader Collection. Croghan’s and Trent’s circumstances at this time made necessary certain other transactions. On August 21, 1751, Croghan turned over bonds to secure Jeremiah Warder & Co. (Etting Collection, George Croghan Estate), and on September 5, 1751, Croghan and Trent signed a bond in favor of Joseph Simon for £353 (Cadwalader Collection). Another of Croghan’s large debts was owed to the Shoemakers. On July 20, 1751, he appears to have reduced this debt from £419 to £210. Cadwalader Collection.
was to have no re-entry into his former properties. Peters' action marked public acceptance of the firm's insolvency.

"As to my Indian affairs," Hockley wrote Penn on his return to Philadelphia in October, 1751, "they are bad enough as I understand from Mr. Peters. . . ." He was naturally anxious to learn from his partners themselves the exact state of affairs. Croghan, however, had gone out to the Ohio, "as he pretends to collect in skins," but Trent had been elected a member of the Assembly from Cumberland County and was expected in town for its opening on October 24. Now Trent, who had been frequent enough in his visits to Philadelphia during the previous year, did not choose to come down. Although elected he did not serve, and, as a result, Hockley had to journey up country to search for him. All the news that came his way was bad, but it was to become even worse.

In the coffee houses and the merchants' offices the affairs of the unfortunate firm were much discussed during the autumn and winter of 1751. The general opinion was that Hockley had been unfairly used by his partners, and that Trent and Croghan had absconded. Hamilton wrote Penn in November that Croghan had ruined himself by his mismanagement of the business, and that he had gone off indebted to many people. There was even a suspicion that Croghan had gone over to the Ohio Company. It was at this time that Hockley learned that the firm of Shippen and Lawrence was going to press him for debts which were in reality those of his partners, but which had been entered under the company's name.

To Penn on February 26, 1752, Hockley wrote: "my Indian affairs are in a bad situation, much worse than when I wrote you last, and shou'd Messrs Trent and Croghan be gone off (which is suspected

96 Richard Hockley to Thomas Penn, Oct. 10, 1751, PPOC, V, 183.
97 Ibid.
98 Of the two representatives elected from Cumberland County, only Daniel Williams came to Philadelphia.
99 Richard Hockley to Thomas Penn, Oct. 26, 1751, PPOC, V, 187; James Hamilton to Thomas Penn, Nov. 20, 1751, Ibid., V, 191. On November 23, 1751, Thomas Cookson and Samuel Flower visited Pennsborough at Hockley's request to see how things were going in Trent's and Croghan's absence. Cookson and Flower, above date, to Trent and Croghan, Cadwalader Collection.
100 James Hamilton to Thomas Penn, Nov. 20, 1751, PPOC, V, 191; James Hamilton to Thomas Penn, Nov. 29, 1751, Ibid., V, 193; Thomas Penn to Richard Peters, March 18, 1752, Penn Letter Book, III, 125.
though I cannot believe it) I am told that I am liable to be sued for upwards of £1700 this curr'cy. taken up on the Partnership acct. without my knowledge."

"Croghan and Trent are under eclipse on account of their circum-
stances," wrote Peters. "Both had disappeared into the woods. "Let me know when my friend Captain Trent comes home," Edward Shippen instructed his frontier agent.

Although the removal of the two partners to the wilderness at the very time that their insolvency was discovered seemed suspicious, it can readily be explained. Croghan had simply gone off for the winter trade as was his wont. It was unusual for Trent to follow him, but perhaps the middle man may have felt that, all things considered, he could do more good on the production line at that time. At all events, Trent returned to Pennsborough in February, a normal enough month to bring out the first fall and winter furs. From his home he wrote Edward Shippen requesting him to obtain a letter from his creditors licensing him to continue his trade unmolested by them until the situation could be straightened out. Fearful of being jailed should he come to town, Trent hoped that Shippen would visit him so that they could discuss ways and means.

His friend was successful in obtaining a "letter of license" from the creditors, although he assured Trent that "it was with much diffi-
culty I got ye Letter signed by so many. . . . I hope your other creditors in the country will also sign it." Soon after Trent had received Shippen's communication enclosing the statement of his creditors freeing him from his obligations for four months, he came down to Philadelphia. There he promised Peters that "if there be faith in man Mr. Hockley will not suffer by his partnership with him & Mr. Croghan." Trent spent the month of April in town. His creditors were willing to advance goods to keep Trent and Croghan in business provided they could give them reasonable hopes of re-

104 Croghan was in bad health during part of the winter season in the Indian country. James Hamilton to George Croghan, April 24, 1752, Colonial Records, V, 570.
105 Edward Shippen to William Harrison, March 5, 1752, Shippen Letter Book.
106 Edward Shippen to William Trent, March 9, 1752, Ibid.
107 Richard Peters to Thomas Penn, March 20, 1752, PPOC, V, 229.
covery. It may be supposed that Trent did what he could along this line to obtain a trading stock to send out to his partner. No doubt he was full of reassurances and promises of large shipments of skins.

To Richard Peters, Trent confessed that he had no idea that Hockley’s firm had been charged with the goods used for other ventures. This, said Trent, was all Croghan’s doing. It is, however, a little surprising that Trent should have been so ignorant of these relatively large dealings which so closely affected his own interests. Moreover, when the company’s accounts were examined in 1754, the very transactions of which Trent had plead ignorance were found to have been entered in his own hand against the initials R. H., Richard Hockley. About May 1, Trent left town to join his partner on the Ohio.

In a document dated May 20, 1752, signed by the three partners of the firm of Hockley, Trent and Croghan, there is the statement that, “as we have found that our carrying on the sd. Trade does not answer our expectations we do therefore hereby mutually agree to dissolve.”

Hockley’s feelings about the partnership were exceedingly bitter. A large loser on its account and menaced with legal action by the creditors, he wrote Penn that it was impossible to describe in a letter “ye usage I have met with from them.” Relatively secure in official position, he made repeated attempts to get restitution from Croghan and Trent, attempts which were continued by his executors after his death in 1774.

To Croghan, who remained in the trading country, Peters wrote in November that “No debts being paid off this year gives the Merchts an indifferent opinion of your case.” Peters then repeated the rumors he had heard that three of four hundred horse loads of Croghan’s

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109 Joseph Shippen, Jr., visited Croghan at Aughwick on December 15, 1754, and personally examined the books which were in Croghan’s possession. Deposition of Joseph Shippen, Jr., April 26, 1758, Cadwalader Collection. The evidence suggests that Croghan and Trent were using the Hockley connection improperly to obtain credit for their private purposes.
110 Edward Shippen to [Mr. and Mrs. James Burd], May 1, 1752, Shippen Letter Book.
111 Cadwalader Collection.
112 Richard Hockley to Thomas Penn, June 21, 1752, PPOC, V, 259. Hockley was appointed Receiver General of Pennsylvania on January 1, 1753. The long drawn-out account of Hockley’s attempts to settle his partnership with Trent and Croghan, its agreements and suits, is traceable, but does not find a place in this article.
skins had come down under false ownership names to cheat the creditors, and warned him against placing confidence in Teaffe and Callendar, "who you may depend upon it abuse you." The truly hazardous situation of Croghan's position is seen in Peters' advice about a meeting: "pray fix a plan of rendezvous for Mr. Hockley myself & you and let it be in Virginia if that will suit but not in Pennsylvania for fear of arrest."\(^{113}\)

Since Croghan had lost his home, he moved sixty miles farther west, beyond the settlements and their established law and order, and settled on a large grant of land which he obtained from the Six Nations on the waters of Aughwick Creek.\(^{114}\) This served as his base of operations until he entered the Indian Department in 1756, as an assistant to Sir William Johnson. His position in the Indian trade, crippled in 1751, was ruined by the French in 1754.\(^{115}\) Soon after that date, his role as an Indian trader was to be replaced by that of Indian agent.

Trent's position upon his return to the Ohio in June, 1752, was not a congenial one to him. From merchant in the fur trade, he was now reduced to the position of trader. Moreover, there was no telling what reception he might meet with should he reappear in the Pennsylvania settlements. It was quite likely that one of his creditors might have him committed to jail.

Consequently, when an opportunity soon offered itself to enter the Virginia service, he was ready to accept it. Such an acceptance, as his recent conversations with Governor Hamilton must have indicated,\(^{116}\) would be entirely favorable to Pennsylvania's interests. Only by helping Virginia could there be any hope of stopping French aggres-

\(^{113}\) Richard Peters to George Croghan, Nov. 3, 1752, Cadwalader Collection.

\(^{114}\) His house at this location is mentioned on October 3, 1753. Colonial Records, V, 675; for his title, see Croghan's deed to William Smith, July 5, 1754, Cadwalader Collection. To this house Croghan removed the records of the Hockley firm, including its books, now lost. This accounts for the presence in the Cadwalader Collection of certain of Trent's correspondence relating to the business. Croghan later turned over some 4,000 acres of the Aughwick tract to one of his creditors, Jeremiah Warder & Co. Etting Collection, George Croghan Estate.

\(^{115}\) Croghan and Trent never properly extricated themselves from the difficulties they encountered in 1751. Various letters of license were allowed them by their creditors in 1753 and 1755. Late in 1755 the Assembly passed a bill for their relief. Etting Collection, George Croghan Estate.

\(^{116}\) Trent had apparently promised to inform Hamilton of the results of the Virginia Treaty. James Hamilton to Thomas Penn, June 19, 1752, PPOC, V, 245.
sion. For the next few years Trent was to be closely associated with the frontier efforts of Virginia and the Ohio Company.

All that remains to be discussed are the reasons for the firm’s failure. Since Croghan and Trent did not confine their trading activities to their Hockley connection, as they were supposed to do, the history of the partnership’s troubles is to be found in Croghan and Trent’s overall operations as Indian traders.

Both Croghan and Trent had borrowed large sums to promote their individual and mutual operations. While this money was readily available to them in 1749, and still available in 1750, by 1751 their creditors had become alarmed at the unpaid balances. Moreover, the Philadelphia market had become overstocked with English goods, and an unhealthy business situation was developing. The year 1750 produced a bumper crop of skins, but by the time they were sold in 1751, their value in London had fallen very low. Prices did not improve during the next twelve months, and those dealing in skins lost money.117 This placed Croghan and Trent in an untenable position. With large overdue debts to pay they found themselves carrying on an unprofitable business.

Other causes contributed to keep them in the red. During the term of the partnership, Croghan and Trent suffered several heavy French losses. Theoretically, this should not have injured Hockley since his goods were not those taken118; actually he suffered whenever his partners’ private ventures failed. Another French harassment to the trade, which may well have affected its profits, was that described by the Swedish traveler, Kalm, who told Peters “that the Coureurs de Bois were ordered to undersell the English [at] the places where both traded together, let them sell never so cheap.”119

Regardless of specific causes for the failure, whether it was brought on by the severe winter of 1750-1751, which may have kept the Indians from hunting, or whether it was the result of what Governor Hamilton called Croghan’s mismanagement, Hockley, Trent and Croghan were not alone in their plight. John Potts, a prominent

117 Thomas Willing to Thomas Lawrence, June 5, 1752, Balch Papers, Swift and Willing Correspondence, 89.
118 Traders’ losses for the period do not list the firm’s name. See Volwiler, 46, and affidavits in Ohio Company Papers.
119 Richard Peters to Thomas Penn, Oct. 15, 1750, PPOC, V, 73.
trader, was jailed for his debts in 1752, and Hugh Crawford might have failed had he not been sustained by Edward Shippen.\textsuperscript{120}

During the entire period of the partnership, a period marked by a rapid increase in the number of men involved, the Indian trade was characterized by cutthroat competition and an absence of both sound ethics and good trade practices. The rivalries thus engendered undoubtedly resulted in much underselling, the result of which, as Richard Peters had prophesied in 1750, could only “make broken traders and broken merchants and ruin all.”\textsuperscript{121}

\textit{Philadelphia} \hspace{1cm} \textbf{Nicholas B. Wainwright}

\textsuperscript{120} Edward Shippen to William Harrison, March 5, 1752, Shippen Letter Book. Concerning the winter of 1750–1751, Trent wrote Peters on March 5, 1751, that it was the “hardest ever known” on the Allegheny, and that he feared that they had lost many horses. \textit{Lancaster County Historical Society Publications}, XXIII, 175.

\textsuperscript{121} Richard Peters to Thomas Penn, April 28, 1750, PPOC, V, 59.