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*Editorial*

Regular readers of the *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* may have noticed a pattern in recent years: the October issue is often, if not always, a special issue on a particular topic. In future, readers can expect one special topical issue per year, generally in October. This year we focus on the eighteenth-century Pennsylvania backcountry, which scholars also refer to as the Pennsylvania frontier, borderland, or crossroads, among other terms, depending upon their preference or emphasis. The issue grew out of a recognition that this is a burgeoning field, with numerous scholars, both young and established, finding fruitful ground to till. This issue does not attempt to provide a comprehensive look at that new scholarship; rather, it provides a sampling of work by some new scholars, surveys and analyzes recent literature on one aspect of the Pennsylvania backcountry—namely Indian-white relations—and, taking a cue from the popularity of the “Hidden Gems” essays of the October 2011 special issue on the Civil War, includes a smattering of essays on a variety of primary sources. These short pieces give readers a glimpse into the historian’s craft.

The authors of this issue have been instrumental in putting it together. Dan Barr, our guest editor, has helped frame the issue in addition to editing it and contributing an informative review essay. Dan is a professor of history at Robert Morris University, outside of Pittsburgh, and he has written extensively about the early transappalachian frontier. He is the author of *The Boundaries Between Us: Natives and Newcomers in the Old Northwest Territory, 1750–1850* (2006) and *Unconquered: The*

*Iroquois League at War in Colonial America* (2006). His most recent project, a study of the early southwestern Pennsylvania titled *A Colony Sprung from Hell: War and Society on the Pittsburgh Frontier, 1744–1794*, is forthcoming from Kent State University Press. I am most grateful for his help in putting this issue together and now turn you over to his capable hands.

Tamara Gaskell  
Editor



## *Introduction*

THE AMERICAN FRONTIER has long been the object of historical inquiry. Even before Frederic Jackson Turner reshaped the field in the early 1890s with his essay *The Significance of the Frontier in American History*, the frontier already occupied a special place in the American imagination. Indeed, much of nation's written history to that point centered in one form or another on the westward movement of Euro-American newcomers and the collision of cultures that occurred along the borderlands of the United States. Turner expanded on that narrative in an attempt to make sense of the processes at work along the frontier and, for better or worse, to assess the frontier's impact on the development of the American nation. Jackson prefaced his analysis by asserting that the physical frontier had come to an end; in essence, however, the scholarly study of the frontier was just beginning. Indeed, while many of Jackson's assertions about its significance have been challenged, repudiated, or revised, the frontier remains, from a scholarly perspective, a wide open, vibrant part of the historical landscape.

At a fundamental level, there is something about the frontier that still appeals to scholars seeking to understand its place in the American experience. This is especially apparent for the colonial frontier, which has enjoyed a considerable amount of scholarly attention over the past several decades. Recasting the colonial periphery alternately as the backcountry, borderlands, and/or contact points, historians and students of early American history have wedded emerging trends in social, cultural, and environmental history to more traditional forms of political, economic, and military inquiry to create a more complete, and much more complex, story of the frontier experience in early America. The infusion of new trends in scholarship into the existing historical literature has produced a blended history of the backcountry that simultaneously confirms, contradicts, and contextualizes our understanding of the frontier as a place and a process in American history. This new understanding has been further enhanced and complicated by specialized regional and local histories that have demonstrated striking similarities and profound differences across

time and space on the colonial borderlands, in the process revising, and at times redefining, our understanding of the regional variations in colonial America. Moreover, new spatial and temporal designations emerging from studies of specific frontier regions, such as the mid-Atlantic and Ohio Country, have complicated the longstanding regional classifications of the New England, middle, and southern colonies.

The eighteenth-century Pennsylvania backcountry occupies a prominent place in this historical literature, with scholarship on the subject steadily trending upward over the past few decades. This special issue of the *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* is a byproduct of this scholarly updraft, as it is unattached to any particularly poignant historical anniversary or commemoration. Rather, the essays in this special issue seek to highlight recent accomplishments in the field while pointing toward new avenues of inquiry.

Much of the modern scholarship on the eighteenth-century Pennsylvania backcountry has focused on the interplay between native peoples and colonists. The initial essay of this special edition—my own contribution—offers a reflection on the recent historiography of Indian-colonial diplomacy and sociocultural interaction. Beginning with the 1999 publication of James Merrell's *Into the American Woods*, scholars have woven new threads into the detailed tapestry of the negotiations between natives and newcomers in Penn's woods. Yet, rather than simply recounting the thrusts and parries of the recent historiography in a standard format, I have sought to test the interpretations of these scholars thematically against the loose parameters of cross-cultural mediation envisioned by Richard White in his seminal study *The Middle Ground* (1991). On the surface, William Penn's Peaceable Kingdom would appear to be an ideal litmus test for models of accommodation and cooperation. Yet, as a host of scholars, beginning with Merrell, have demonstrated, if a middle ground existed on the eighteenth-century Pennsylvania frontier, it was a much darker place than might be anticipated.

The two remaining original essays bring breadth to our exploration of the Pennsylvania backcountry by moving beyond a focused examination of Indian-white relations and interjecting political, economic, and imperial consideration into the discussion. Patrick Spero begins this process by shedding light on a little-known, but fascinating, border conflict between Pennsylvania and Maryland known as the Conojocular War. Pennsylvania's colonial borders were a source of nearly unrelenting strife, especially in

the thinly populated peripheral regions of the colony, yet these border conflicts have received little modern scholarly attention. The transgressions of Connecticut settlers in the Wyoming Valley during the American Revolution have been recently scrutinized in detail by historians, while the border dispute with Virginia in southwestern Pennsylvania during the second half of the eighteenth century has received less focused attention. Yet, as Spero notes, the earlier boundary dispute between Pennsylvania and Maryland has been largely neglected. Spero seeks to correct this deficiency by shedding light on the political significance of the Conojocular War, both locally and provincially, while offering important considerations about Pennsylvania's expansion policy and the shifting, self-interested nature of loyalty along the eighteenth-century frontier.

Marcus Gallo's essay compliments Spero's work by examining another sort of sociopolitical development along the West Branch of the Susquehanna River during the revolutionary era. There poor Scots-Irish migrants created a *de facto* squatter republic, based on an internally developed system of "Fair Play" wherein labor and improvements to the land provided a basis for occupation. This new frontier framework functioned effectively as long as the squatter population remained manageable, but, as Gallo demonstrates, it did not create a particularly egalitarian community. Competition and self-interest remained key characteristics of the squatter republic, as men and women strove within the Fair Play system to define the limits of aggressive competition and protect every individual's access to opportunity. With the American Revolution came change, and, despite the squatters' efforts to co-opt the Patriot cause as protection for their frontier land claims, the removal of colonial land restrictions resulted in a wave of settlement to the region, fracturing the community created by the Fair Play system and destroying the fledgling squatter republic. As Gallo observes, the entire process provided an early model for patterns of occupation, usurpation, and consolidation of the hinterlands of postrevolutionary America.

Both Spero and Gallo demonstrate that the Pennsylvania backcountry remains a vibrant field of study with many paths yet to explore. Together, they demonstrate the importance of intercolonial competition, social conflict, political manipulation, and, perhaps above all else, the pervasiveness of self-interest along the eighteenth-century Pennsylvania frontier. Moreover, both Spero and Gallo have tapped into some of the underutilized source material available for researchers throughout the common-

wealth. Much of the remaining space in this special issue is dedicated to illuminating some of those sources for historians and students alike. David W. Maxey begins this section with a thorough examination of the papers of Samuel Wallis, a canny, self-promoting frontier entrepreneur and land agent. Maxey intertwines a brief biographical sketch of Wallis into an illuminating overview of the collection, housed at the Muncy Historical Society and, in microfilm, at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, as well as the history of its preservation. Interestingly enough, a focal point of both the essay and the collection is a curious receipt for payment from Wallis to none other than Benedict Arnold—a payment delivered after the latter's infamous treason was uncovered.

What follows Maxey's more exhaustive essay is a generous sample of shorter introductions to numerous "Hidden Gems," a diverse assortment of little-known yet valuable sources that provide insight into the Pennsylvania eighteenth-century backcountry. Some of these gems come in familiar forms: written primary documents culled from numerous archival collections, including journals, letters, business ledgers, travelers' descriptions, and court records. Among the glimpses into life in the Pennsylvania backcountry provided by these sources are a Presbyterian minister's record of communion practices, a trader's description of pathways leading west from the Susquehanna River, and the letters of a minister detailing, among other things, the growing resentment among backcountry settlers against Indians. Other sources shed light on lesser-known events or aspects of frontier life, such as the importance of translation in business transactions and the role of slavery in western Pennsylvania. Collectively, these pieces illustrate the great value that remains in archival sources and offer compelling insights into how even small details can reshape larger narratives.

In addition to traditional written sources, the "Hidden Gems" section reveals other avenues for exploring the Pennsylvania backcountry. Colonial-era maps, in particular, often offer compelling or complementary clues about familiar stories, such as Andrew Hamilton's deceptive sketch-map of the 1737 Walking Purchase or Joseph Shippen's map of the Susquehanna River, which details the physical features of the river as well as the location of Indian villages during the 1750s. In addition, the relentless advance of digital archiving has made maps more accessible than ever for researchers, as demonstrated by the wonderful collection of warrantee township maps available as PDF files from the website of the

Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission. Examining museum artifacts, such as the Kittanning Destroyed Medal, one of the earliest decorations awarded for military accomplishment in American history, can offer important insights into the historical context of events in Pennsylvania's backcountry as well as the ways and means by which these events are recalled and commemorated. A historic location or site can also be a hidden gem, as demonstrated by the short introductions to Fort Rice and the Joseph Priestley House, both surviving testaments to differing aspects of military and civilian life in the eighteenth-century Pennsylvania backcountry.

This small but compelling collection of hidden gems provides only a brief glimpse into the many resources available for researchers in archives, museums, historical societies, and, increasingly, on the internet. Indeed, as more archival sources are digitized and made available online, it is highly likely that many more such gems will be discovered by future students and scholars. Coupled with the essays in this issue, readers will, it is hoped, find inspiration in these sources for continued research into the Pennsylvania backcountry. Given the recent trends in the historical literature and increased access to a wider variety of sources than ever before, the future of scholarship on the eighteenth-century Pennsylvania frontier would appear to have a very bright future.

*Robert Morris University*

DANIEL P. BARR



## REVIEW ESSAY

### *Did Pennsylvania Have a Middle Ground? Examining Indian-White Relations on the Eighteenth-Century Pennsylvania Frontier*

**N**EARLY EVERY STUDENT and scholar of Pennsylvania history is familiar with the story of the Paxton Boys. It has come to occupy an infamous but lasting place in the landscape of colonial Pennsylvania history. Indeed, several important scholarly books published over the last twelve years have afforded considerable attention to the Paxton Boys and their motivations for murder. This essay is, for the most part, about what historians have said about those motivations and the conditions that precipitated them. But it begins with the murders. In the predawn hours on December 13, 1763, a posse of fifty-seven mostly Scots-Irish colonists from the frontier community of Paxton advanced through snow and sleet toward a small Indian settlement at Conestoga Town. There the frontiersmen attacked and killed the six Conestoga Indians they encountered and burned the village. Two weeks later, the self-styled Paxton Boys were on the march again, this time toward Lancaster, where fourteen additional Conestogas, survivors who had been absent from their town that fateful morning, had been billeted in the workhouse for their own safety. In a well-organized assault, the colonists forced entry into the workhouse and then viciously murdered and butchered all fourteen Indians, including eight children. Claiming victory, the Paxton Boys departed Lancaster, whooping and yelling as they went. Not long after, some of the Paxton Boys would attempt to lay claim to the lands at the Conestogas' former town. Their claims would not be upheld by Pennsylvania authorities, but their attempt to take possession of Indian land was an ironic twist. The murdered Conestogas, who numbered among the last of the once-mighty Susquehannock peoples in Pennsylvania, had occupied their town for generations, dating back to the

earliest days of the colony. They had remained and endured, scratching out a meager existence as a rising tide of new immigrants, many Scots-Irish like the Paxton Boys, flooded Pennsylvania's frontiers with Euro-American newcomers who surrounded the small Conestoga community. Now, after a brief but vicious outburst of violence, the Conestogas were no more.<sup>1</sup>

It was not a particularly surprising end, given the history of Indian-white relations along the frontiers of Great Britain's American colonies. It is a familiar narrative: westward-moving Euro-American settlers disturb, displace, and, in many cases, destroy the Indian peoples who lie in their path. Intercultural violence was a common component of this process, especially during times of stress and turmoil. But in colonial America much of this cross-cultural violence occurred in New England or in the southern colonies, where the competition for land was fierce and intolerant religious or social conventions dominated societies. The Paxton Boys butchered a small group of Indians who had been living in peace with their white neighbors for decades, and they did it in Pennsylvania, the colony founded by William Penn on the principles of equality. It's tragically ironic. Indeed, among the personal possessions recovered from the burned homes of the murdered Conestogas was a tattered treaty. Signed in Philadelphia in 1701, it was a testament of goodwill signed between the Conestogas and new colony of Pennsylvania; it pledged that the Indians and colonists "shall forever hereafter be as one Head & One Heart, & live in true Friendship & Amity as one People." Signed by William Penn himself, the treaty promised that "He and they will at all times shew themselves true Friends & Brothers to all & every one of ye Said Indians."<sup>2</sup>

How could Pennsylvania have been the site of such horror? How could this promise of friendship—Penn's own vow at the start of the century—have come to mean so little to frontier colonists like the Paxton Boys by the 1760s? Metropolitan Pennsylvanians at the time pondered similar questions. Benjamin Franklin, among others, derided the murders as having occurred "in Defiance of the Government, of all Laws human and divine, and to the eternal Disgrace of [the perpetrators'] Country and

<sup>1</sup> James H. Merrell, *Into the American Woods: Negotiators on the Pennsylvania Frontier* (New York, 1999), 284–88; Kevin Kenny, *Peaceable Kingdom Lost: The Paxton Boys and the Destruction of William Penn's Holy Experiment* (New York, 2009), 1–2.

<sup>2</sup> Treaty text quoted in Merrell, *Into the American Woods*, 288.



Colour.”<sup>3</sup> Yet the Paxton Boys believed, according to historian Kevin Kenny, that “the killing of the Conestogas . . . was both necessary and just.”<sup>4</sup> They even reassembled in greater numbers and marched to Philadelphia in February 1764, intending to sensitize the Pennsylvania Assembly to their predicament and, perhaps, to butcher the more than one hundred Christian Indians who had taken refuge in the city. The marchers were turned back without violence, but Kenny and many other historians have long sought to understand how and why such violent outbursts against Indians could take place in Pennsylvania. In their attempts to understand the Paxton Boys, a recent crop of historical scholarship has delved deeper into the nature and fabric of Indian-white relations in Pennsylvania during the eighteenth century. Its explorations focus on the frontier—on the locations of sustained contact where Indians and colonists met, communicated, and, in the end, collided. It is here, amid the history of Indian-white relations on the Pennsylvania colonial frontier, that the Paxton Boys’ murder of the Conestogas is revealed as the symptom of a more pervasive problem, a single, tragic episode in a larger, more complicated story: the deterioration of amicable relations between Indians and colonists into violence, racial hatred, and murder.

What follows is an assessment of how recent historical scholarship has reconstructed that story. The essay is not intended to be all encompassing, nor will it delve into every problem and challenge of interpreting the frontier experience in eighteenth-century Pennsylvania. Rather, the essay will explore how select modern historians have interpreted the complicated interactions between Indians and colonists along the frontier and how their analyses and understandings of the context of those relations shaped events like the Paxton Boys’ killing of the Conestogas. Nor should readers expect to find lengthy semantic dissections of terminology: “frontier” has been utilized in this essay to describe and define the regions of Pennsylvania where natives and newcomers most often interacted with one another. There is no intention to assert the primacy of frontier over other designations: borderlands, backcountry, crossroads, etc. These discussions have their place in academic discourse, but they tend to be subjective and often lengthy. This essay will leave those discussions for another

<sup>3</sup> Franklin quoted in Krista Camenzind, “Violence, Race, and the Paxton Boys,” in *Friends and Enemies in Penn’s Woods: Indians, Colonists, and the Racial Construction of Pennsylvania*, ed. William A. Pencak and Daniel K. Richter (University Park, PA, 2004), 201–2.

<sup>4</sup> Kenny, *Peaceable Kingdom Lost*, 163.

forum, except where a specific construction of terminology clearly relates to an important historical interpretation.

Instead, this essay is constructed around a central question: was there a middle ground in eighteenth-century Pennsylvania? Before this can be considered, an attempt must first be made to understand what a middle ground entails. In 1991, historian Richard White published his original and influential book *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650–1815*. White focused on the interactions of Indians and Euro-Americans along the Great Lakes frontier, an area the French called the *pays d'en haut*, or upper country. He found that Indians and Euro-Americans in the *pays d'en haut* created a “place in between: in between cultures, peoples, and in between empires and the nonstate world of villages.” He called this space the middle ground and defined it as a place where “diverse peoples adjust their differences through what amounts to a process of creative, and often expedient, misunderstandings.” Unlike the Paxton Boys, peoples occupying the middle ground try “to persuade others who are different from themselves by appealing to what they perceive to be the values and the practices of those others. They often misinterpret and distort both the values and practices of those they deal with, but from these misunderstandings arise new meanings and through them new practices.” Rather than colonists butchering Indians, or vice versa, in the middle ground Indian peoples and Euro-Americans accommodated one another in a shared world, “a joint Indian-white creation.”<sup>5</sup> It sounds harmonious, but White warns that the middle ground was often fraught with peril and conflict. According to White:

The middle ground depended on the inability of both sides to gain their ends through force. The middle ground grew according to the need of people to find a means, other than force, to gain the cooperation or consent of foreigners. To succeed, those who operated on the middle ground had, of necessity, to attempt to understand the world and the reasoning of others and to assimilate enough of that reasoning to put it to their own purposes.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650–1815* (New York, 1991), x, xiv.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

Thus, the middle ground endured only so long as its principal partners, Indians and colonists, were willing to work through their misunderstandings to find common ground. When that willingness subsided, as occurred in the *pays d'en haut* during the era of the American Revolution, the middle ground quickly eroded and was replaced by an antagonistic environment in which Indians and Euro-Americans marginalized and attacked the other, often culminating in the eradication or expulsion of Indian peoples.

Since the publication of *The Middle Ground*, White's model of frontier accommodation has become the standard against which nearly all colonial and early national Indian-white interactions have been measured, even if that is not what he envisioned when constructing his history of Indian-white relations along the Great Lakes.<sup>7</sup> But the impact of his work is undeniable. Historians of many different frontiers have applied White's framework to understand the ways in which natives and newcomers have met and adapted to one another.

Certainly Pennsylvania would seem to offer itself readily for scholarly comparison to White's middle ground in the *pays d'en haut*. After all, Pennsylvania was William Penn's "Peaceable Kingdom," a "holy experiment" in which peoples of diverse backgrounds and ethnicities, including Indians and colonists, could live together in peace. Yet the Paxton Boys' brutal slaying of the Conestoga Indians certainly complicates attempts to apply the middle-ground framework to Pennsylvania. Historians have demonstrated that the murders were part of a larger pattern of racially motivated violence that characterized much of Pennsylvania by the 1760s. In Pennsylvania, Indians and colonists were killing one another at least a decade prior to the American Revolution and doing so with alarming ferocity. To be fair, White constructed the middle-ground framework from specific conditions he found in the *pays d'en haut*, and applying it to other regions of colonial America requires caution. Variations in the sociopolitical climate must be considered, as these undoubtedly accounted for a different outcome in Pennsylvania. Still, given the principles upon which Penn founded his colony, something had clearly gone terribly wrong in the "Peaceable Kingdom" by the 1760s for frontier vigilantes to murder peaceful Indians with impunity.

<sup>7</sup> For an interesting conceptual commentary on the middle-ground model and White's intentions for his interpretation, see Philip J. Deloria, "What Is the Middle Ground, Anyway?" *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 63 (2006): 15–22.

Such assumptions belie a larger question: was there ever any form of middle ground in Pennsylvania? And if it existed, what was the nature and mechanics of this shared world? More importantly, how, when, and why did it fail? Numerous historians have issued forth recently to explain how and why cross-cultural accommodation failed in Pennsylvania during the eighteenth century. The majority of this scholarship has sought to understand how the mythic "Peaceable Kingdom" of Penn's imagination rapidly devolved into a cultural landscape where, in the estimation of James Merrell, "few Pennsylvanians were interested any longer in communication with Indians beyond what issued from the muzzle of a gun."<sup>8</sup> In the process, they have challenged, redefined, and, most often, subdued the "Peaceable Kingdom" myth and offered a negative assessment regarding the existence of a middle ground in Pennsylvania, whether they overtly acknowledge it or not.

Any discussion of recent historical inquiry into Indian-white relations on the Pennsylvania frontier must begin with James Merrell's magisterial and multifaceted book, *Into the American Woods: Negotiators on the Pennsylvania Frontier* (1999). With compelling narrative flair, Merrell examines the interaction of Indians and Euro-American newcomers from the early decades of the eighteenth century through the late 1760s. As historical literature, *Into the American Woods* defies easy explanation. Unorthodox in its construction, the book alternates chapters that provide a more or less chronological narrative of cross-cultural diplomacy on the Pennsylvania frontier with chapters devoted to thematic analyses of the nature and practices of negotiation. As historical interpretation, however, the thrust is more direct. Using Pennsylvania's primeval forests as a backdrop, Merrell paints a decidedly dark picture. Like White, he tells a tale of two diverse cultures struggling to find accommodation and commonality through a series of mishaps and misunderstandings. Merrell, however, finds little in Pennsylvania that resembles White's middle ground of the *pays d'en haut*. From the early 1700s, Merrell argues, the colonists' nearly insatiable appetite for land created friction and disharmony between Indians and whites. While this process accelerated significantly between 1744 and 1769, resulting in a near total breakdown of cross-cultural cooperation, Merrell asserts that any semblance of accommodation or hybridity along the Pennsylvania frontier before that was an illusion, as the

<sup>8</sup> Merrell, *Into the American Woods*, 229.

forces that led to the violent clashes between Indians and whites in the 1760s were present in Pennsylvania from the start. Under Merrell's examination, the Paxton Boys were not an aberration or a tragic misstep in Pennsylvania's Indian-white history. Rather, the murder of the Conestogas was a predictable outcome given the deeply strained nature of the relationship between Indians and Pennsylvanians along the colony's frontier.

Merrell's conclusions are tinted with a gloomy irony, considering the individuals he builds his narrative around: the frontier interpreters, mediators, messengers, and negotiators whom Merrell simply and fittingly calls "go-betweens." These are individuals whose very existence would seem to be the byproduct of a middle ground between Indians and colonists. After all, go-betweens traveled back and forth "between" the two sides; by default they appear to occupy ground in the middle. Merrell does not shy away from that understanding. Indeed, he skillfully demonstrates how for a time go-betweens facilitated communication and cooperation between the two cultures, crossing back and forth to secure agreements, resolve conflicts, and promote cooperation. Yet despite their crucial function along the frontier, Merrell warns that go-betweens did little to create an Indian-white middle ground. While many go-betweens adopted the dress and customs of the other culture, learned the language of the other, and occasionally even married someone from the other side, "few, it turned out, really felt at home on the far side." Go-betweens "were not, as it turns out, denizens of some debatable land between native and newcomer; almost without exception, they were firmly anchored on one side of the cultural divide or the other." Any appearances to the contrary, where the "the go-between was some real-life Natty Bumppo, one foot planted—like his famous fictional kinsman, Cooper's legendary Leatherstocking—in each world," was a fictitious construction.<sup>9</sup>

Merrell drives this point home forcefully with his depiction of Conrad Weiser, Pennsylvania's preeminent go-between prior to the 1760s. Weiser, often depicted as a friend to Pennsylvania's Indians, hardly lives up to that description under Merrell's examination. While he lived among the Mohawks and was adopted into one of their communities, Weiser's sympathies toward Indians extended only as far as his own self-interest. He never considered himself an Indian in any manner, and as Indian-white

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 300, 37.

relations deteriorated along the frontier during the 1750s and 1760s, Weiser increasingly became involved in land speculation and supported the removal of Indians that stood in the path of his own enrichment. "Swept up in the land rush, Weiser did not envision, did not work toward, did not even want a world in which Indians and colonists were one heart and one body. . . . Quite the contrary: a mingling of European and Indian was his worst fear."<sup>10</sup>

While conflict over land fueled the fires of contention, Merrell finds more complex issues smoldering in the ashes of this conflagration. The cultural divide between Indians and colonists never diminished or blurred in any meaningful manner because neither side made any meaningful effort to accommodate the other. In short, they came to know each other well, and neither side liked what it saw. Again, go-betweens played an ironic role in this outcome. Rather than constructing a middle ground, go-betweens allowed natives and newcomers to remain separate through most of the colonial period. There was little need for accommodation so long as the chosen representatives of each culture successfully managed crises and blunted conflicts. Accordingly, cultural biases inherent in each society were never moderated through cooperation, and Indians and whites developed different visions of their futures in Pennsylvania based on their own cultural assumptions. According to Merrell, "Weiser and other colonial mediators, never shedding prejudices that Europeans brought to America, embraced the idea that getting along with Indians was only a necessary step on the road to a brighter future, a time when those Indians would follow the forest into oblivion." Indian go-betweens were no different. While "envoys from Indian country did pursue coexistence . . . it was a coexistence designed to keep colonists at arm's length so that Indian peoples could remain masters of their own destiny." Accordingly, Indians across the frontier sought to control the form and function of cross-cultural diplomacy, mandating that all such encounters follow established Indian protocols. Since neither culture truly wanted to accommodate the other in a shared world, Merrell concludes that separation was the only path to coexistence as peoples. Colonial Pennsylvania was "a land of lines dividing Indians from Europeans, not a place where lines blurred and peoples came together."<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 296.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 37–38, 300.

In short, then, Merrell's interpretation implies that there was never a middle ground in Pennsylvania because neither Indians nor colonists wanted one. Cultural separation was desirable and inevitable, driven in part by go-betweens who feigned cooperation while actually furthering the cultural and racial divide. Merrell contends that "while all sought harmony, while they played up similarities, they could not, they did not want to, erase the differences they saw between colonist and Indian. They, too, thought the existence of *English ground* and *Indian ground*, of *us* and *them*, was nonnegotiable." As the eighteenth century matured, and as colonists increasingly sought to make Indian ground into English ground, war became inevitable. Indians and colonists along the frontier began "killing each other with terrible fury," overcome by animosity as "the symptoms of a deeper malaise—blind hatred—became more pervasive." Indians and colonists continued to meet one another and negotiate, but by the 1760s they more often met as victor and vanquished than as equals, and the treaty council, the quintessential representation of Penn's mythic "Peaceable Kingdom," came to represent the division rather than the unification of cultures. As Merrell concludes, "Looking back . . . at almost a century of treaties between Penn's province and its Indian neighbors, it is clear that these gatherings had, at best, an ambiguous legacy. Intended to bring people together, treaties ended up driving them apart. Intended to promote harmony, in the ended they produced dissonance. And while councils did spawn understanding, that understanding ended in hatred."<sup>12</sup>

Merrell's interpretation is complex and persuasive, backed by meticulous research into a deep trove of sources. And, like all good historical reconstructions, it generates as many questions as it answers. Was the Pennsylvania frontier really as dark and discouraging as Merrell contends? Was there indeed never more than a fleeting chance for cross-cultural cooperation and harmonious coexistence? To be certain, Merrell's interpretation is powerful but not unassailable. To some extent, his examination lacks context. Merrell focuses so intently on provincial matters that he offers little analysis of the role that imperial powers—the French and the British—played in the negotiations and conflicts that unfolded along the Pennsylvania frontier. Moreover, his relatively small sample of go-betweens perhaps overinforms his significantly larger conclusions about Indian-white relations on the frontier. Many go-betweens may have been

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 38, 221, 250, 276.

uncomfortable straddling two cultures, but that does not necessarily hold true for all colonists. Lastly, the pessimism of his account seems almost too fatalistic, railing as doggedly as it does against even the faintest hope that Indians and colonists tried to find a different outcome.

Still, the influence of Merrell's work is profound. Since its publication, *Into the American Woods* has compelled all serious students of the Pennsylvania frontier to engage its arguments. Not surprisingly, a new generation of frontier scholarship has emerged to confirm, challenge, and critique Merrell's interpretation. Some have confirmed his findings, while others have detected elements of a middle ground in Pennsylvania. This is not to say that all recent historical inquiry into the colonial Pennsylvania frontier situates itself firmly on White's middle ground or in Merrell's dark and dangerous woods. Indeed, much of what has been written about the Pennsylvania frontier since 2000 embraces elements of one or both frameworks in a manner that both enhances and complicates the story of Indian-white interaction in Pennsylvania. Accordingly, these historians have given us a broader and more complex picture of the Pennsylvania frontier than either White's middle ground or Merrell's divisive frontier allows, although it is debatable just how far they stray from Merrell's conclusions.

The first work of this new generation to appear after Merrell, and perhaps the most significant, was Jane T. Merritt's *At the Crossroads: Indians and Empires on a Mid-Atlantic Frontier, 1700–1763*, published in 2003. Merritt's focus is nearly identical to Merrell's: Indian-white relations on the Pennsylvania frontier from the early eighteenth century through the 1760s. Her conclusions are likewise similar: tensions between Indians and whites along the frontier, fueled in no small part by an ever-increasing horde of colonial immigrants hungry for Indian land, erupted in violence that crystallized into racial hatred, assuring that Indians would have no place in Pennsylvania's future. But how she arrives at that world of racial discord and violence is quite different. Where Merrell subtly but steadily urges his readers to concede that there was never any real hope for accommodation between Indians and whites in Pennsylvania, Merritt's interpretation of cross-cultural concourse is closer to White's middle ground. Merritt refuses to assume that the two cultures were polarized from the start and instead argues that "Indians in the mid-Atlantic region negotiated a common space with European settlers along the shifting frontier where roads both literally and figuratively passed



through and between communities, connecting their lives and histories.” Rather than a barrier between cultures, Merritt argues that the frontier was a “like a crossroads, a place where many paths converged, providing divers possibilities and directions to those who passed through.”<sup>13</sup>

For Merritt, these possibilities became reality in Pennsylvania over the first half of the eighteenth century, as Indians and colonists accommodated one another and established the foundation for a shared common society. A powerful factor influencing accommodation was that many Indians, like the early colonists, were newcomers to Pennsylvania, migrants who sought “to negotiate interdependent social, economic, and political relations for their survival.” Imperial rivalries likewise fostered cooperation. During the 1730s and 1740s, the Pennsylvania government allied with the Iroquois Confederacy in an effort to impose controls over peoples they considered to be their subjects along the frontier. Indians and colonists found common cause in resistance to these aspiring imperialists. These and other considerations led Indians and colonists to create a “frontier of inclusion,” where neither group held a meaningful advantage over the other, cooperation proved mutually beneficial, and they resolved differences through negotiation and accommodation.<sup>14</sup>

The most compelling illustrations of this “frontier of inclusion” were the shared Indian-white communities created by Moravian missionaries along the Lehigh and Susquehanna Rivers in the 1740s. Merritt convincingly demonstrates that accommodation thrived in these communities and that both Indians and Moravians were willing participants in the formation of a middle ground. Indians selectively embraced elements of Moravian Christianity because its relatively liberal framework allowed for hybridity; “to become Christian, then, an Indian did not have to let go of the past but instead could merely reframe it as a new, yet familiar context for the present.”<sup>15</sup> Religion in turn provided a gateway for Indian acceptance of other European sociocultural conventions, while Moravian missionaries reciprocated by adopting many native social and cultural protocols because it allowed them to integrate themselves—and their religious message—into native communities and kinship networks. Together they created a hybrid Indian-Christian-European community centered on commonalities rather than differences.

<sup>13</sup> Jane T. Merritt, *At the Crossroads: Indians and Empires on a Mid-Atlantic Frontier, 1700–1763* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2003), 3, 2.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 20, 4.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 110.

Yet fissures existed even in the hybridized Indian-Moravian communities, and the passage of time “exposed many social fractures that threatened their stability.” In the end, this world could not, and did not, survive. It collapsed under the strain of the Seven Years’ War and the pressures it unleashed upon the Pennsylvania frontier. In Merritt’s estimation, the war did not necessarily create new problems as much as it exacerbated existing disputes. As colonial settlers pushed westward, they attracted the attention of imperial powers—the French, the British, Pennsylvania, and the Iroquois Confederacy—all of whom increased their efforts to assert control over the lands and people along the Pennsylvania frontier. Indians, in particular, found themselves under assault from all sides, and they responded aggressively to protect their lands and liberty. More often than not, violent altercations with Pennsylvania colonists resulted. Indians raided frontier settlements, killed and mutilated settlers, and deluged much of the Pennsylvania frontier in blood. The violence created fear among frontier colonists, who sought to retaliate in kind. Violence begat violence, suffering bred hatred, and racism replaced accommodation as both sides used race to “justify violent retaliation during the Seven Years’ War.” Even when the violence abated, the peace that followed was ripe with distrust, fear, and racial hatred. It is not surprising that the Paxton Boys emerged from this dark landscape, given the “racial rhetoric [that] emerged by 1763 to displace the nuanced interactions that had previously characterized relations between native Americans and white settlers in Pennsylvania.”<sup>16</sup>

Much of Merritt’s interpretive thrust echoes White’s middle-ground model of Indian-white interaction. Her analysis of the transformation of cross-cultural relations on the Pennsylvania frontier exhibits many of the characteristics of White’s middle ground in the *pays d’en haut*: Indians and colonists accommodated each other as long as they needed one another, but when the competition for land and resources intensified, as occurred during the Seven Years’ War in Pennsylvania, the middle ground crumbled. Yet Merritt’s analysis of how and why the “frontier of inclusion” failed ties into Merrell’s arguments more than it might appear at first. Merritt explains that the shared landscapes created by Indians and colonists prior to the 1750s made the violence of the Seven Years’ War intensely personal. The brutality of the war was all the more terrible because it “was born of their familiarity, even similarity.” Thus, just as

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 131, 10.

Merrell has argued, familiarity bred contempt. As the violence intensified, accommodation and cooperation gave way to marginalization as the seeds of a racially charged nationalism took root, pitting “us” against “them.” “The hybrid nature of frontier life, the competition for resources, and the tensions of an imperial war had engendered a nationalist sentiment among both white and Indian populations” that transformed Indian-white relations, ensuring that “the differences among Pennsylvania immigrants—whether political, economic, social, religious, ethnic, or racial—once negotiable and often tolerated at a local level, became increasingly characterized by race.” A powerful component of that racism, Merritt concludes, was a deep sense of betrayal, as “native Americans and Euramericans blamed each other for undermining the potential peace embedded in an idealized past.” The result was a complete transformation of the Pennsylvania borderlands away from the “frontier of inclusion” and toward Merrell’s “land of lines dividing Indians from Europeans.” Indeed, much to her own chagrin, Merritt concludes that the intensely personal violence of the era left Indians and colonists “no other solution than to create more permanent boundaries between communities.”<sup>17</sup>

Although Merritt arrives at a similar endpoint as Merrell, her view of the interaction between Indians and colonists on the Pennsylvania frontier over the first half of the eighteenth century is very different. Her depiction of the Indian-Moravian communities demonstrates that real accommodation was possible and that it actually occurred. Perhaps the frontier in Pennsylvania was not as dark and depressing as Merrell contends, yet questions persist about the extent to which the Indian-Moravian communities were representative of the overall texture of accommodation on the Pennsylvania frontier. Just as Merrell’s go-betweens may comprise too small of a sample upon which to base his arguments that neither Indians nor colonists were particularly interested in accommodation along the Pennsylvania frontier, the Indian-Moravian communities that Merritt offers as shining examples of cultural hybridity may very well be aberrations, compelling but unique examples of accommodation in an otherwise culturally divisive landscape. It is worth noting that few of the examples Merritt cites when discussing the racialized violence of the 1760s come from the Indian-Moravian communities, leaving one to ponder their true significance for the larger dynamic of Indian-colonial accommodation on the Pennsylvania frontier.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 9, 4, 14, 202.

Another potential drawback of Merritt's pseudo-middle-ground analysis is that many of the cracks that she discovers in the foundation of accommodation during the Seven Years' War seem to have been present much earlier in the century as well. This point is underscored by certain selections in *Friends and Enemies in Penn's Wood: Indians, Colonists, and the Racial Construction of Pennsylvania* (2004). The collection, edited by William Pencak and Daniel Richter, appeared a year after Merritt's *At the Crossroads* and follows a similar interpretive route, seeking to "trace the collapse of whatever potential may have existed for a Pennsylvania shared by Indians and Europeans and its replacement by a racialized definition that left no room for Native people." The organization of the collection, which is divided into three chronological sections of essays—"Peoples in Conversation," "Fragile Structures of Coexistence," and "Toward a White Pennsylvania"—seems to mesh well with Merritt's framework of a pre-1750 middle ground transformed by competition, war, and racism during the Seven Years' War. Some of the essays in the volume lend credence to this construction, but, as the editors concede, "the chapters in this volume provide no easy or definitive answers," and several of the essays suggest that cross-cultural relations were less than favorable from the inception of the colony. Faced with this dichotomy of interpretation, the editors are left little choice but to conclude that prior to 1750 "very real points of congruence between views of the world provided some basis for mutual understanding, but underlying disparities in interests made such understandings—and the possibilities for peaceful coexistence they implied—inherently fragile."<sup>18</sup>

Perhaps no essay in the collection demonstrates the fragility of Indian-white relations in early Pennsylvania more than James O'Neil Spady's "Colonialism and the Discursive Antecedents of *Penn's Treaty with the Indians*," which paints a less than complimentary picture of William Penn's early dealings with the Lenape Indians. Spady argues that "the story of Pennsylvania's benevolent origins is an allegory of colonialism propagated by Penn and later colonists that has obscured the significance of both the severe disruption of Lenape life that Pennsylvania created and the resistance of some Lenapes to that disruption." In Spady's estimation, there were difficulties between Indians and colonists from the start of Pennsylvania, and those tensions revolved around land. The Lenapes, in particular, took issue with the land policies of the founder and his

<sup>18</sup> Pencak and Richter, *Friends and Enemies in Penn's Woods*, xvi–xvii, x–xi.

colonists. Based on their past experiences with Swedish and Dutch colonists, the Lenapes expected “colonial expansion would be modest and manageable, and that often it might fail completely.” Penn sought not only large tracts of land, but also to reorient the usage of the land away from traditional native practices. Indeed, “once Penn purchased the land, mutual use was impossible as forests became fields and thousands of Europeans insisting on exclusive possession filled the area.” Seeing no other acceptable alternative, many Lenapes withdrew from the region, seeking refuge from any other vestiges of Penn’s benevolence. As Spady argues, “after Penn’s founding of Pennsylvania, compromise was increasingly a Lenape obligation, and brotherhood and friendship increasingly required Lenape subordination.”<sup>19</sup>

Interestingly, Merritt finds evidence of a similar dynamic at work on the Pennsylvania frontier seventy years later. In the wake of the Seven Years’ War, a veritable flood of new settlers deluged the frontier seeking land and opportunity. Much like their colonial ancestors, these new immigrants tipped the power balance along the frontier in favor of the colonists and forced Indians to compromise or withdraw, although the methods and forms of that compromise differed dramatically from those of Penn’s era. Many of the Euro-American immigrants to the Pennsylvania frontier in the 1760s were preconditioned to distrust and despise Indians. They had been exposed to stories and newspaper reports sensationalizing the brutality of the Seven Years’ War, and they quickly and easily fell under the sway of the incipient racist nationalism emerging on the frontier. Not surprisingly, they believed the submission of Indians, which in this scenario required their dispossession and removal, was an absolute necessity for the settlers’ security and prosperity. They called on government entities to create new boundaries and remove the Indian threat from their midst. When provincial or imperial authorities failed to meet their expectations in this regard, frontier colonists took matters into their own hands. They attacked and killed Indians wherever they could be found, as in the massacre of the Conestogas by the Paxton Boys. Provincial and even imperial authorities eventually caved to the demands of the frontier population—and also pandered to the parallel interests of influential land speculators—by coercing Indians into accepting treaties that defined them as subordinate peoples and corralling them behind arti-

<sup>19</sup> James O’Neil Spady, “Colonialism and the Discursive Antecedents of *Penn’s Treaty with the Indians*,” in *ibid.*, 19, xii, 20.

ficially imposed borders, first in 1763 and again in 1768. Some Indians, determined to maintain what little lands they still held, responded by embracing movements for pan-Indian unity in the Ohio Country and beyond, seeking strength in numbers, both at the negotiating table and in any future conflict. But unity proved elusive, and as often as not, Indian peoples departed contested regions for the relative but temporary security of new lands further removed from the ever-expanding colonial settlements.

Westward-moving settlers may have been the force that steered Indian-white relations on the Pennsylvania frontier toward violence, but Merritt and the essayists in *Friends and Enemies in Penn's Woods* argue that the complex process that initiated this transformation began with the Seven Years' War. Indeed, the war looms large over Merritt's "frontier of inclusion" as the crucial turning point that destroyed the fragile forms of accommodation previously found along the Pennsylvania frontier. Merrell also recognizes the central importance of the war, arguing that "the bloodshed and anguish forever changed the face of the frontier, leaving Penn's peaceful vision little more than a memory."<sup>20</sup> Nor are these scholars alone in placing the war at the center of the breakdown of Indian-white relations in Pennsylvania. Matthew Ward's *Breaking the Backcountry: The Seven Years' War in Virginia and Pennsylvania, 1754–1764*, published the same year as Merritt's *At the Crossroads* (2003), reaches a similar conclusion. While Ward's study covers much more than Indian-white relations on the frontier, he too situates the Seven Years' War squarely at the heart of the racism that divided Indians and colonists in Pennsylvania after the war. Ward, like Merritt, highlights the brutality of the conflict, noting that the intensely personal nature of the war rendered any chance of resuming the primarily peaceful interactions of the prewar days impossible.

Ward goes into slightly more detail about the brutality of the war, but, more importantly, he also demonstrates how Indian military tactics contributed to the eradication of accommodation. Asserting that "the Seven Years' War reveals the extent to which the Indian peoples developed effective patterns of warfare," Ward illustrates how Indians dictated the tempo and temperament of the war, striking fast and without warning, often deliberately targeting colonists settled on former Indian lands along the frontier. But there was more to Indian strategy than revenge.

<sup>20</sup> Merrell, *Into the American Woods*, 36.

According to Ward, “Indian raiders consciously waged psychological warfare. . . . [Along the frontiers of Pennsylvania, Indian raiders mutilated the bodies of women and children, displaying them at crossroads or other locations where they would be sure to be discovered.]”<sup>21</sup> The goal was to terrorize and intimidate the colonists into vacating contested lands. Moreover, the tactics worked. Settlers were traumatized and thousands fled, yet there were unintended consequences as well, one of which Ward offers as an interesting sidebar that may have larger ramifications for the Pennsylvania frontier than he implies:

The war may have also played a vital role in the “arming” of the backcountry. . . . Before the war many backcountry settlers had no need for arms. . . . However, during the war, and then again during Pontiac’s War, the descent of Indian raiding parties on the frontier meant that backcountry settlers needed to be armed. With every reason to possess arms for their own protection, backcountry settlers acquired guns and began the process of arming their communities.<sup>22</sup>

The acquisition of firearms set a dangerous precedent, especially since the major impact of the Indians’ psychological terrorization of the frontier was the rapid onset of hatred for Indians. In the wake of the war, Ward argues that “the region’s settlers . . . [had] concluded on the basis of a decade of suffering and bloodshed that the only good Indian was a dead one.”<sup>23</sup>

The Seven Years’ War was without question a profoundly transformational event in Pennsylvania’s history. Based on the interpretations of much recent scholarship, the war was more than just a border conflict between Indians and colonists living along the Pennsylvania frontier: it was the apocalypse. But was the war, as recent scholarship suggests, so devastating that there was no chance for accommodation between Indians and colonists in its aftermath? The easiest way to test the war’s impact on Indian-white relations along the Pennsylvania frontier would be to examine them over time after the war’s end. Unfortunately, a common characteristic of Merrell, Merritt, Ward, and most of the collected essays in the Pencak/Richter anthology is that they do not pursue their analysis beyond

<sup>21</sup> Matthew C. Ward, *Breaking the Backcountry: The Seven Years’ War in Virginia and Pennsylvania, 1754–1764* (Pittsburgh, 2003), 7.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 258.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 257.

the 1760s. While they offer important commentaries on the development of a racially bifurcated frontier in the immediate aftermath of the war, they decline to carry their interpretations into the revolutionary era, preferring to utilize the Paxton Boys' murder of the Conestogas as the culminating episode in the degeneration of the Pennsylvania frontier into racial armageddon. Nor do they hint at any hope for accommodation or even coexistence over the final third of the eighteenth century. Instead, the Paxton Boys and the violence they unleashed become monolithic symbols of a world without hope, where all that remained between Indians and white Pennsylvanians was hatred, war, and death.

Into this breach has come an even more recent body of scholarship that has carried the declension model of the Pennsylvania frontier forward, both confirming and complicating existing arguments about Indian-white relations on the Pennsylvania frontier and offering new conclusions about the viability of a middle ground in Pennsylvania. The racial hatred unleashed on the Pennsylvania frontier by the Seven Years' War continues to be an important consideration for this scholarship. It lies at the heart of Peter Silver's book, *Our Savage Neighbors: How Indian War Transformed Early America* (2007). Despite the misleading subtitle (the book is primarily about Pennsylvania), Silver offers an interesting assessment of how frontier settlers created a shared identity in Pennsylvania in the decades after the Seven Years' War. Fear was the force that divided Indians from colonists. Like Merritt, Silver asserts that frontier colonists developed a pervasive hatred of Indians during the Seven Years' War. This hatred was created by fear of Indian attack. The brutality of the war, especially the mutilation of men, women, and children, produced intense fear and paranoia among Pennsylvanians living along the frontier. In this regard, Silver echoes Ward in arguing that "the violence that provincial Americans found themselves first dreading and then experiencing was, in the most literal sense, terroristic. It had been carefully planned and carried out by the Indians with whom they were at war to induce the greatest fright possible." But where Ward concentrates on a tactical analysis of Indian warfare's psychological elements, Silver focuses on the aftermath of the brutality. Indians, he argues, did not achieve the ends they envisioned. While some colonists fled the frontier, many remained, and as Merritt has demonstrated, an entire host of new immigrants arrived. Silver illustrates how these frontier colonists, old and new, found common identity in their shared fear of Indians. That fear germi-



nated into a pervasive hatred for all Indians that burned at the core of a nascent racial nationalism among frontier Pennsylvanians, a process that matured during the American Revolution as Pennsylvanians of varying ethnic and religious backgrounds came together to see themselves as “the white people.” Indians were marginalized and reclassified by frontier whites as “our savage neighbors,” demonstrating Silver’s contention that “fear and horror, with suitable repackaging, can remake whole societies and their political landscape.”<sup>24</sup>

Although he traces the deterioration of Indian-white relations in Pennsylvania to its climax during the American Revolution, Silver’s conclusions are very similar to Merritt’s. What sets Silver’s work apart is his analysis of how this racial construction of the frontier emerged. War with Indians and the fear it spawned was certainly the catalyst, but the creation of a separate “white” identity among frontier Pennsylvanians was engineered through literary mechanisms. Silver demonstrates how frontier colonists in Pennsylvania used rhetoric to articulate their fear of Indians. They created what he terms “the anti-Indian sublime,” a literary construction of Indians as treacherous, bloodthirsty killers who lurked in the woods awaiting any opportunity to murder and mutilate white colonists living on the frontier. It was a method of “writing and thinking about Indians . . . shaped by the pathetic sublime, a mode of writing engineered to overwhelm the reader with emotion at the sight of suffering.” Newspapers and pamphlets, in particular, during and after the Seven Years’ War, focused on graphic depictions of Indian violence against colonists, attesting to “the existence of a suffering, victimized community” along the frontier. This “magnetic rhetoric of suffering, one fixed on the sight of the attacks and not their causes,” bred fear and loathing of Indians in the colonial frontier settlements, with colonists increasingly calling for retribution and the removal of all Indians.<sup>25</sup>

Silver argues that this process escalated even further during the American Revolution and implies that it correspondingly had a politicizing effect on white Pennsylvanians living along the frontier. This consideration forms an important part of the interpretation offered by Patrick Griffin, whose book *American Leviathan: Empire, Nation, and the Revolutionary Frontier* (2007) in part explores how the lack of centralized

<sup>24</sup> Peter Silver, *Our Savage Neighbors: How Indian War Transformed Early America* (New York, 2007), 41, xviii.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 83, 74.

authority along the frontier was responsible for the degeneration into violence and racial hatred. During the 1760s, British authorities concluded that Indians could evolve into valuable subjects of the empire if only they were protected and allowed time to become civilized. This benign view of Indians was entirely at odds with the views of colonists along the frontier, where “they now killed [Indians] because, in an increasingly violent state of war, most believed that the civility model was fundamentally flawed.”<sup>26</sup> The Paxton Boys, remember, argued that there was no such thing as a friendly Indian. Moreover, the British lacked the resources to enforce the separation of Indians and colonists along the frontier, and the violence continued in fits and spurts until the Revolution, when it exploded once again into open war. Violence during the Revolution not only deepened the Pennsylvanians’ Indian hatred—and further expanded Silver’s “anti-Indian sublime”—it also politicized the white frontier population. Whereas Indians and colonists had worked together during the 1740s to resist imperial efforts to assert control over them, Griffin argues that the process completely reversed during the revolutionary era, as frontier whites called for the new American government to impose control over the frontier. They were motivated once again by fear. In Griffin’s estimation, frontier society in Pennsylvania had descended into a world of violence and disorder of the variety theorized by Thomas Hobbes in his 1651 work *Leviathan*, which argued that when man exists alone in a state of nature, society will invariably degrade into a “war of every one against every one” where there is “no society; and which is worst of all, continual fear, and danger of violent death; and the life of man [is] solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.”<sup>27</sup> Overwhelmed by fear and consumed by violence, Griffin asserts that frontier settlers “were beginning to argue that only the state could deliver them from their state of war and its attendant evils.” They sought security and stability above all else, and they believed only a powerful governing entity—Hobbes’s *Leviathan*—could protect them from Indians. This was the maturation of the racist nationalism that Merritt sees emerging from the Seven Years’ War. Griffin argues that this mentality spread well beyond the Pennsylvania frontier to become a core component of the early national frontier in the United States. In his estimation, by the 1790s, when “defending the West, for men and women on

<sup>26</sup> Patrick Griffin, *American Leviathan: Empire, Nation, and the Revolutionary Frontier* (New York, 2007), 154.

<sup>27</sup> Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, quoted in *ibid.*, 95.

the frontier, implied ridding the region of Indians . . . nearly all westerners subscribed to protection as the fundamental right of society.”<sup>28</sup>

All of which leads back to the Paxton Boys, who emerge from the pages of recent historical literature as the poster boys for the arguments of Silver and Griffin. They remain the most prolifically studied example of how the breakdown of Indian-white relations impacted the Pennsylvania frontier. It is thus surprising that it took until the 2009 publication of Kevin Kenny’s *Peaceable Kingdom Lost: The Paxton Boys and the Destruction of William Penn’s Holy Experiment* for a modern book-length analysis of the Paxton Boys to appear. There have been several impressive articles written about the Paxton Boys, including Krista Camenzind’s excellent offering in *Friends and Enemies in Penn’s Woods*, but Kenny offers a fuller treatment and contextualizes the Paxton Boys’ violent outbursts within the larger framework of deteriorating Indian-white relations in Pennsylvania during the eighteenth century.<sup>29</sup> Much of what Kenny finds conforms to scholarly interpretations discussed in this essay. Land issues lay at the root of contention between Indians and colonists in Pennsylvania, as differing understandings of land transactions produced tensions from the time of William Penn’s first acquisition of Lenape lands. Relations were further strained by Scots-Irish immigrants who illegally squatted on Indian lands and defied all attempts made by provincial authorities to remove them. When the Seven Years’ War erupted, Indians resorted to violence to drive off these settlers while provincial authorities bickered over how to defend them and who would bear the expense, with the proprietors initially hesitant to fund defense of squatters who paid no taxes and had not legally purchased title to their lands. Quakers, too, questioned the legitimacy of defending squatters who had stolen land rightfully belonging to the Indians. The result was the formation of frontier civilian militias—the Paxton Boys were drawn from one such group—who took defense into their own hands. Driven by fear and hatred, they did not care to distinguish between friendly and enemy Indians, leading to the grisly murder of the Conestogas.

Kenny’s major accomplishment is situating the Paxton Boys in the recent historical literature of the Pennsylvania frontier. His account does not end with the murder of the Conestogas, or even with the less well-known Paxton Boys’ march on Philadelphia in 1764. Rather he charts the

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 185.

<sup>29</sup> Camenzind, “Violence, Race, and the Paxton Boys,” 201–20.

story of the Paxton Boys through the era of the American Revolution, offering them as a compelling example of how the processes described by Silver and Griffin played out in a specific group of people. After their aborted campaign to kill the Moravian mission Indians who had been granted asylum in Philadelphia, the Paxton Boys returned to the frontier and became engaged in a literary war with the provincial government and, in particular, Benjamin Franklin. Kenny illustrates how, through numerous pamphlets and petitions, the Paxton Boys decried the violence of the frontier, indicted the Pennsylvania government for failing to protect them, and justified their actions by denying that there was any such thing as a friendly Indian. As revolutionary agitation gained momentum in the early 1770s, the Paxton Boys underwent a remarkable transformation by remaking themselves as patriots who had secured the frontier from not only Indians but the imperialistic designs of the now-exiled Penn proprietors for the new American nation. They became, in short, the embodiment of Griffin's politicized frontier population who demanded "land, personal security, and vengeance against Indians."<sup>30</sup>

Collectively, Silver, Kenny, and Griffin illustrate that the maturation of Indian-hating in Pennsylvania during the American Revolution provided a foundation for the emergence of a distinct frontier mentality that strongly influenced early United States Indian policies. Although it is not the stated objective of their work, they also largely confirm the findings of Merrell, Merritt, Ward, and others that after the Seven Years' War there was no longer any realistic possibility of accommodation between Indians and whites in Pennsylvania. All remaining vestiges of the "Peaceable Kingdom" had been eradicated by violence, war, and racial hatred. Yet questions remain, especially about the distinctiveness of this process in Pennsylvania. Penn's colony has long been thought to have been unique among the original thirteen American colonies because of its tolerant landscape and the relatively peaceful coexistence of Indians and colonists. That construction of Pennsylvania has been demolished, but might the inverse be more sustainable? Perhaps what distinguished Pennsylvania among its colonial neighbors was not that a climate of accommodation reigned supreme in the colony but, rather, that it crumbled so dramatically into hatred and war. After all, Pennsylvania is the only state among the original thirteen to have no Indian reservations and

<sup>30</sup> Kenny, *Peaceable Kingdom Lost*, 231.

no federally recognized Indian tribes today. As of the 2000 census, only 0.01 percent of the state's population self-identified as Native American—the lowest percentage in the nation.<sup>31</sup>

These statistics are compelling, but they alone are not sufficient to demonstrate that the declension model of Indian-white relations on the Pennsylvania frontier is exceptional. Such an assertion will require further analysis, as a common criticism levied against many of the works covered here is that their authors fail to place the events they cover in the proper context of eighteenth-century America. However, at least one recent study has attempted to offer some comparisons. David Preston's *The Texture of Contact: European and Indian Settler Communities on the Frontiers of Iroquoia, 1667–1783* (2009) explores Indian-white relations at several contact points on the perimeters of the Iroquois Confederacy, including two different locations along the Pennsylvania frontier. Preston acknowledges that “recent studies of Pennsylvania, for example, suffer from their lack of contextual attention to New France and New York,” and he argues that “what is true for Indian-white relations in Pennsylvania is not necessary true for those in New York or Canada.” Although Preston hopes to offer an alternative to the unavoidable conflict interpretation dominating Pennsylvania frontier scholarship by demonstrating that that interactions between Indians and colonists “were far more complex and, at times, more harmonious and stable than other histories have allowed,” he is more successful in demonstrating that the Pennsylvania experience was fairly unique among its mid-Atlantic neighbors. Like Merritt, Preston finds examples of accommodation between Indians and colonists along the Pennsylvania frontier prior to the Seven Years' War, but he struggles to prove that “despite a vicious cycle of killings and murders, and continued conflict over land and authority, colonists, Iroquois, and Algonquians who lived there still dealt with one another in peaceful ways.”<sup>32</sup> Indeed, most of Preston's findings for Pennsylvania fall into step with the conclusions of Merrell, Merritt, Silver, and the others who chart the near total disintegration of Indian-white harmony after the Seven Years' War. By comparison, however, his analysis of Indian-white relations in New York and along the Canadian border demonstrates that the violence that characterized the Pennsylvania

<sup>31</sup> Pencak and Richter, *Friends and Enemies in Penn's Woods*, xix.

<sup>32</sup> David L. Preston, *The Texture of Contact: European and Indian Settler Communities on the Frontiers of Iroquoia, 1667–1783* (Lincoln, NE, 2009), 17, 5, 20.

frontier did not make its way north. Accommodation continued, to varying degrees, in these communities up to—and, in some cases, during—the American Revolution. Preston offers numerous reasons for the divergent outcomes in Pennsylvania and the north, the most significant of which may have been differing land policies, but the presence and influence of the Iroquois Confederacy as a stabilizing force, at least until the Revolution, was a critical factor in mitigating violence and racial hatred in New York.

Based on this admittedly limited sample, there is an evidentiary foothold for arguing that the breakdown of Indian-white accommodation in Pennsylvania was unique, at least among the middle colonies during the eighteenth century. The role of the Seven Years' War in creating such deep animosities between Indians and colonists also seems to have been exceptional in Pennsylvania. Moreover, while this essay has focused primarily on the breakdown of Indian-white relations along the Pennsylvania frontier, this process has broader implications that are also fairly distinctive to Pennsylvania in the mid-Atlantic region. Much of the scholarship discussed here has highlighted to some degree the ways that provincial and imperial power brokers co-opted the violence on the Pennsylvania frontier to push forward their own political agendas. Silver and Kenny, in particular, have illustrated how antiproprietary factions in the Pennsylvania Assembly used the violence on the frontier as justification for turning Pennsylvania into a royal colony. The Quaker Party in the assembly asserted that the proprietors' inability or unwillingness to defend the frontier constituted "betraying the province to the Indians" and mandated that they be removed from their position of authority in Pennsylvania.<sup>33</sup> Yet the push for royalization was in part an effort to deflect criticism away from Quakers, who had come under heavy fire for their sympathetic views of Indians and their pacifist principles during the Seven Years' War. As both Silver and Kenny have shown, critics of the Quakers—including defenders of the Paxton Boys—argued that frontier whites had "defended the province militarily, while Quakers hid behind the smokescreen of piety and principle." Claiming that "the Quakers' pacifism . . . had utterly degraded their ability to govern," anti-Quaker factions used violence between Indians and whites on the frontier as grounds for driving Quakers from the halls of government.<sup>34</sup> Silver out-

<sup>33</sup> Silver, *Our Savage Neighbors*, 217.

<sup>34</sup> Kenny, *Peaceable Kingdom Lost*, 179, 178.

lines a related process that took place during the American Revolution, where the British, like Indians, were labeled savages. The “anti-Indian sublime” was applied to the British because of their alliances with Indians during the Revolution and because long ago “the inhabitants of Britain had been blue-painted savages, more or less indistinguishable from New World Indians.”<sup>35</sup> The violence between Indians and colonists not only impacted these political and ideological developments in Pennsylvania but also had an influence on conflicts between white settler groups. Paul Moyer, in his book *Wild Yankees: The Struggle for Independence along Pennsylvania’s Revolutionary Frontier* (2007), argues that violence between Indians and colonists in the Wyoming Valley of Pennsylvania during the 1750s and 1760s had a profound effect on struggles between rival colonial factions in the valley during the American Revolution. Pennsylvanians (Pennamites) and Connecticut settlers (Yankees) “built on a bitter history of Indian-white conflict by engaging in a struggle that was not just violent, but *deadly*. That a legacy of interracial contention added to the Wyoming controversy can be deduced from the fact that other regions which experienced conflicts over land and jurisdiction, but did not possess Northeast Pennsylvania’s recent history of Indian-white warfare, saw much lower levels of bloodshed and death.”<sup>36</sup>

Understanding that Indian-white relations on the frontier were central to many other aspects of eighteenth-century Pennsylvania helps to substantiate the continued exploration of that relationship. There is more to this story yet to be told, especially from the Indian perspective. The historical literature discussed in this essay has done a remarkable job charting the dissolution of intercultural accommodation in Pennsylvania from the colonial side of the equation, which is understandable given the dearth of Indian primary sources, but few explore the impact that the violence had upon Indian peoples. Similarly, native motivations and mechanizations remain largely absent from the process, despite the efforts of some historians—Merrell and Ward most notably—to include Indians in their discussions as something more than the object of white colonists’ hatred. Emerging ethnohistorical studies of Pennsylvania Indians may not completely alter what we currently understand about the Pennsylvania frontier, but they will undoubtedly further complicate an

<sup>35</sup> Silver, *Our Savage Neighbors*, 251.

<sup>36</sup> Paul D. Moyer, *Wild Yankees: The Struggle for Independence along Pennsylvania’s Revolutionary Frontier* (Ithaca, NY, 2007), 24.

already complex equation. Indeed, they might offer new possibilities for accommodation or add depth and detail to those limited examples already uncovered.<sup>37</sup> Similarly, local histories of eighteenth-century Pennsylvania frontier communities are likely to both confirm and challenge elements of the existing interpretive framework. Such studies very well may confirm David Preston's assertion that "these communities tell a more complex and perhaps more ambiguous story about early America than the simple morality tale of bad Europeans and Indian victims."<sup>38</sup>

These are stories yet to be told and episodes yet to be interpreted. Based on recent existing scholarship, how then are we to answer the fundamental question: was there a middle ground in Pennsylvania? The historical scholarship discussed in this essay demonstrates that any such construction was nearly impossible after 1750, but prior to the Seven Years' War, the possibility of a middle ground existed, or, perhaps more correctly, the possibilities for many middle grounds existed. Some succeeded for a time, others did not. None endured as long or was as encompassing as the middle ground of the *pays d'en haut*, but Richard White's original middle ground, like the deterioration of Indian-white relations along the Pennsylvania frontier, was molded by a unique set of conditions. Some of those conditions may have existed in Pennsylvania during the first half of the eighteenth century, but they were beset by serious disagreements and almost constantly subjected to external pressures from colonists and empires seeking possession of and dominion over Indian territory. In short, the limited middle ground found in Pennsylvania could not long endure with such stresses woven into its fabric. Indeed, all recent scholarship on the Pennsylvania frontier agrees that the Seven Years' War, and the racial violence it unleashed, tore that fabric beyond repair. As the editors of *Friends and Enemies in Penn's Woods* have concluded, "had the Seven Years' War not occurred, it is possible to imagine a

<sup>37</sup> For example, see Amy C. Schutt, *Peoples of the River Valleys: The Odyssey of the Delaware Indians* (Philadelphia, 2007). Schutt adds depth and detail from the Indian perspective, especially with regard to alliance building, but her conclusions largely reflect the declension model advanced by Merrell, Merritt, and the essays in Pencak and Richter. Stephen Craig Harper, *Promised Land: Penn's Holy Experiment, the Walking Purchase, and the Dispossession of Delawares, 1600–1763* (Bethlehem, PA, 2006) is a more focused ethnohistorical account that also largely conforms to the declension model.

<sup>38</sup> Preston, *Texture of Contact*, 18. While its limited discussion of Indian-colonist relations mostly conforms to the dominant framework of recent Pennsylvania frontier scholarship, Judith Ridner's *A Town In-Between: Carlisle, Pennsylvania, and the Early Mid-Atlantic Interior* (Philadelphia, 2010) is an excellent example of recent frontier community study.



Pennsylvania frontier where Indians and Whites interacted peacefully or solved their differences to general satisfaction,” but because the war eradicated those possibilities, “it remains a moot question as to just how powerful these interethnic grassroots ties were and whether they could have survived.”<sup>39</sup> The latter portion of their conclusion perhaps goes too far—should examples of accommodation be disregarded simply because they failed?—but, as Peter Silver has asserted:

It seems like common sense that everyday social contact between members of different groups should break down their shared stereotypes, improving not only individuals' views of one another but intergroup relations as a whole. But almost nothing about the history of the early modern middle colonies suggests that this hopeful view of contact between groups is true. With few exceptions, living together made the different sorts of people there feel frightened of one another's intentions.<sup>40</sup>

All of which returns us, after a fashion, to Merrell's pessimistic view of Indian-white relations. We may all wish for a happier story with a more uplifting outcome, but, as Merrell concedes, when “plotting the trajectory of how Native America became Penn's Woods . . . it is hard not to wind up in a dark, bleak place, with Indian-haters in full cry and Indians themselves in full retreat.”<sup>41</sup> Recent scholarship on the Pennsylvania frontier has expanded and complicated that trajectory, but it delivers us, mostly, to those same dark woods.

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<sup>39</sup> Pencak and Richter, *Friends and Enemies in Penn's Woods*, xvii.

<sup>40</sup> Silver, *Our Savage Neighbors*, xix.

<sup>41</sup> James H. Merrell, “Afterwards,” in Pencak and Richter, *Friends and Enemies in Penn's Woods*, 266.



# *The Conojocular War: The Politics of Colonial Competition, 1732–1737*

**I**N JANUARY 1765, CHARLES MASON took a break from his work drawing a boundary line between Maryland and Pennsylvania to visit Lancaster, Pennsylvania, the site of the 1763 Paxton Boys' massacre of the Conestoga Indians. He did so, he wrote, out of "curiosity to see the place where was perpetrated last winter; the horrid and inhumane murder of 26 Indians: men, women, and children, leaving none alive to tell." What he found was hardly what he expected. Lancaster was not a lawless frontier outpost but a bustling and vibrant port on its way to becoming the largest inland city in British North America. It was "as large as most market towns in England," Mason observed.<sup>1</sup>

Disappointed in his efforts to learn about the massacre, Mason soon "fell in company with Mr. Samuel Smith," who told him a story of a different, earlier conflict. In 1736, Smith recounted, Pennsylvania was "in open war" with Maryland "on the river Susquehannah." Smith, who had been serving as sheriff of Lancaster County at the time, recalled how at the height of hostilities, a Pennsylvanian force laid siege to the home of the leader of the Marylanders, one "Mr. Cresap." In the ensuing melee, Cresap's house was engulfed in flames, one Marylander died, and the Pennsylvanians captured and jailed Cresap and many of his men as they tried to flee the fire.<sup>2</sup>

The raid on Cresap's home served as the violent denouement of a nearly decade-long and costly conflict between these two neighboring colonies. Previously, the Crown, an ocean away and more concerned with

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Mason, diary, Jan. 10 and Jan. 17, 1765, MG614, Papers Regarding the Paxton Boys and Conestoga Massacre, LancasterHistory.org, Lancaster, PA.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

its mercantile affairs than with its expanding colonial empire, had paid little attention to the escalating tensions on the banks of the Susquehanna River, then the westernmost outpost of the British Empire in the middle colonies. The extreme violence exhibited in the raid, however, forced the Crown to act; it set in motion a series of hearings and a protracted court case that eventually ended with Charles Mason and Jeremiah Dixon surveying the boundary between these two colonies. That Mason did not know of this war—a conflict that had led to his current endeavor—shows how little those in imperial circles knew of this episode. That Smith thirty years later continued to brag about the “open war” between the colonies shows that the event retained a prominent place in the memory of those living in the area.

Like Charles Mason, almost all historians of early America today know of the Paxton massacre, an event that highlights the failure of William Penn’s vision of intercultural peace in his woods. The Conojocular War, the name of the “open war” Samuel Smith described, remains largely untold today. Only three recent articles have dealt with the conflict directly. In 1986, Paul Doutrich published a thorough article demonstrating how important the dispute was for securing Pennsylvania’s expansion west. Charles Dutrizac, in an article published five years later in this journal, used four episodes from the hostilities to analyze how participants’ “ideas about localism and authority informed their actions.” In the same issue, Thomas Slaughter examined the border dispute in light of other crowd actions in colonial America. In books and monographs on Pennsylvania’s history, the episode has received scant attention. Alan Tully’s book *William Penn’s Legacy* examines the conflict in its opening pages as an example of the effectiveness of Pennsylvania’s government. His more synthetic work *Forming American Politics* does not discuss it. In that book, he instead focuses on the politics of Philadelphia and the assembly to describe the political culture of Pennsylvania. Similarly, the two best syntheses of Pennsylvania history, *Colonial Pennsylvania*, written by Joseph Illick in the 1970s, and the more recent and more expansive *Pennsylvania: A History of the Commonwealth*, overlook the event entirely. Synthetic analyses of colonial Pennsylvania thus treat the Conojocular War as an irrelevant event—as a self-contained episode rather than a significant chapter in the story of Pennsylvania’s development.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Paul Doutrich, “Cresap’s War: Expansion and Conflict in the Susquehanna Valley,” *Pennsylvania History* 53 (1986): 89–104; Charles Dutrizac, “Local Identity and Authority in a

That is not to say historians have always ignored the conflict. To the contrary, an earlier generation of historians knew the story well, although for them it was merely a matter of antiquarian interest. Robert Proud, author of the first history of Pennsylvania written after Independence, wrote of the “uneasiness and trouble” the Marylanders gave Pennsylvanians. In the first history of Lancaster County, published in 1811, I. Daniel Rupp described Cresap as “a restless, quarrelsome individual” and the Marylanders as “invaders.” Later in the nineteenth century, a time of pronounced state identity and allegiance, the war caused feuds between contending historians from Pennsylvania and Maryland. Marylanders claimed Penn won through fraud and deception, while Pennsylvania historians attacked the legitimacy of Maryland’s claims. One Pennsylvania historian called Cresap a “pliant” tool of Baltimore and cast Maryland’s actions as an attempt “to colonize” Pennsylvania. Conversely, Maryland historians have praised Cresap for his “hospitality” and portrayed the Pennsylvanians as intransigent. One Marylander even dedicated a chapter of his dissertation on the controversy to an analysis of William Penn’s character (it was not a kind assessment). Another Marylander who defended his colony’s actions deemed his Pennsylvania contemporaries “worthless.”<sup>4</sup>

The conflict deserves greater analytical attention than it has thus far received. The Conojocular War reveals an important, though often over-

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Disputed Hinterland: The Pennsylvania-Maryland Border in the 1730s,” *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 151 (1991): 35–63. In the same issue, Thomas examines the border dispute in light of other crowd actions in “Crowds in Eighteenth-Century America: Reflections and New Directions,” 3–34. Alan Tully, *William Penn’s Legacy: Politics and Social Structure in Provincial Pennsylvania, 1726–1755* (Baltimore, 1977), and *Forming American Politics: Ideals, Interests and Institutions in Colonial New York and Pennsylvania* (Baltimore, 1994); Joseph Illick, *Colonial Pennsylvania: A History* (New York, 1976); Randall Miller and William Pencak, eds., *Pennsylvania: A History of the Commonwealth* (University Park, PA, 2002).

<sup>4</sup> For earlier histories of Pennsylvania that contained stories of the conflict, see Robert Proud, *The History of Pennsylvania*, vol. 2 (Philadelphia, 1798), 204–16; I. Daniel Rupp, *History of Lancaster County* (Lancaster, PA, 1844), 266–69; Franklin Ellis, *History of Lancaster County* (Philadelphia, 1883); William Egle, *An Illustrated History of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania* (Harrisburg, PA, 1876), 822–25; Charles Keith, *Chronicles of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia, 1917), 2:757–68; H. Frank Eshleman, “Cresap’s War: The Lancaster County Border Struggle,” *Papers Read before the Lancaster County Historical Society* 13 (1909): 237–54; Matthew Andrews, *History of Maryland: Province and State* (New York, 1929), 229–33; and Charles Tansill, “The Pennsylvania-Maryland Boundary Controversy” (PhD diss., Catholic University of America, 1915). Tansill’s final chapter, “The Character of William Penn,” amounted to a diatribe against Penn’s “duplicity,” “masquerading,” and “self-aggrandizement.” Nicholas Wainwright recounted this latter historiographical attack in “The Missing Evidence: Penn v. Baltimore,” *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 80 (1956): 227–28.

looked, aspect of the political culture of those living outside Philadelphia. Whenever two colonies competed for land, as they did in the Conojocular War, they relied on the allegiance of local settlers to bolster their claims to legitimacy. Competition created opportunities for colonists to use their shifting loyalties to win the best terms they could from colonial governments. Settlers often conducted these negotiations directly with a proprietor or one of his agents, and studying this contest for settler allegiance exposes a common political behavior in such remote areas. Indeed, for those in politically underrepresented western counties, whose homes often fell outside the purview of the assembly in a colonial capital, competition between colonies was more important to their politics than the institutional, urban-based politics that historians have most often analyzed.

The Conojocular War also sheds light on the history of Pennsylvania's expansion west and on the colony's shifting diplomatic policies toward Native American groups in the region. As Doutrich shows, Pennsylvania's ability to displace Maryland ensured that the colony would control settlement west of the Susquehanna Valley. In order to secure this claim, however, Pennsylvanians had to reconsider their alliances with Native American groups. Native Americans could sanction new settlements through treaties, and their backing could lend greater legitimacy to whatever colony secured their acquiescence. In the midst of hostilities, Pennsylvania officials reconfigured their relations with Native American groups by privileging the Iroquois—whose deed, they believed, could bolster their claim to the land—over groups such as the Conestogas, who inhabited the Susquehanna.

The shift in Pennsylvania's treatment of Native American groups also portended a significant new direction in the colony's expansionist policies. Before the clash with Maryland, Pennsylvania encouraged a slow and ordered westward push in part to keep promises made to the Conestogas that the colony would not extend west of the Susquehanna. The necessities of winning the dispute forced Pennsylvania to open the West to unfettered settlement. Pennsylvania officials tried to reign in this expansion and return to the status quo antebellum in the years following the cessation of hostilities with Maryland, but their efforts proved futile. Instead, settlements established because of the Conojocular War continued to grow, increasing tensions with displaced Native American groups.

A few words should be said about the name of this conflict. Settling on a designation for this event is problematic because it varies according to which state's historians discuss it. Evoking the animosities of earlier

generations, Pennsylvanians tend to call it “Cresap’s War,” impugning the leader of the Marylanders and implying that it was an offensive war fought primarily by a “quarrelsome” individual. It is the appellation of a victor whose virtuous actions defended the land from an unjust invasion. Marylanders, on the other hand, know it as the more benign “Conojocular War,” a reference to the geographic area in dispute based on a word derived from what Indians called the area. For the purposes of this study, I have adopted the term “Conojocular War” because it best reflects what was at stake in this contest. True, Cresap was a central figure in events. He was also a wily, daring character whose audacious acts give the story its vividness. But Cresap did not act as a lone wolf. Rather, he worked in concert with Maryland authorities. Moreover, as I hope to show, Pennsylvania was as active as Maryland in escalating tensions on the Susquehanna. Indeed, the largely Pennsylvania-based perspective of this essay makes me even more inclined to break with tradition and call it the Conojocular War precisely because of Pennsylvania’s aggressiveness, which paints a picture of the Quaker colony much at odds with its long-heralded pacifist principles.<sup>5</sup>

The appellation “war” might strike some today as an exaggeration. In a comparative sense, this conflict was not on par with imperial wars or with some of the wars colonies fought against Native Americans. Nonetheless, the causes underlying this conflict and the actions taken by both parties were similar to those seen in these larger, better-known wars. Both Maryland and Pennsylvania mustered militias, built fortifications, and took prisoners. At least two lives were lost in pitched assaults. Perhaps most significantly, many of those involved in the fighting called it a war, and their unceasing fear of imminent violence resembled the emotional strains that those in a war zone often feel. This was a conflict between two competing governments, each of which sought absolute legal, political, and economic control over a disputed area of land—not unlike virtually every war fought in colonial North America.<sup>6</sup>

At the same time, the “Conojocular War” was never quite the “open war” that Samuel Smith remembered when he told Charles Mason about it. Maryland and Pennsylvania were two British colonies under the same imperial legal system, and the officials in both colonies often used laws

<sup>5</sup> See Aubrey C. Land, *Colonial Maryland: A History* (Millwood, NY, 1981), for a recent use of the title favored by Maryland historians.

<sup>6</sup> Dutrizac, “Local Identity and Authority,” 35–63.

and precedents to justify their actions. Colonial officials from both Maryland and Pennsylvania respected at least the appearance of legal constraints because they understood that imperial structures could ultimately decide this case. Most early violence occurred under the guise of executing an arrest warrant, and the militias from each colony reported to their respective sheriffs and justices of the peace. The legal machinations they initially deployed seemed to reflect colonists' mindfulness of imperial regulations that they hoped would bolster their own claims in the eyes of the Crown. In time, however, these actions became a façade for what nearly all those involved—from high proprietary officials to those stationed on the fortified banks of the Susquehanna—called a war.

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The origins of the Conojocular War rested in ambiguities in the proprietary charters granted to William Penn and Lord Baltimore. There were two points of controversy between Baltimore and Penn. The first involved how to interpret the ownership of the area that is modern-day Delaware. Penn assumed he had received the land, then known as the Lower Counties, from the Duke of York, who had received the territory through a gift of his brother, Charles II. Baltimore, however, believed his charter entitled him to the land. This dispute had less to do with the land itself than it did with access to waterways, which served as highways for trade. If Penn lost the Lower Counties, he lost unrestricted access to the Delaware River, and with that, to Philadelphia, his colony's capital. The main point of disagreement was whether Europeans had settled on southern areas of the Delaware River before English ownership. If so, then the land transferred to the Crown through conquest, and the Duke of York was within his rights to give it to Penn. Baltimore, however, argued that the land was never in European hands and thus never transferred to the Crown, meaning that ownership had always rested with him.<sup>7</sup>

The second dispute regarded the fortieth degree, or the northern border of Maryland—a much trickier matter. Here, too, the disagreement was over a river. Both proprietors viewed the Susquehanna as a gateway

<sup>7</sup> Baltimore claimed that his 1632 charter granted the land to his family, which stated Baltimore had all land on the Delmarva Peninsula that was "*hactenus inculta*"—that is, all lands "hitherto uncultivated." The Penns, on the other hand, argued that the Lower Counties had not been unoccupied lands, but land controlled by the Swedes and then the Dutch. If that was the case, then the land was transferred to the Crown when the Dutch ceded all land in North America to the English, and Penn's



to the West and future prosperity. Penn envisioned a second large city situated on the Susquehanna, complementing Philadelphia. Without control of the river, his western lands would become, in his words, a “dead lump,” because Baltimore would control all trade and own the most fertile lands. The real rub came down to interpreting the cartographic intent of each charter. Penn’s charter stated that his colony’s southern border was the “beginning of the fortieth degree.” Baltimore’s charter, on the other hand, contained the passage that his colony went up to “that part of the Delaware Bay that which lieth under the fortieth degree.”<sup>8</sup>

Today, these may seem very specific designations, and, indeed, the Crown meant the language of the charters to be as precise as possible. In an era of poor instrumentation and mapmaking, however, these descriptions proved troublesome. According to Penn’s maps, his colony started below where the Susquehanna River met the Chesapeake, well into modern-day Maryland. That border would have given him the entirety of the potentially lucrative river. In time, however, it became clear that Penn’s map was drastically inaccurate. Penn’s surveyors quickly realized that Philadelphia itself lay below the fortieth degree. This revelation meant that if Baltimore’s interpretation was right, then the vast majority of Pennsylvania settlement, including the colony’s capital, belonged to Maryland.<sup>9</sup>

Penn made overtures to Baltimore once he recognized the implications of these findings. In December of 1682, he asked Baltimore “to be soe good and kind a neighbour as to afford him but a back door” to his colony by offering to buy the land from Baltimore. Baltimore, already upset with much of Penn’s grant, had no room for altruism and refused to relinquish

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charter entitled him to this territory. For detailed analyses of the legal negotiations dating back to William Penn, see Walter B. Scaife, “The Boundary Dispute between Maryland and Pennsylvania,” *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 9 (1885): 241–71; William Robert Shepherd, *History of Proprietary Government in Pennsylvania* (New York, 1896), 117–46; Tansill, “Pennsylvania-Maryland Boundary Controversy”; Sydney George Fisher, *The Making of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia, 1896), 318–46; Wainwright, “Missing Evidence,” 227–35 and “Tale of a Runaway Cape: The Penn-Baltimore Agreement of 1732,” *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 87 (1963): 251–69; Tully, *William Penn’s Legacy*, 3–17; and Richard S. Dunn and Mary Maples Dunn, eds., *The Papers of William Penn*, vol. 2, 1680–1684 (Philadelphia, 1982), 379–438 and 494–500.

<sup>8</sup> Jean Soderlund, *William Penn and the Founding of Pennsylvania: A Documentary History* (Philadelphia, 1983), 153; Charter of Maryland, 1632, The Avalon Project, Yale Law School, [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/17th\\_century/ma01.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/17th_century/ma01.asp); Charter for the Province of Pennsylvania, 1681, The Avalon Project, Yale Law School, [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/17th\\_century/pa01.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/17th_century/pa01.asp).

<sup>9</sup> Fisher, *Making of Pennsylvania*, 330.

his rights. Both sides quickly realized that with so much at stake, personal negotiations were not going to solve these conflicting claims.<sup>10</sup>

Each proprietor grew certain that only a court could resolve their dispute, so they both began to prepare their cases. Each focused his argument on the clause regarding the fortieth degree. The specific legal sticking point was what “beginning” of the fortieth degree and “lieth under the fortieth degree” meant in terms of both geography and intent. Baltimore held that the two grants were clear and that Penn should have the land north of the fortieth parallel and Baltimore south of it. Penn, on the other hand, argued that the drafters of his charter had assumed that the fortieth degree was much lower than it was in actuality and that this intent was what mattered.<sup>11</sup>

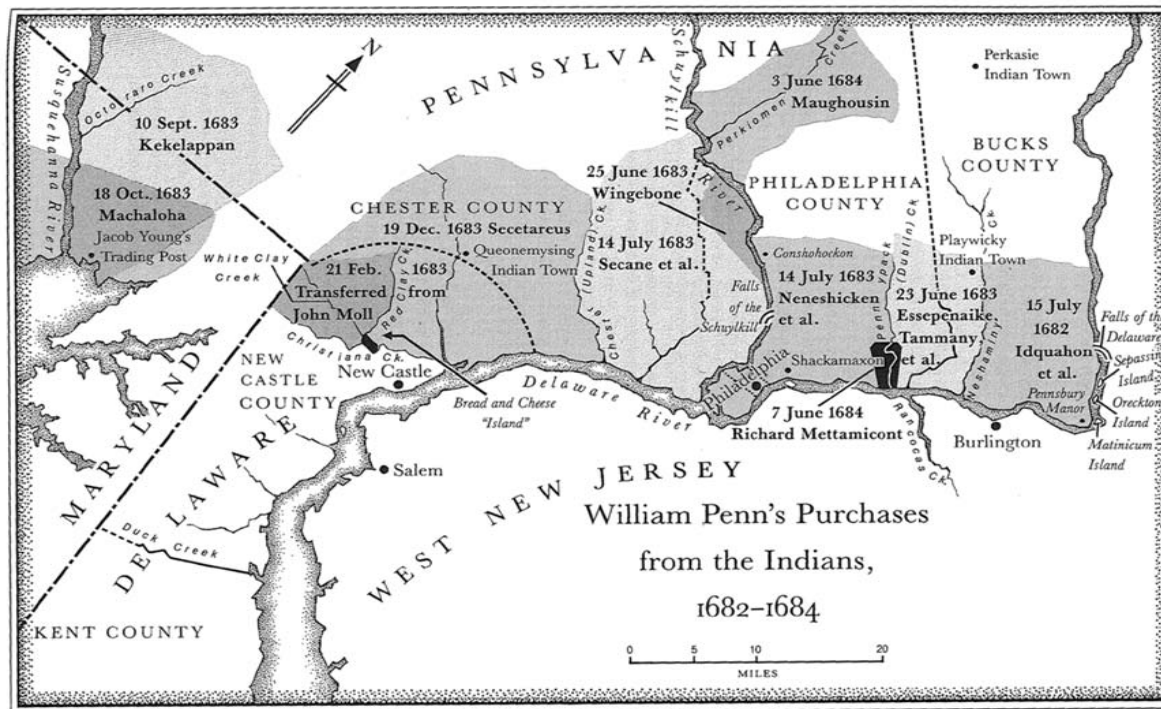
Penn took an additional measure that he thought would strengthen his case: he secured the land at the mouth of the Susquehanna through an Indian treaty. Penn could use the deed in court to show that the Indians invested with the original right to the land believed Penn to be the legitimate owner. Penn’s “Purchase of the Mouth of the Susquehanna River” was one of the shortest and vaguest of his original procurements. He bought the land from Machaloha, whose right to sell it has since been deemed “questionable” by scholars. As Richard and Mary Dunn have pointed out, Penn’s purpose was “to solidify his claim and notify the Lords of Trade,” the imperial organization meant to mediate disputes between colonies.<sup>12</sup>

Although the text of the deed instructed all settlers to “behave themselves justly and lovingly” towards the Indians, the dubious nature of the purchase suggests that when colonies competed over land within the British Empire, Penn, like others, would push aside native concerns. Such times laid bare the driving assumption of Penn’s Holy Experiment: Penn would someday control all the land granted in his charter, and he would take whatever steps were necessary to secure this claim from threats.

<sup>10</sup> “A narrative of the whole Proceeding betwixt the Lord Baltemore and Captain William Markham Deputy Governor under William Pen, Esqre as also betwixt the Lord Baltemore, and the said Pen,” *Archives of Maryland: Proceedings of the Council of Maryland, 1667–1687/8* (Baltimore, 1883–1972), 5:380.

<sup>11</sup> Albert S. Bolles, *Pennsylvania: Province and State* (Philadelphia, 1899), 2:48–50.

<sup>12</sup> Clayton Coleman Hall, ed., *Narratives of Early Maryland, 1633–1684* (New York, 1910), 421; *Papers of William Penn*, 2:468 and 472; William Penn, “Purchase of the Mouth of the Susquehanna River,” Oct. 18, 1683, in *Papers of William Penn*, 2:492. Amy Schutt has done the most exhaustive recent analysis of Machaloha and concludes he was likely a Delaware. Amy C. Schutt, *Peoples of the River Valleys: The Odyssey of the Delaware Indians* (Philadelphia, 2007), 66 and 209.



Map of William Penn's purchases from the Indians, from Richard S. Dunn and Mary Maples Dunn, eds., *The Papers of William Penn*, vol. 2 (Philadelphia, 1982), 491. Courtesy of the University of Pennsylvania Press.

Indeed, such expectations influenced the action of officials in the years following Penn's death in 1718. By the 1720s, evidence suggests that high proprietary officials had begun to speculate in land on the west side of the river even as they promised Native Americans they would not settle on it. They did so because they, too, assumed that Indians would someday sell the land to Pennsylvania.<sup>13</sup>

In 1683, Baltimore took his dispute with Penn to the Crown as soon as he learned Penn's intentions. The king acted through the Lords of Trade in 1685. The Lords of Trade acted as advisers to the monarch on imperial matters. They often created the grants and charters for colonies and were the first venue for boundary disputes between these colonies. When conflicts arose between colonies, one of the aggrieved parties could take the case to the Lords of Trade, who would usually follow one of three avenues: they would offer recommendations for settlement, refer the matter to the Crown, or redirect the parties to established English courts. They decided to render a partial judgment in this case. Much to Baltimore's chagrin, the Lords of Trade accepted Penn's claim that Swedish and Dutch settlers had occupied the Lower Counties before Baltimore's charter. Their decision granted Penn the Lower Counties, but they left the exact boundary line between the Lower Counties and Maryland undetermined. The Lords of Trade also left the question of the borders in the West unanswered, perhaps because, with colonial settlements clinging to the coastlines, it seemed far too abstract an issue. By the 1720s, this abstraction had become a reality as demographic growth had pushed settlement into the contested western region.<sup>14</sup>

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William Penn died in 1718 with the dispute still very much unresolved. His widow, Hannah, inherited the colony and the problem of its borders. She administered the colony until her death in 1726. Negotiations between Maryland and Pennsylvania waxed and waned dur-

<sup>13</sup> Samuel Blunston and James Wright both make numerous references to land they owed in their correspondence used in this paper. I infer that their claims predated the conflict. Likewise, James Patterson, a prominent Pennsylvania trader, also referred to horses he kept on the west side. Captain Civility, one of the chiefs of the Conestogas, accused Wright of surveying land and breaking the promises the colony made in 1730. Captain Civility to Governor Gordon, Sept. 28, 1730, in *Pennsylvania Archives*, ed. Samuel Hazard et al. (Philadelphia and Harrisburg, PA, 1852–1935), 1st ser., 1:271–72.

<sup>14</sup> Wainwright, "Missing Evidence," 230–31; Fisher, *Making of Pennsylvania*, 318–46.

ing her tenure. Occasionally some dispute over the uncertain borders would flare up, usually when a colonist claimed allegiance to one proprietor while living on land claimed by the other. The disagreements during these years centered primarily on the more densely settled Lower Counties because settlers had not yet reached the Susquehanna River. In 1724, Hannah Penn and the fifth Lord Baltimore settled on a temporary compromise: each would respect the other's tenants already in the contested regions, stop granting new settlements on the disputed boundaries, and begin negotiations to finalize the borders. Hannah's death in 1726 left this last promise unfulfilled.<sup>15</sup>

After Hannah Penn's death, her sons Thomas, Richard, and John became the new proprietors. They picked up where their mother left off and pursued a solution to the boundary problems with vigor. In 1732, after much negotiation, they entered into an agreement that they and Baltimore hoped would settle the boundary conflict. The Penns allowed Baltimore to commission a map that they would use for the basis of all negotiations. The two proprietary families agreed to draw a line west from Cape Henlopen to mark the southern limits of the Lower Counties. This line would run until it reached the middle of the Delmarva Peninsula, where it would turn north, intersecting with a twelve-mile radius drawn around Newcastle at a point fifteen miles south of Philadelphia. At this intersection, the line was to run west across the Susquehanna for at least twenty-five miles.<sup>16</sup>

Both proprietors carried an air of formal diplomacy throughout the negotiations, as if they were kings of independent nations. They had good reason to act that way. Proprietary colonies were, in some respects, feudal fiefdoms in which the proprietors, as lords of the manor, could negotiate with other political entities over jurisdictional and diplomatic matters. In theory, proprietors were subordinated to the monarch, but in an empire in which communication was slow and control weak, proprietors could operate with only minimal oversight from the Crown. To be sure, proprietary powers eroded in Maryland and Pennsylvania, largely through the assertion of legislative prerogatives over proprietary dictates. Proprietary power and its feudal remnants remained strong when it came to control

<sup>15</sup> Tully, *William Penn's Legacy*, 5–11; Shepherd, *Proprietary Government*, 32, 132. Shepherd describes the eight years of negotiations between the two sides after 1724 as “a series of empty promises.”

<sup>16</sup> For the details of the proprietors' negotiations, see Wainwright, “Tale of the Runaway Cape,” and Tully, *William Penn's Legacy*, 5–11.



Map of the boundaries as drawn for the Agreement of 1732 with annotation showing location of Cresap, Ross, Wright, and Blunston's properties as well as the "Dutch" settlement. NB-003, folder 6, ser. 11, Penn Family Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, [http://digitallibrary.hsp.org/index.php/Detail/Object/Show/object\\_id/8534](http://digitallibrary.hsp.org/index.php/Detail/Object/Show/object_id/8534).

of land and colonial expansion, though. Indeed, this dispute over land between the proprietors of Maryland and Pennsylvania amplified the autonomous nature of proprietary colonies because proprietors controlled undeveloped territory, and that was what was at stake in these contests. In regions less directly encompassed by legislative authority, regions such as the Susquehanna River in 1732, the proprietor and his institutional representatives, such as land officials and justices of the peace, retained much of their power. As the agreement broke down in the years to come, the proprietors' control of these local offices provided the means through which they would wage the Conojocular War.

But before there was war, there was hope. In the summer of 1732, Lord Baltimore and Thomas Penn departed England to oversee the surveying of the boundary lines. As these proprietors crossed the Atlantic to see their estates for the first time, they entertained lucrative dreams for their contested lands. The agreement promised to reopen land sales and increase revenues. Richard Penn speculated that the quitrents on new grants could be higher than ever before because the "Lands . . . are more Valuable now, then they were before any Form of Government was Settled any Plantation made, or any Marketts found."<sup>17</sup>

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Thomas Penn encountered a social landscape in the Susquehanna Valley that looked far different from the one his father had. The area that William Penn had seen as the future of his colony had begun to realize his vision. Pennsylvania had experienced its first major immigration in the 1720s. The colony now teemed with Germans and Scots-Irish, many of whom sought the landed opportunity beyond the original eastern settlements. Many ended up in the Susquehanna River valley. A group of Irish Presbyterians dwelled near a tributary of the river about five miles to the north of the town in a settlement called Donegal. They had established a congregation there in 1719, but they had not yet received formal deeds to their land because of the uncertainty over titles. More than fifty people recently arrived from Germany lived opposite Donegal on the west side of the river and on another tributary. Sometime in the late 1720s, these Germans arrived through Holland seeking good land, comfort in

<sup>17</sup> John and Richard Penn's Instructions to Thomas Penn, May 20, 1732, and John Penn to Thomas Penn, July 20, 1732, NV-211, pp. 54–58, ser. 1, Penn Family Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

Pennsylvania's reputed "mildness of government," and religious toleration. Although they had at first hoped to settle on the east side of the river near another German settlement, they decided to cross the water boundary in the early 1730s because they could not find suitable land.<sup>18</sup>

Pennsylvania officials addressed this growth by creating Lancaster County in 1729. The new county administration would address the needs of this new population and help maintain the order that Penn's vision called for. The proprietors hoped that Lancaster would serve as Philadelphia's western sister city, much as Penn had planned. In 1731, the town erected a courthouse, a mark of its importance within the expanding colony. Although in theory the new Pennsylvania county expanded as far west as Penn's charter extended, colonial officials wanted to stop settlement at the Susquehanna River. They expected the new county governance to enforce this policy.<sup>19</sup>

Maryland, too, began to stake a claim to the Susquehanna watershed. Joppa, situated on the banks of the Chesapeake near the Susquehanna River, was a growing Maryland community in the 1730s. It served as a trading center and midway point between the colonial capital and the mouth of the Susquehanna. The town, much like Lancaster, had a courthouse and a jail. Today, Joppa is a long-abandoned settlement. Yet, had the Marylanders secured the land west of the Susquehanna, Joppa's history would have paralleled Lancaster's; the city would have served as the focal point for trade and the migration west that the Susquehanna facilitated in the same way that Lancaster did. Sometime in 1731, a number of Maryland settlers had obtained grants for tracts of land on the west side of the Susquehanna that, as one Pennsylvanian noted, "lye many miles further north than this city of Philadelphia." These developments to the Susquehanna River valley meant that while proprietors in England negotiated an agreement, officials and colonists an ocean away were setting the stage for a future conflict.<sup>20</sup>

The new settlements along the banks of the Susquehanna also upset Native Americans in the region, especially the Conestogas, who had long

<sup>18</sup> Tully chronicles the settlement of the Irish and other lands on the Susquehanna in *William Penn's Legacy*, 3–28. Substance of Answer of Dutch to Governor of Maryland, 1736, in *Pennsylvania Archives*, 1st ser., 1:492–94.

<sup>19</sup> For details on the creation of Lancaster County, see Patrick Spero, "Creating Pennsylvania: The Politics of the Frontier and the State, 1680–1800," (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2009), 110–13.

<sup>20</sup> Patrick Gordon to Lieutenant Governor Calvert, Sept. 13, 1731, in *Pennsylvania Archives*, 1st ser., 1:289–92.



been allied with Pennsylvania. Pennsylvania officials promised the Conestogas that no settlers would occupy the west side until—and if—this group decided to sell the territory. For years, the government, acting largely through offices controlled by the proprietor, took steps to honor treaty agreements. In 1728, Captain Civility, the spokesperson for the Conestogas, asked Governor Patrick Gordon to remove Edward Parnel “and several other familys who were settled on the west side of the river.” Gordon vacated them and promised Civility that “no person should settle on that side of the river.” When Cresap moved to the area, Civility approached Samuel Blunston, one of the leading proprietary officials in the region, and alerted him “That William Penn had promis’d them they should not be disturbed by any settlers on the west side of Sasquehannah, but now, contrary thereto, several Marylanders are Settled by the River, on that side.” To add to their concerns, Civility told Blunston that Cresap “beat and wounded one of their women who went to get apples from their own trees” near the Maryland settlement. The Conestogas thus approached their Pennsylvania allies for help in warding off the encroachment of a fellow British colony.<sup>21</sup>

The Shawnees, a roaming band about whom Pennsylvania officials always fretted, also complained to Gordon about illegal settlers. Gordon again used government institutions at his disposal to “dispossess all persons settled on that side of the river,” which he hoped would reassure the Shawnees “that those woods may remain free to the Indians.” Gordon went a step further. He sought to secure the Shawnee alliance by surveying “10 or 15,000 acres of land around the principal town where [the Shawnees] were last seated” for their use. Gordon essentially carved out an area of Indian autonomy and independence within Pennsylvania as a way to ingratiate the colony with much-needed allies. As one nineteenth-century historian remarked with surprise: “it is difficult to believe that as late as 1731 what was called an official map was published fixing the river Susquehanna as the extreme and western boundary of the province of Pennsylvania.” Local justices of the peace helped proprietary authorities

<sup>21</sup> John Wright and Samuel Blunston to Governor Gordon, Oct. 30, 1732, and Deposition of Tobias Hendricks, Dec. 29, 1732, in *Pennsylvania Archives*, 1st ser., 1:363–65 and 362. Hendricks testifies that Parnel and four others actually lived on the land on which Cresap had settled. John Wright, Tobias Hendricks, and Samuel Blunston to Peter Chartiere, Nov. 19, 1731, in *Pennsylvania Archives*, 1st ser., 1:299; Dutrizac, “Local Identity and Authority,” 36; Captain Civility to Governor Gordon, Sept. 28, 1730, and Samuel Blunston to Robert Charles, Oct. 3, 1731, in *Pennsylvania Archives*, 1st ser., 1:271–72 and 295.

enforce this policy by punishing transgressions of this boundary. The actions of these local officials also reinforced the centrality of proprietary authority in these areas.<sup>22</sup>

Maryland countered Pennsylvania's moves with an assertion of its right to the land. The leader of the Maryland contingent was Thomas Cresap, who in 1731 staked his claim opposite Blue Rock, an area known for a number of flats in the river near modern-day Columbia. Cresap demonstrated the connection between land and loyalty upon his arrival. He proudly stated that he considered himself "a tenant to the Right Honble the Ld Propr'y of Maryland . . . by virtue of his Lordships Grant." Perhaps not coincidentally, Cresap's settlement ran virtually due west of Philadelphia at the fortieth parallel. Cresap also opened a ferry on the wide and shallow section of the river near his claim. Proprietors controlled the use of internal waterways within their colonies; thus, only the proprietor could grant the right to ferriage on these waters. The Penns had competing ferries at John Emerson's plantation near Cresap's and at John Wright's house further north. Cresap's Maryland-licensed ferry, in addition to his settlement, represented a direct challenge to Pennsylvania's claim of sovereignty and became a major point of friction.<sup>23</sup>

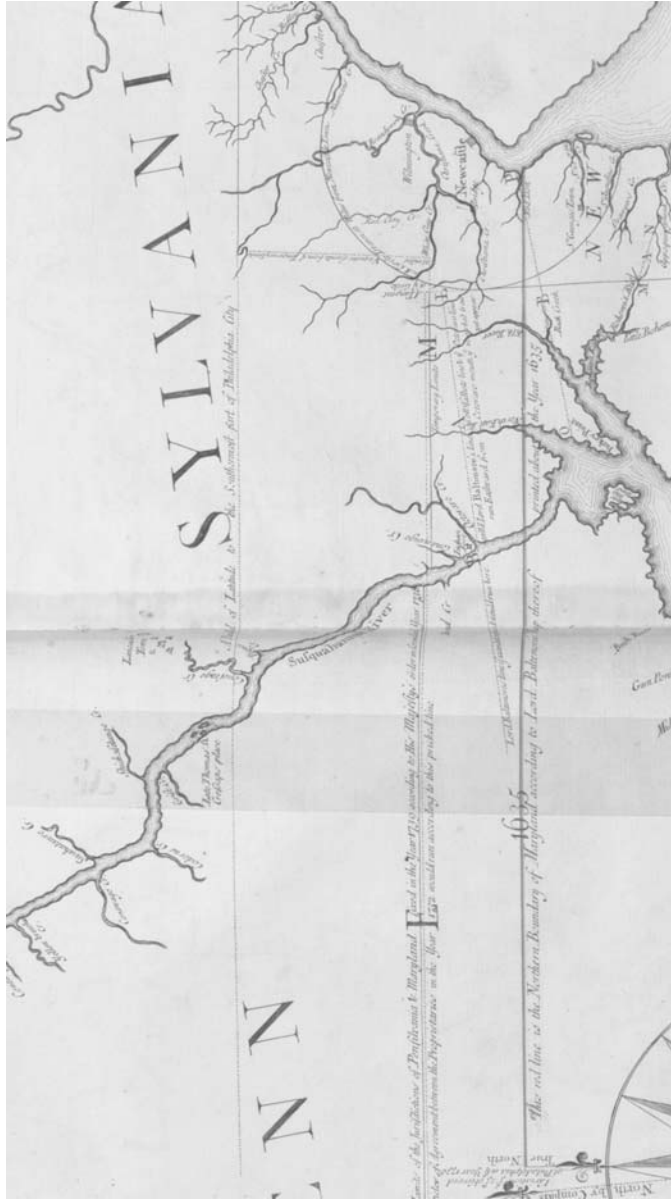
Baltimore's claim posed a unique threat to Pennsylvania officials trying to restrain settlement. Previously, Pennsylvania officials reined in settlers from their colony trying to squat on land west of the river. With Maryland apparently sanctioning settlement on land Pennsylvania claimed, Pennsylvania officials could not evict the newcomers, because they claimed to hold legal rights granted from a neighboring proprietor. As James Logan remarked, because their opponent was another British colony, he did not "know . . . how to make war with them."<sup>24</sup>

Gordon decided that his best recourse was to call on the goodwill of Maryland's governor, Samuel Ogle. Both were executives of provinces in

<sup>22</sup> Samuel Blunston to Robert Charles, Oct. 3, 1731; Governor Gordon to Governor Ogle, Apr. 18, 1732, in *Pennsylvania Archives*, 1st ser., 1:295 and 321–24; John Wright and Samuel Blunston to Governor Gordon, Dec. 30, 1732, in *Minutes of the Provincial Council of Pennsylvania, from the Organization to the Termination of the Proprietary Government*, in *Colonial Records of Pennsylvania*, ed. Samuel Hazard (Harrisburg, PA, 1838–53), 3:504–6; John Wright, Tobias Hendricks, and Samuel Blunston to Peter Chartiere, Nov. 19, 1731; Robert McMeen, "The Scotch-Irish of the Juniata Valley," *The Scotch-Irish in America: Proceedings of the Scotch-Irish Congress*, vol. 8 (Nashville, 1897), 115; Dutrizac, "Local Identity and Authority," 36.

<sup>23</sup> For Cresap's biography, see Kenneth P. Bailey, *Thomas Cresap: Maryland Frontiersman* (Boston, 1944). Governor Gordon to Lieutenant Governor Calvert, Sept. 13, 1731; Deposition of Thomas Cresap, Jan. 29, 1731, in *Pennsylvania Archives*, 1st ser., 1:311.

<sup>24</sup> James Logan quotation from Dutrizac, "Local Identity and Authority," 36.



“A Map of parts of the Provinces of Pennsylvania [Pennsylvania] and Maryland with the Counties of Newcastle, Kent, and Sussex on Delaware according to the most exact Surveys yet made drawn in the year 1740,” produced by the Penns for the Crown to prove their case. Note the position of Cresap’s house just above the fortieth parallel. NV-064, ser. 7, Penn Family Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, [http://digital.library.hsp.org/index.php/Detail/Object/Show/object\\_id/8535](http://digital.library.hsp.org/index.php/Detail/Object/Show/object_id/8535).

the British Empire, which meant they shared a responsibility to protect the geopolitical interests of the Crown. Gordon thus appealed to Ogle on the basis of their shared imperial duties. Gordon argued that Pennsylvania's model of ordered expansion and peaceful relations with native peoples was the best means to secure broader imperial interests. He began his plea by outlining the uncertain nature of imperial North American geopolitics, noting "the French . . . possessed . . . Canada and the vast country they call Louisiana" and thus "enclose all of these British colonies." Gordon worried that unrestrained expansion on the part of British colonies only played into French hands. Gordon also complained of "that rude fellow Cresap's behavior." Cresap, Gordon argued, could upset Native American relations in the empire because "those Indians consider us all as subjects of the same great Empire and their resentments against one part will unavoidably be attended with further unhappy consequences to others." Likewise, Gordon concluded that complaints about Cresap's actions should "concern Maryland as well as Pennsylvania, and as the British Interest may be affected by them, undoubtedly every good subject is concerned."<sup>25</sup>

Gordon's call for comity fell on deaf ears. In 1732, geopolitical arguments resting on a conception of a shared British empire were ineffective, or at least unpersuasive. Gordon and Ogle had to worry about more than just the interests of the empire. They also had to protect the interests of the proprietors who had appointed them. These proprietary interests were concerned above all else with preserving future land claims. Maryland officials treated the geopolitics on the Ohio River as far removed from the issues at stake on the Susquehanna, perhaps because the colony had little vested interest in the politics of that area—perhaps also because Maryland lacked the same history of cultivating relationships with Native American groups that Pennsylvania had. Regardless, as Cresap's actions showed, Maryland was more interested in establishing settlements that protected Baltimore's claim than with maintaining good relations with local Indians on the Susquehanna.

Gordon's call for delaying expansion may have had more to it than just goodwill. Such a strategy also served Pennsylvania's interest. A delayed expansion preserved Pennsylvania's promise to its native allies that its residents would not settle west of the river. By maintaining the status quo, Pennsylvania officials would increase the likelihood that these Indian

<sup>25</sup> Governor Gordon to Governor Ogle, Apr. 18, 1732.

groups would one day choose to sell the land to Pennsylvania. Stopping Maryland's settlement would thus maintain Pennsylvania's strategic growth. A slow and orderly expansion also allowed the Penns to better organize revenue-producing proprietary manors.

As Marylanders disregarded calls for unity, the situation on the banks of the Susquehanna escalated. Several confrontations between Pennsylvanians and Marylanders took place. The skirmishes reflected the types of actions taken by two state-like entities competing to establish absolute legal control over a region. Maryland officials tried to sow doubt about Pennsylvania's claims by sending more settlers and surveyors; they also conferred legal status on individuals loyal to their cause. Ogle made Cresap the local leader of Maryland's cause by naming him a justice of the peace and captain in the Maryland militia. Pennsylvania's agents reacted to these moves by attempting to expel or arrest their Maryland counterparts as a way to challenge Maryland's assertion of jurisdiction and to demonstrate Pennsylvania's legitimate authority over the area.<sup>26</sup>

An example of the intentionality of this type of targeting occurred in June 1732. Pennsylvanians heard that some well-connected and powerful Marylanders were inspecting the settlements on the west side, among them John Ross, speaker of the Maryland Assembly, and Charles Carroll. Their arrival on the west side seemed to confirm rumors that Ogle had "granted warrants to some great men in Maryland." Pennsylvania officials decided to use the appearance of these two prominent Marylanders as an opportunity to challenge Maryland's jurisdiction. Pennsylvania officials James Patterson and John Wright used an arrest warrant for a small farmer loyal to Baltimore as a pretext to see "whether . . . Ross or Carroll would oppose" its execution. If the speaker of Maryland's assembly had accepted the arrest, then Pennsylvania would have won this small but politically significant confrontation. The jurisdictional conflict turned physical when the Marylanders rejected Pennsylvania's legal authority. Patterson swore he would fight Marylanders "to . . . the knees in blood" and the Marylanders promised him they would "repel force with force." Though the contest stopped short of coming to blows, the tensions were real and constant as representatives from both colonies attempted to establish their absolute legal authority over the area.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>26</sup> *Pennsylvania Archives*, 1st ser., vol. 1 and the Lancaster County Papers at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania are filled with accounts of the recurring confrontations between Pennsylvania and Maryland officials.

<sup>27</sup> Petition of Ross and Carroll, July 6, 1732, Deposition of Luke Mercer, July 6, 1732, and

Such conflicts continued with regularity. At the same time, emissaries from the colonies tried to enact the 1732 agreement between proprietors. The first meeting between the delegates from Maryland and Pennsylvania occurred on October 6, 1732, in Newtown, Delaware. The conference began with a bang—Thomas Penn spent over one hundred pounds treating the Marylanders to drinks and displays of gunfire—but ended with a fizzle. The commissioners could not agree on where, exactly, the boundary lines should run. The commissioners from Pennsylvania and Maryland played the diplomatic game until November 1733, when they finally agreed to disagree and disbanded. Indeed, once Baltimore saw the land in person, he became convinced that the Penns had conned him—and some circumstantial evidence suggests that he was right. The Penns may have secretly employed the mapmaker to draw a map more favorable to their interest. The map they commissioned in 1732 to serve as the basis for their negotiations contained an inaccuracy—a “false cape”—that served to give them far more land than Baltimore believed justified. Incensed, Baltimore left for England in May 1733, effectively declaring the agreement dead. At the time, James Logan, who had once wondered how two colonies could go to war with one another, concluded “tis now all over . . . the dye is cast and nothing but war remains.”<sup>28</sup>

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By the time Baltimore left, he and his agents had designed a strategy for Maryland to win the disputed land. First, Samuel Ogle had to establish Maryland’s firm control over the land west of the Susquehanna by convincing settlers to become loyal tenants of Baltimore. Second, Ogle had to establish Maryland’s legal jurisdiction through the appointment of justices of the peace and other offices. Finally, he had to convince those

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Governor Ogle to Governor Gordon, July 10, 1732, in *Pennsylvania Archives*, 1st ser., 1:333–37. The rumor of the grants came from an anonymous letter Gordon received. He had then relayed the rumor to Ogle in a letter dated June 15, 1732, in *Pennsylvania Archives*, 1st ser., 1:330–31. In addition, Charles Dutrizac argues that both Ross and Carroll had received patents for upwards of ten thousand acres. I have not confirmed this finding, but it seems possible. Nonetheless, if true, neither patentee established plantations on the west side during this time.

<sup>28</sup> Journey to the New Town in Maryland, Receipt, 1732, NB-011, folder 6, ser. 3, Penn Family Papers. The report was published as *Articles of Agreement* (London, 1735), with the commissioner’s report affixed. Letter from Pennsylvania Commissioners for Newcastle to Maryland Commissioners, Mar. 28, 1733, NB-003, folder 9, ser. 7, Penn Family Papers. Wainwright, in “Tale of a Runaway Cape,” details the publication of this document, along with all other legal documents printed during the dispute. Logan quotation found on page 265.

with no preexisting loyalties who would settle in the area to ally with Maryland. Samuel Blunston, one of Thomas Penn's main agents in the contested area, described these tactics as an effort "to alienate the minds of the inhabitants of this province and draw them from obedience to their party." In England, meanwhile, Baltimore prepared to press his case in court using the loyalty of the settlers, the establishment of legal offices, and the taxes paid to him as evidence supporting the validity of his claim.<sup>29</sup>

Ogle believed Thomas Cresap was the man to implement this plan. He had built the perfect résumé for the job Baltimore needed done. Cresap had earned a reputation as a scrapper who would pursue his own interests with ferocity. He had traveled extensively throughout western areas of the middle colonies before settling on the western banks of the Susquehanna. After arriving in Maryland, he headed out to western Virginia, perhaps even renting land from the Washington family, before returning to Maryland. Along the way, he had built a reputation for loyalty and grit. Baltimore made Cresap a justice of the peace sometime in 1732, hoping his ardor would serve Maryland's purposes well.<sup>30</sup>

Cresap's commission reinforced the relationship between proprietors and their settlers in these zones. Proprietors felt duty-bound to protect those loyal to them, and settlers would only give their fealty to those who proved they could protect them. As one of the Marylanders stated, because Baltimore "had recd money for that land on which . . . Cressop lived, he would defend him from the proprietor of Pensilvania." The irony, of course, was that Cresap, as justice of the peace, was the person Baltimore was empowering to defend himself from Pennsylvania's encroachments. Baltimore had, in effect, given Cresap carte blanche to protect his own land and to secure Maryland's dominion in the process. Cresap soon enlisted others and empowered constables to build a bulwark to fend off Pennsylvanian attacks.<sup>31</sup>

Cresap went about courting settlers on the ground and quickly created a community on the west side loyal to Baltimore. He initiated a policy of accepting a variety of people seeking refuge, such as runaway servants from Pennsylvania. He also invited a number of relatives to join him. Moreover, sometime around 1732, the German community that settled to the north on Codorous Creek began to pay taxes to Maryland in

<sup>29</sup> John Wright and Samuel Blunston to Governor Gordon, Dec. 30, 1732. The best explication of this strategy was published in the *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Feb. 3, 1737.

<sup>30</sup> Bailey, *Thomas Cresap*.

<sup>31</sup> Deposition of Joshua Low, Dec. 28, 1732, in *Pennsylvania Archives*, 1st ser., 1:356.

exchange for formal recognition of their land ownership. The community was a large settlement for the time with at least fifty heads of household. Their allegiance to Baltimore was crucial because if they stayed loyal to Maryland, Baltimore could use their continued fidelity as evidence that those who already lived in the region recognized his claims as legitimate.<sup>32</sup>

With Baltimore in England and Cresap operating with a commission in the West, Thomas Penn began to orchestrate Pennsylvania's counter-strategy through Samuel Blunston, a Quaker loyal to Pennsylvania's interests. Penn aimed his institutional powers at Cresap, who represented Maryland's claim to absolute legal authority over the area. By arresting him, Pennsylvania would establish its authority by removing the figure that represented Maryland's legitimacy. Andrew Hamilton, soon to be of Zenger trial fame but then the main legal advisor to Penn, met with Blunston and gave him specific orders for carrying out the arrest of Cresap. Although no record exists of his instructions, correspondence between Penn and Blunston suggests that Hamilton advised the latter to arrest Cresap at any point when he was not at his house. Blunston, a pacifist Quaker, delegated the violence to the Scots-Irish settlers from Donegal and the Scots-Irish sheriff.<sup>33</sup>

On January 29, 1734, Robert Buchanan, the sheriff, received intelligence that Cresap would be out "squareing logs for a house and building a flat for the ferry." Pennsylvania officials realized they had the opportunity to seize their antagonist. Promising compensation, Buchanan enlisted a group of men loyal to Pennsylvania to cross the river and arrest Cresap. The Pennsylvanians raided the Maryland camp and captured eight of Cresap's workmen. They failed, however, to find Cresap. Some of the Pennsylvanians carted the prisoners to Blunston's house, which served as Lancaster's jail, while others, contravening their orders, proceeded to Cresap's home to seize him. Surrounded, Cresap holed up in the house with other Maryland loyalists and refused to answer the warrant. During the confrontation, someone from Cresap's house fired a shot that struck Pennsylvanian Knowles Daunt in the knee, a wound that proved fatal.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Substance of Answer of Dutch to Governor of Maryland, 1736, in *Pennsylvania Archives*, 1st ser., 1:492–94, details the Germans' migration and reasons for allying with Cresap before switching their loyalties to Pennsylvania.

<sup>33</sup> Samuel Blunston to Thomas Penn, Jan. 2, 1734, vol. 1, p. 17, Lancaster County Papers; Samuel Blunston to Thomas Penn, Jan. 30, 1734, in *Pennsylvania Archives*, 1st ser., 1:410–12; Thomas Penn to Samuel Blunston, Jan. 10, 1734, and Thomas Penn to Samuel Blunston, Feb. 4, 1734, box NB-011, folder 20, ser. 2, and NB-003, folder 10, ser. 7, Penn Family Papers.

<sup>34</sup> Samuel Blunston to Thomas Penn, Jan. 30, 1734.



The raid on Maryland's community sparked a series of arrests, counterarrests, and general harassment. The open violence bred a state of fear throughout the fast-militarizing Susquehanna Valley. Each side justified its actions by claiming that the other colony's jurisdiction was illegitimate and individuals loyal to it were illegally settled and liable to removal, arrest, and punishment. Soon, servants and farmers as well as colonial officials were involved in the border strife. Blunston feared that the Cresapians "can so easily Come over in the Night & Burn our Houses," and he worried about Pennsylvania's lack of arms and "Military men."<sup>35</sup>

Cresap, too, feared for his safety. In the aftermath, Cresap's house became a virtual fortress, with Cresap refusing to leave his yard. Blunston advised Penn that "it will be in vain . . . to expect to take him any where but at home (which has hitherto been advised against)." Knowing that Penn had mustered the support of the Scots-Irish settlement at Donegal to serve as his military might, Cresap believed "a number of Scotch Irish . . . lyes in ambush for him to the quantity of one hundred and fifty . . . so that he dare not hide at home for fear of his life." Cresap stood in his doorway, Blunston reported, "armed with pistols in his belt a gun in his hand and long sword by his side like Robinson Crusoe" as a way to protect himself and convey an air of authority. By August 1734, Cresap had a captain's commission and formed a regular militia that mustered weekly. For nearly three years, militias mustered, drums of war sounded, and violence became a regular part of life for those living near the Susquehanna River. As George Aston reported, "the people" did "not seem well pleased with this state of war."<sup>36</sup>

At the same time that confrontations increased in violence and frequency, Penn realized that he also had to combat Maryland by changing the colony's policy on expansion. Maryland's method of encouraging new settlers and winning the support of old ones seemed to be working, so Penn needed a new strategy. Rapid expansion was his answer. In April 1734, Penn told Blunston that "surveying lands to the inhabitants over Sasquehannah is what should not be an hour neglected." Penn wanted to

<sup>35</sup> Samuel Blunston to Thomas Penn, Mar. 15, 1734, vol. 1, p. 3, Lancaster County Papers.

<sup>36</sup> Samuel Blunston to Thomas Penn, Mar. 10, 1734, Samuel Blunston to Thomas Penn, May 12, 1734, Samuel Blunston to Thomas Penn, July 22, 1734, vol. 1, pp. 3, 7, 17, Lancaster County Papers; Thomas Penn to Samuel Blunston, Apr. 3, 1734, NB-003, folder 22, ser. 7, Penn Family Papers. The exact spelling of Aston's name is uncertain. In the document cited it is spelled Asheton, but in other documents Aston. Since Aston is a far more common spelling of a last name, I have changed it here. John Hendricks and Joshua Minshall to Thomas Penn, May 6, 1734, NB-025, folder 39, ser. 1, Penn Family Papers.

make these grants as legal as possible, so he dispatched a surveyor as “the only sure means of regular settlement.” Once, the Penns and their subordinates had tried to restrain settlement to honor their treaties with natives as well as to facilitate an ordered expansion west. Now, colonial competition forced Pennsylvania officials to abandon this longstanding policy. Instead, they emphasized the unspoken assumption that undergirded officials’ thinking: land not yet purchased would, nonetheless, be part of Pennsylvania. These steps would protect this future.<sup>37</sup>

As both sides tried to settle more territory, the area of contention expanded beyond lands directly bordering the Susquehanna. Indeed, competition fueled a rapid and uninhibited push far into the West, an even sharper break from Pennsylvania’s previous policy. When Penn gave Blunston “one hundred blank warrants signed and sealed which are designed for any persons that have an inclination to settle over Sasquehannah without regard to the distance westward,” Blunston resigned himself to doling out grants to “loose-settlers” in these western reaches for practical reasons. Blunston figured that because of “the dispute between the provinces,” such less-than-respectable types “ought to be encouraged” so Pennsylvania could have “warrants and surveys” that established Penn’s legal claim to the land in the event the controversy entered British courts.<sup>38</sup>

As Pennsylvania’s proprietor began issuing licenses for settlement on the west side of the river, Maryland ratcheted up its own surveying. One Maryland surveyor ventured up to Cresap’s house but, fearing for his safety, retreated south. Later, Pennsylvanians arrested another Maryland surveyor for trying to remove Edward Murphy from his land in Lancaster County. Suggesting just how much the maneuvers were like a chess match in which dueling proprietors tried to capture one another’s settlers as a way to gain ground, Penn’s officials determined to protect Murphy—and the government’s claims to his land—“by removing him further into the Province, and Settling Some Sturdy Person that will keep possession on the Plantation in Right of this Government.”<sup>39</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Thomas Penn to Samuel Blunston, Apr. 3, 1734; Samuel Blunston to Thomas Penn, Mar. 15, 1734.

<sup>38</sup> Thomas Penn to Samuel Blunston, Aug. 8, 1734, NB-011, folder 25, ser. 3, Penn Family Papers; Samuel Blunston to Thomas Penn, Aug. 13, 1734, vol. 1, p. 7, Lancaster County Papers; and Thomas Penn to Ferdinand Paris, Feb. 12, 1736[7], NB-003, folder 17, ser. 7, Penn Family Papers. Paris was the attorney for the Penns.

<sup>39</sup> James Steel to Elisha Gatchell, Oct. 8, 1736, James Steel Letterbook, 1730–41, p. 124, Logan Family Papers, 1664–1871, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

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The competition between polities over land and settlers created economic and political opportunities not usually afforded would-be settlers. Normally, the proprietor established land prices and terms. In the case of Pennsylvania, a land office with an agent in charge of setting prices granted lands with the proprietary seal. The proprietor also appointed a number of surveyors to mark and value tracts. Although neighboring colonies' prices might ostensibly influence Pennsylvania's land practices, in most cases there was little room for negotiation on the part of the settler. With such fierce competition for settlers, however, neither colony could dictate costs or the terms of expansion.

Nowhere is this more apparent than in "shifting" of tenants. The practice of renouncing one proprietor for another was perhaps the greatest threat to proprietary governments. In a rare moment of unity, both Maryland and Pennsylvania explicitly rejected the practice when settlers attempted to do it in the Lower Counties in the 1720s. The competition for the West, however, changed the rules of the game; settlers could play one proprietor off the other for better terms. In July 1734, a Maryland commissioner came to the west side of the Susquehanna and promised to lay out lands for settlers—squatters, really—who had not received official grants, although they were sympathetic to Penn. Blunston believed the situation was dire: "either save them to us or let them know they may shift for themselves." Penn agreed and granted them low terms. A few months later, Penn embraced Marylanders who desired to switch their allegiances. In late December 1734, "12 or 14 Dutch inhabitants" who lived on the "other side opposite" Samuel Blunston, likely some of the settlers who had accepted land from Cresap, visited Pennsylvania officials. They asked "to take licence under" Penn; believing they had "been imposed on by the Marylanders," they "incline[d] to be Pennsylvanians."<sup>40</sup>

Colonial competition not only helped those on the west side of the river, it also provided an opportunity for Scots-Irish Presbyterians long settled on the eastern bank to negotiate new terms. Many of these settlers provided the backbone of the proprietor's military, and they used their

<sup>40</sup> Discussions of shifting can be found in Governor Gordon to Governor Ogle, Feb. 17, 1732/33, in *Pennsylvania Archives*, 4th ser., 1:509–13; Governor Gordon to Lord Baltimore on Mar. 28, 173[3], Provincial Council Minutes, in *Colonial Records*, 3:531–37; Governor Gordon to Lord Baltimore, Feb. 17, 1732/33, in *Pennsylvania Archives*, 4th ser., 1:506–9; Samuel Blunston to Thomas Penn, July 22, 1734; Samuel Blunston to Thomas Penn, Jan. 2, 1735; Thomas Penn to Samuel Blunston, Jan. 10, 1735; Shepherd, *Proprietary Government*, 117–46.

service and the threat of shifting allegiances to negotiate their land grants. In a speech to Penn, they promised him their loyalty and expressed their hope that he would take “this happy opportunity [to grant lands] before any such thing be offer’d,” implying that should Maryland approach them offering recognition of their land, then they might consider joining its cause. For specific terms, the settlers asked Penn not to make “either the purchase money or ye yearly quitrent of ye lands [they] shall be allow’d to enjoy so high as other parts of ye province” because Donegal was “so far back from markets, whereby [they] are incapacitated from raising money.” Blunston advised Penn to make special consideration for them, for “there must be some difference made betwixt the Donegalians and others or the former wil think they are not favoured.” Penn heeded Blunston’s advice and offered them a compromise in which settlers could choose from a variety of payment options. It was an unprecedented offer.<sup>41</sup>

Maryland, for its part, tended to offer good opportunities for those newly arrived or disillusioned with the ordered expansion Pennsylvania tried to facilitate. Cresap had regularly provided protection to servants fleeing their masters in Pennsylvania. He also welcomed other Germans to settle on the west side of the river. In 1736, Ogle traveled to New Castle to enlist recently arrived Irishmen to his side with promises of land on the west side of the Susquehanna in exchange for service.<sup>42</sup>

As the varied allegiances of these colonists suggest, one’s Old World background did not determine one’s political allegiance. Maryland had both German and Scots-Irish supporters, as did Pennsylvania. Among those most loyal to Cresap were Michael Risner and Bernard Woimer (probably a corruption of Weimar, a city in Germany), both recent German arrivals. Penn enlisted settlers in the Scots-Irish settlement of Donegal to form militias to support fellow Pennsylvanians who happened to be German. In one case, a Scots-Irish settler loyal to Pennsylvania tried to convince a boyhood friend in the employ of Cresap to renounce his allegiances and join Pennsylvania. What these stories suggest is that personal choice, rather than ethnicity, drove political decisions.

The courting of settlers was so personal that many settlers negotiated directly with the proprietor, and their choice often reflected the type of

<sup>41</sup> For the speech, see James Anderson to William Allen, Address to the Proprietor, June 26 and 30, 1733, NV-089, p. 29, ser. 6, Penn Family Papers; Samuel Blunston to Thomas Penn, Jan. 3, 1736, vol. 1, p. 23, Lancaster County Papers. For details of the arrangement, see Tully, *William Penn’s Legacy*, 5–11.

<sup>42</sup> Samuel Blunston to Thomas Penn, Oct. 21, 1736, vol. 1, p. 27, Lancaster County Papers.

government that appealed to them. Settlers in Donegal showed an inclination toward Pennsylvania because of their treatment so far, but they also noted that they did not expect to be “made tenants in ye common sense of ye word, this being what [they] can never, with any pleasure, think of subjecting again [their] necks unto.” They thus understood the proprietary nature of the colony in terms similar to, but decidedly different from, the manor life they knew in Ireland. They expected Pennsylvania to offer them greater liberty than the place they had left, where they were subject to the caprice of uncaring landlords. They thus let Penn know they would pay him for his protection, as they had done for their British landlords, but they expected him to maintain a different type of government in his woods.<sup>43</sup>

The intensity of colonial competition created new political and economic prospects for women, too. Many took an active part in the affair and, in so doing, broke out of social norms to further their individual, familial, and communal interests. A number of Pennsylvania women served as emissaries and provided intelligence to Blunston—among them Esther Harris, whose husband, John, owned a ferry on the Susquehanna, was well-connected among both settlers and Indians, and whose home served as a major trading center. Jenny Wright, wife of John Wright, one of the leading Pennsylvanians in the region, played a similar role.<sup>44</sup>

Women in the Maryland interest were even more active in the conflict. Mary Emerson used competition to challenge the limited legal rights afforded widows and women in Pennsylvania. Her husband, John, had been a loyal supporter of Pennsylvania, having participated in the failed attempt to arrest Cresap in 1734, and the proprietor rewarded his service with a ferry license on the Susquehanna. When he died sometime in 1735 or early 1736, Penn took Emerson’s land and his license from his widow and gave them to John Ross, a resident of Donegal who had also served Pennsylvania’s interest well. Mary received some remuneration for the improvement on the land, but she wanted to keep the house and the ferry. By May 1736, a frustrated Mary had aligned herself with the Marylanders, deemed Cresap “the best friend she ha[d] in the world,” and gone to Ogle to plead her case. In 1737, she threatened “to burn to ashes

<sup>43</sup> For the Scots-Irish speech, see John Anderson to William Allen, Address to the Proprietor, June 26 and 30, 1733.

<sup>44</sup> For examples of the roles Esther and Jenny played, see: Thomas Penn to Samuel Blunston, Apr. 18, 1736, NB-011, folder 43, ser. 3, Penn Family Papers; and Samuel Blunston to Thomas Penn, Jan. 13, 1737, vol. 1, p. 23, Lancaster County Papers.

[the] house” that was once hers. At one point, Ross heard that she and Cresap’s wife had hatched a plan in which Mary Emerson would distract Ross with a game of cards, allowing Cresap and his forces to seize him. James Steel, a member of Penn’s inner circle, expressed dismay “that the laws of Pennsylvania and the magistrates of Lancaster” could not “bridle the insolence of a turbulent woman.”<sup>45</sup>

Many of the women who joined the Maryland cause did so to protect their property when the male members of their households no longer could. Betty Low was among the most active participants for the Maryland side. Pennsylvania had seized and imprisoned some of her family members, including her husband. In their absence, she led a company of the Maryland militia. Her prominence frustrated Blunston, who called her “one of the worst of them.” Blunston, unsure how to handle a woman acting in such a way, sought the proprietor’s approval to seize her. In another case, Blunston sold some property he had acquired on the west side of the river when the male lessee of the tract died. The man’s widow, children, and father-in-law, however, refused to vacate. Instead, they switched their allegiances and gave “intelligence and succor” to the Marylanders, hoping that “if the Marylanders could get the better they

<sup>45</sup> It is likely that the ferry was auctioned off and the proprietor purchased it. The last mention of Emerson being alive was in a letter Penn wrote to Blunston dated Apr. 18, 1736. In May, Penn sent Blunston a copy of the grant he had given Emerson and advised him he was to put the property up for sale, along with the terms of service in the grant. Penn then advised Blunston to “bid on my account,” so he could still own the valuable land and dole it out to one of his loyal tenants. Thomas Penn to Samuel Blunston, May 6, 1736, NB-011, folder 44, ser. 3, Penn Family Papers. The property attracted numerous bidders, and Penn eventually spent more than he wished. Samuel Blunston to Thomas Penn, May 10, 1736, NB-025, folder 9, ser. 1, Penn Family Papers. For specific details on Penn’s plans for the land, see James Steel to Dr. [Samuel] Chew, winter 1737, James Steel Letterbook, 1730–41, p. 131. The handling of Emerson’s land provides further evidence of proprietary power in these western areas and among those vested in the institution of the proprietor. Steel wrote, “Some time after the Death of John Emerson who had the Grant of a Plantation within our Proprs Mannor of Conestogo, the Same being taken in Execution and Sold by the Sheriff to pay his debts, was purchased for the Proprs use as lying within a large quantity of rich Land, and thereupon a Tenant was Settled to keep the plantation in Order and for that purpose two Servant men were purchased here the last fall and Sent up with the Tenant who also had their Indentures with them.” Later, after Ross established himself, he found a number of stray horses with Emerson’s mark. When he asked Steel for advice on what to do with them, Steel advised him to sell them as “for in England (and I suppose the same in Ireland) all Strays &c. are the property of the Lord of the Manor where they are found and it must at least, if not more be so to the Proprs of a large province, Vested with such Extensive powers as the King was pleased by his Royal Charter to Grant.” James Steel to John Ross, Sept. 14, 1737, James Steel Letterbook, 1730–41, p. 160. W. Murray, “The case relating to the dispute between Lord Baltimore and the Penns,” *Register of Pennsylvania* 2 (1828): 209–16; James Steel to John Ross, Apr. 8, 1737, James Steel Letterbook, 1730–41, p. 139; Samuel Blunston to Thomas Penn, May 10, 1736.

should keep the place.” As these examples suggest, settlers gained power when colonies competed for their allegiances in contested areas. They could bend proprietary wills to meet their needs and desires.<sup>46</sup>

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After more than four years of constant but low-level conflict, the war had settled into a tense stalemate. Both Maryland and Pennsylvania had amassed groups of settlers actively supporting their respective causes. Both sides also took well-planned actions, targeting specific individuals and groups who represented the other side’s authority. Pennsylvania pursued Cresap, and Maryland took aim at Blunston and others with proprietary powers. Things changed in August 1736 when the German community that had long allied with Maryland publicly declared its allegiance to Pennsylvania in a petition to the Maryland government.<sup>47</sup>

The shift of the German community altered the course of the conflict. The settlers, Pennsylvania officials reported, cited the “oppression and ill usage we have met with from the government of Maryland, or at least from such persons who have been empowered thereby,” as the reason for their turn. Impertinent Maryland officials were not the only reason they abandoned the colony. They spoke of Pennsylvania’s “mildness,” which they believed promised them a measure of peace and security that Maryland did not offer. Pennsylvania’s government appealed to them because of what it stood for and because of the proprietor’s actions toward his settlers. In a statement to Penn, the German settlers noted that under Maryland, they “received a treatment . . . very different from that which the tenants of your government have generally met with.” In a contest between two colonies vying for settler allegiance, these German settlers used the opportunity to choose the model of governance they preferred.<sup>48</sup>

The loss of the German community, the first and largest group of settlers on the west side of the Susquehanna, threatened to destroy Maryland’s strategy. Maryland had used their allegiance as evidence of that colony’s long-standing settlement of the region. Their switch

<sup>46</sup> Samuel Blunston to James Logan, undated (likely Jan. 1737, improperly dated 1732 in the source), in *Pennsylvania Archives*, 1st ser., 1:316–20.

<sup>47</sup> For the public pronouncement in which the German settlers explicitly rejected Maryland for its behavior, see *Archives of Maryland*, vol. 28, *Proceedings of the Council of Maryland, 1732–1753* (Baltimore, 1908), 100–101. Blunston recounts the constant harassment both sides received in Samuel Blunston to Thomas Penn, May 3, [1736], vol. 1, p. 21, Lancaster County Papers.

<sup>48</sup> *Archives of Maryland*, 28:100–101; Murray, “Dispute between Lord Baltimore and the Penns.”

strengthened Pennsylvania's legal standing in a potential court case and undermined a key piece of Maryland's argument. Word of the Germans' disaffection caused Ogle to take offensive actions to dissuade the group from their decision. On September 5, over three hundred militiamen from Baltimore County, including the county's sheriff, traveled to the west side of the river. There they joined Cresap's militia, which had grown into a professional force in which members were reportedly paid twelve pounds per annum for service. The large Maryland contingent forced the Germans to flee their homes and take refuge across the river with John Wright, Blunston's closest ally. The Maryland militia mustered for nine days and traveled throughout the settlement with "beat of drum and sound of trumpet to awe those poor people into compliance." They hoped their processions, musters, and other military trappings would impel insecure colonists to return to Maryland through a show of sheer force.<sup>49</sup>

Pennsylvanians on the east side of the river saw the conflict in the stark terms of war, with Marylanders as their enemies. A rumor spread among those loyal to Pennsylvania that the Maryland's three-hundred-man militia planned an assault on Pennsylvania. As a preemptive move, Blunston organized one hundred Pennsylvanians from Donegal and Lancaster, armed them, placed them under the command of the sheriff, and sent them across the river in two barges to do battle. The Marylanders, who were eating dinner, fled at the sight of the approaching Pennsylvania militia. The Maryland militia regrouped and in the days that followed made numerous overtures to the Germans, who repeatedly rebuffed them.<sup>50</sup>

Once it became clear that the symbolic presence of the militia could not convince the Germans to return to Maryland, the militiamen adopted more coercive methods—raiding German homes and seizing "Linnen Cloth for Public Dues." Since taxes were a measure of one's allegiance, Maryland militiamen took the linen as dues so they could claim these settlers were still Marylanders. The sheriff, obviously trying to compete with Pennsylvania, also made pecuniary offers, promising to treat the Germans better in the future and remitting their taxes "until they were better able to pay." As an added gesture of goodwill, the sheriff returned all the seized

<sup>49</sup> Proclamation of James Logan, Sept. 17, 1736, *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Sept. 23, 1736; James Logan to Daniel Dulany and Edmund Jennings, Dec. 10, 1736, box 50, folder 23, ser. 3, Cadwalader Family Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania. A detailed description of the events can be found in Samuel Blunston to Thomas Penn, Sept. 8, 1736, vol. 1, p. 9, Lancaster County Papers; and the Deposition of William Downard, Dec. 2, 1736, in *Pennsylvania Archives*, 1st ser., 1:513.

<sup>50</sup> Samuel Blunston to Thomas Penn, Sept. 8, 1736.



goods. If the Germans refused to acknowledge Maryland's authority, however, he vowed to come back "with a much greater force," eject them, and repopulate their land with "Lusty young men."<sup>51</sup>

The Marylanders' behavior was too much for most German settlers to forgive. They had become so aligned with Penn that Blunston reported that most "are Mighty Desirous to live under this Governmt, and Some of them wil rather quit their possessions then return to their former Slavery." For German settlers, many of whom had come from a society in which tenancy to large landlords was the norm, this conflict between two proprietors must have looked somewhat familiar. In the colonies, though, they could switch allegiances depending on which lord's government best addressed their interests. Just as the respective assemblies of Maryland and Pennsylvania checked the ability of these proprietary colonies to become feudal lordships, so too did colonial competition in border zones weaken proprietary institutions and give settlers greater political power.<sup>52</sup>

Penn's reputation for compassion attracted these settlers to his fold. Their malleable allegiance, however, gave them the negotiating power to ensure that the proprietor lived up to his promise, and Penn worked hard to maintain the loyalty of his new allies. Maryland, in a last-ditch effort to win back the Germans, arrested some of the most prominent Germans and jailed them in hopes that the settlers would return to Maryland's fold. Penn took pains to aid the imprisoned and their families. He sent emissaries to the jail with food and money and provided the same for the prisoners' families, along with an armed guard. In doing so, he sought to assure these settlers that he was committed to providing the protection proprietors pledged to their tenants.<sup>53</sup>

Penn's acceptance of the Germans, the first settlers in the disputed region, and his willingness to defend them from Maryland's aggression were essential to his strategy for victory. He did so not just to uphold his

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Receipt of Philip Syng, Jan. 13, 1736, and Receipt of Caspar Wistar, Feb. 28, 1736, NB-025, folder 55 and 58, ser. 1, Penn Family Papers. Thomas Penn also makes note of Wistar's travels to the prisoners in a letter to Samuel Blunston dated Jan. 20, 1736[7], box NB-011, folder 38, ser. 3, Penn Family Papers, where he assures Blunston that Wistar "set several right," perhaps implying the imprisoned Germans may have thought of quitting their loyalties. James Steel describes the aid and supplies he sent to those on the Susquehanna and those imprisoned throughout his letters, but see his July 18, 1737, letter in particular for the issues he had to deal with. Maryland, for instance, would only accept Maryland money for food and other supplies for the prisoners. Steel to Dr. [Samuel] Chew, July 18, 1737, James Steel Letterbook, 1730-41, p. 152.

proprietary duties but also to show imperial officials that he considered the Germans his tenants. Penn made his rationale for supporting the Germans explicit in a letter to his attorney in London. He wrote that had he not recognized the rights of the German settlers who claimed Pennsylvania allegiance on the west side of the Susquehanna, "it would have amounted to an acknowledgement that we did not believe they were within our province and consequently the place where I now write [Philadelphia] is within the Bounds of Maryland."<sup>54</sup>

Penn's treatment of the German community reveals the contours of the British Empire on the fringes of settlement in the middle colonies. Pennsylvania and Maryland operated largely free from imperial intrusion for much of the conflict. Nonetheless, officials always kept in mind the possibility that imperial officials might interfere. They therefore acted with their eye toward precedents that they believed would help them prevail in a court of law. Penn's actions towards the Germans also underscore the importance of the proprietors' direct relationships with settlers in winning the contest.

With the loss of the German settlers, Marylanders had to recalibrate their approach. They turned to Native American groups to bolster Maryland's claim within the imperial system. Ogle began to cultivate relations with the Six Nations Iroquois in 1736, hoping to formally purchase the west side of the Susquehanna from them. Ogle's courting of the Six Nations posed a dilemma to Pennsylvania officials in charge of Indian relations. A deed from a Native American group that the Crown recognized as holding the original rights to the contested land would provide strong evidence in a trial in England or a hearing before the Board of Trade.<sup>55</sup>

Official Pennsylvania policy, however, had long recognized the Conestogas' right to the land. Just a few years earlier, colonial officials had even gone so far as to forcefully remove Pennsylvania squatters to uphold their promises to the Conestogas. The Six Nations, however, claimed that the Conestogas were their dependents and lacked the authority to sell such land. Moreover, many British officials had come to accept Iroquoian claims of dominion over other groups in the mid-Atlantic. If Maryland received a deed from the Six Nations and Pennsylvania from the

<sup>54</sup> Thomas Penn to Ferdinand Paris, Feb. 12, 1736[7].

<sup>55</sup> Thomas Penn to unknown, Apr. 18, 1736, and Thomas Penn to Samuel Blunston, Apr. 18, 1736, NB-011, folders 42 and 43, ser. 11, Penn Family Papers.

Conestogas, the Crown would likely have to determine which Indian group was the rightful owner. In such a situation, Pennsylvania officials had to worry that imperial officials would choose the Iroquoian claim over that of the Conestogas.

In the face of such uncertainty, Thomas Penn decided once again to do what was necessary to bolster his position in a British court of law. In October 1736, he held a treaty with the Iroquois in Lancaster in which, in exchange for the conveyance of the land west of the Susquehanna to Pennsylvania, he recognized the Six Nations' claims to supremacy over other native groups in Pennsylvania. The treaty marked yet another major shift in traditional Pennsylvania policy. William Penn had, as Francis Jennings pointed out, largely "ignored" the Iroquois claims of dominance over the Conestogas. Jennings argued further that the Iroquois's claims of dominance were largely "fabricated," but in 1736, Pennsylvania "gang[ed] up with the Six Nations" to make it "real."<sup>56</sup>

From this point forward, Pennsylvania policy recognized the Conestogas as a friendly people lacking any real political power. Similarly, the Shawnees, who had earlier been offered a tract of land in the western region, were not consulted in 1736, and the treaty made their land claims and political status subordinate to the Iroquois. Viewed in light of the ongoing Maryland conflict and the contest for power among Native American groups, the treaty was mutually beneficial for Pennsylvania and the Six Nations, as each gained an edge over its respective competitors. For those excluded, the shift in Pennsylvania policy created grievances that would fester.

Such compromises between idealism and pragmatism anticipated the Walking Purchase of 1737, a notorious land grab that historians have interpreted as signaling a larger, more general change in proprietary views toward western expansion, Indian relations, and land acquisition. Viewed alongside the 1736 Lancaster Treaty and the ongoing and costly conflict with Maryland, the Walking Purchase appears less anomalous and instead part of a wholesale shift in Pennsylvania officials' views toward expansion that the demands of colonial competition had wrought. One of the underappreciated reasons for the Walking Purchase was Pennsylvania's concern that Dutch settlers from New York had begun to stake a claim

<sup>56</sup> Francis Jennings, *The Ambiguous Iroquois Empire: The Covenant Chain Confederation of Indian Tribes with English Colonies* (New York, 1984), 321–22; Jennings, "Pennsylvania Indians' and the Iroquois," in Daniel K. Richter and James H. Merrell, eds., *Beyond the Covenant Chain: The Iroquois and Their Neighbors in Indian North America, 1600–1800* (Syracuse, NY, 1987), 82.

over the land acquired by it. After having waged a costly five-year campaign against Maryland, proprietary officials took the actions necessary to head off a potential conflict with New York. Indeed, William Penn's treaty with Machaloha in 1683 suggests that these actions were not without precedent. Concerns about competition from neighboring colonies reflected the larger problem facing the British Empire in this era. In a British empire in which imperial authority was weak, neighboring colonies saw one another as competitors and pursued their own expansionist aims with little concern for the larger geopolitical issues of imperial growth. Such individual actions often led them to undercut each other in ways that might alienate Indian allies and strengthen the position of a growing and unified French imperial power.<sup>57</sup>

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Backed by settler allegiance and a title from the Six Nations, Pennsylvania tried to rid the region of Cresap and his followers. On November 25, 1736, Samuel Smith led nearly forty people, mostly from Donegal, to Cresap's house. They came under the pretense that they wanted to arrest Cresap for the murder of Knowles Daunt (the Pennsylvanian killed in a raid two years prior). The Pennsylvanians brought rum and other victuals, suggesting they were willing to stay for a long time. A tense standoff ensued. As Arthur Buchanan tried to cajole a few of the Irish immigrants living in Cresap's house into joining the Pennsylvanians, Cresap's very pregnant wife went into labor. Eventually shots rang out, but with no result. Then the house caught on fire. At the behest of his wife and children, Cresap fled the house and was shot repeatedly. Although none of Cresap's injuries proved fatal, one of his men was mortally wounded. Soon many other Marylanders were captured and jailed in Lancaster. Blunston feared that the Lancaster jail was too weak to hold Cresap and moved him to Philadelphia. As Cresap entered Philadelphia in chains, he remarked to his jailer, George Aston, "Damn it, Aston, this is one of the prettyest towns in Maryland."<sup>58</sup>

<sup>57</sup> Susan Klepp, "Encounter and Experiment: The Colonial Period," in *Pennsylvania: A History of the Commonwealth*, 75.

<sup>58</sup> For details of the raid, see *Pennsylvania Archives*, 1st ser., 1:504–610; and Deposition of George Aston, Dec. 3, 1736, in *Pennsylvania Archives*, 1st ser., 1:510. The details on Cresap's wife's condition come from an undated deposition in vol. 1, p. 25, Lancaster County Papers.

The raid on Cresap's home changed the nature of the conflict. For the first time, one of the proprietors believed he had a clear edge over his competitor within the empire's arbitration system. Baltimore realized that if he cast the Cresap affair in the proper light, he might win the king's favor—and, indeed, he did. After hearing of the burning of Cresap's house and the militias operating in the region, King George II delivered a series of edicts declaring a moratorium on all warlike actions and calling for the release of all prisoners and the mutual recognition of each colony's settlers in the contested region. It was, in effect, a return to the pre-1732 status quo. After Penn submitted a rebuttal demonstrating Pennsylvania's claim to the disputed territory, the Crown backpedaled and, in 1738, formalized a border between the rival colonies much further south than Baltimore believed it should be. The Crown considered the measure temporary, however, and forced the case to proceed in the Court of Chancery, allowing the British legal system to determine where the boundaries between the colonies fell. The case began in 1750 and did not officially conclude until 1760. The court decided in Penn's favor and asked that surveyors draw a formal boundary line between the two colonies. Five years later, Charles Mason, in the midst of conducting that survey, traveled to Lancaster and learned of the strange events that had led to his current employment.<sup>59</sup>

The Conojocular War may have ended easily, with a simple edict from the Crown and, anticlimactically, with a long drawn-out legal case in London, but this conclusion should not obscure its significance to the mid-Atlantic. For over six years, both governments encouraged near constant strife in the region, during the very time historians have described the middle colonies as enjoying a "long peace." Both colonies acted as they did because they believed victory was possible—and that the other side might be on the cusp of winning. Although Pennsylvania tried to avoid a conflict, once it began, officials had to adopt new policies regarding expansion in order to compete. These changes altered the development of the middle colonies. To combat one another, Maryland and Pennsylvania pursued their own expansionist aims with little concern for larger geopolitical issues that could affect the interests of the empire.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>59</sup> For details on this decision, see the Minutes of the Court at Kensington, May 25, 1738, reprinted in *Archives of Maryland*, 28:145–49.

<sup>60</sup> Francis Jennings used the term "Long Peace" in at least two of his works, but emphasized it most in "Miquon's Passing: Indian-European Relations in Pennsylvania, 1674 to 1755" (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1965), 462, and in *The Founders of America: From the Earliest*

The legacy of the Conojocular War left an indelible mark on the Pennsylvania landscape in the decades that followed its end. After the war between colonies ceased in 1738, Pennsylvania officials expressed renewed concern over growing Indian complaints that often focused on the settlements the proprietors had allowed during the competition with Maryland. Emboldened by their victory, Pennsylvania officials began exerting greater political power over recently settled areas in western Pennsylvania, much as they had in the 1720s, often with an eye toward assuaging Indian unease. In 1750, Pennsylvania created Cumberland County to oversee western expansion and to provide a means to reign in illegal squatters. Almost as soon as the county was formed, proprietary commissioners and a newly appointed justice of the peace tried to burn down all illegal homes. They razed dozens of settlements, an act meant to satisfy native concerns by signaling a return to the earlier policies that had rested on ordered expansion negotiated with native approval.<sup>61</sup>

Such assertions of authority could only go so far in areas in which vestiges of colonial competition continued to exist, however. Two large settlements escaped the commission's torch. Little Cove and Great Cove were located in a fertile valley in the Allegheny Mountains near the Pennsylvania and Maryland boundary. As the commissioners reported, the colony had been aware of these settlements since at least 1741, and there is some evidence that they dated to the grants from the 1730s. The governor, however, "did not think it proper to take any other notice" of them because "the two governments were not then on very good terms." The commissioners were also aware that Maryland commissioners were traveling through Little Cove and Great Cove trying to convince the inhabitants to swear allegiance to Maryland and possibly reignite the boundary dispute in these western areas. Faced with competition again, the government allowed the two settlements to persist.<sup>62</sup>

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*Migrations to the Present* (New York, 1994), 215. For other prominent examples of its use, see Daniel K. Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country: A Native History of Early America* (Boston, 2001), 152–58, which uses the phrase to describe the general state of early eighteenth-century North America; and James H. Merrell, *Into the American Woods: Negotiators on the Pennsylvania Frontier* (New York, 2000), 35–37.

<sup>61</sup> Richard Peters's Report to Lieutenant Governor James Hamilton, Provincial Council Minutes, July 31, 1750, in *Colonial Records*, 5:437–51. For a historian's treatment of this episode, see David L. Preston, *The Texture of Contact: European and Settler Communities on the Frontiers of Iroquoia, 1667–1783* (Lincoln, NE, 2009), 139–42.

<sup>62</sup> Report of Commissioners and Petition of Little Cove, July 25, 1750, and Message of the Governor to Assembly, Aug. 8, 1750, Provincial Council Minutes, in *Colonial Records*, 5:453–55.

In 1754, western Delawares and Shawnees once more voiced their opposition to these settlements. They told Pennsylvania representatives that they had united to defend their hunting grounds on the Allegheny and warned the colonial officials that if the settlements were not removed, Indians and the English would “never come to peace again.” The promise proved prophetic. In 1755, after Braddock’s defeat, a party composed of western Delawares and Shawnees targeted these settlements. The raid on Great Cove sent shockwaves throughout the colony as news of the nearly unprecedented death and destruction spread. A creek named Bloody Run memorializes the devastation. Eight years later, Mason would venture to Pennsylvania to see the site of the colonists’ massacre of the Conestogas—proof that peace had not returned to the colony.<sup>63</sup>

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In 1796, thirty years after Charles Mason first heard of the Conojocular War during his trip to Lancaster, William Findley, a congressman from Pittsburgh, wrote a book to defend his constituents involved in the Whiskey Rebellion. He began *A History of the Insurrection in the Four Western Counties of Pennsylvania* with a brief history of Pennsylvania that compared the experience of those living around Pittsburgh—the new boundary of Pennsylvania—with that of those who had lived on Pennsylvania’s borders in other periods. His history described a region wracked by years of competition and conflict between colonies and then states. He wrote of the “bloodshed and numerous acts of outrageous violence” that had occurred between Pennsylvania and Connecticut as they fought over control of the northern third of what eventually became Pennsylvania. He also told of the “competition” between Virginia and Pennsylvania over Pittsburgh, beginning in the 1770s. This competition, he wrote, bred “a strange state of society” in which residents made “their election of submitting to the one or the other . . . as it comported with their interest or their caprice.”<sup>64</sup>

<sup>63</sup> Quotation from David Dixon, *Never Come to Peace Again: Pontiac’s Uprising and the Fate of the British Empire in North America* (Norman, OK, 2005), 41. This raid is depicted in Peter Silver, *Our Savage Neighbors: How Indian War Transformed Early America* (New York, 2007), 195–97; Preston, *Texture of Contact*, 114–16 and 142–46; and, especially, Matthew C. Ward, *Breaking the Backcountry: The Seven Years’ War in Virginia and Pennsylvania, 1754–1765* (Pittsburgh, 2004), 65–66.

<sup>64</sup> William Findley, *History of the Insurrection in the Four Western Counties of Pennsylvania* (1796; repr., Spartanburg, SC, 1984), 21–25.

Findley, who had immigrated to Pennsylvania in the 1760s, also wrote of a conflict that had preceded his arrival: the “Conegehally War.” Findley had heard stories of the “the bloodshed and violence” that had occurred between Maryland and Pennsylvania. He noted that “some of the heroes, who gained their military fame in that war, have not been many years deceased.” He was undoubtedly referring to Thomas Cresap. Cresap had recently died in western Maryland at around ninety years old, although some sources suggested he lived to be over a hundred. After the war with Pennsylvania ended in 1738, Cresap returned to Maryland. He served as a colonel during the Seven Years’ War, won election to the Maryland legislature, acquired large tracts of land in the West, and continued to protect Maryland interests as the colony continued to expand. The story of his involvement in the “Conegehally War” had stayed alive in the border regions in part because Thomas Cresap had stayed alive to retell his tales. As Findley noted, Cresap established his reputation for bravery in this war with Pennsylvania, and Findley likely heard his tales firsthand, much as Mason had heard of them from Samuel Smith.<sup>65</sup>

The memory of the fighting persisted for another reason, however. The Conojocular War remained relevant because competition between states continued in the new nation. The Conojocular War was, as Findley noted in his history, the first in a long saga of border conflicts that defined life for those living on the boundaries of the middle colonies. Findley told of how Pennsylvanians “in those counties bordering on other states,” even after the Revolution, continued to use competition to weaken and evade laws with which they disagreed. A product of this environment, Findley emphasized this history of competition between polities because it was a prominent aspect of the political culture of the region.<sup>66</sup>

Even though Thomas Cresap and his exploits in the war between colonies were well known in border regions during the eighteenth century, the Conojocular War has fallen outside the bounds of Pennsylvania history today. But as Charles Mason learned in 1765 and Findley related in 1796, the Conojocular War continued to matter to people in this region long after it ended in 1738. This perspective should matter to historians today, too. Such competition was central to the geographic expansion of British colonies and the political development of the middle colonies, especially the political development of Pennsylvania. Settlers in these

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 21, 23–25.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 30–32.



western and border regions engaged in forms of politics that differed greatly from the urban and eastern brands we know so well. Yet this other type of politics played just as central a role in the creation of Pennsylvania as the eastern one—perhaps more so.

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PATRICK SPERO



*“Fair Play Has Entirely Ceased,  
and Law Has Taken Its Place”:  
The Rise and Fall of the Squatter  
Republic in the West Branch Valley  
of the Susquehanna River,  
1768–1800*

**D**URING THE 1770S, hundreds of predominantly Scots-Irish settlers trespassed onto Indian territory north of the West Branch of the Susquehanna River. There they formed a squatter republic, annually electing a tribunal of “Fair Play Men” who distributed land to newcomers and kept order under a set of rules sometimes referred to as the Fair Play code. During the American Revolution, the squatters sided with the patriots, and Pennsylvania’s republican government assumed control of the region. After the Revolution, the legislature granted the squatters the right to purchase the tracts they had occupied by filing pre-emption applications, which, if successful, would prevent the general public from buying the plots in question. An applicant could then request a warrant for the purchased land, pay for a survey, and receive a patent after the surveyor returned his records to the land office. Most of the squatters could not afford to buy their own lots and chose instead to sell their rights to the improvements they had made to the land. Those who sold tended to move away. Other squatters had the means to stay in the region after the Revolution, and several of them became leading members of their community.<sup>1</sup>

I would like to thank the *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*’s anonymous readers, as well as the members of the Pennsylvania Historical Association panel that led to my decision to write this article: Daniel Barr, William Campbell, Paul Douglas Newman, and Patrick Spero. My work benefited greatly from Jonathan Stayer’s knowledge of the Records of the Land Office at the Pennsylvania State Archives.

<sup>1</sup> On the Fair Play community, see George D. Wolf, *The Fair Play Settlers of the West Branch Valley, 1769–1784: A Study of Frontier Ethnography* (Harrisburg, PA, 1969). Wolf’s book remains the most extensive treatment of the Fair Play settlers. See also John F. Meginness, *History of*

An anecdote recorded by local historian John Meginness suggests that some of the squatters who remained regretted the transition to state jurisdiction. As the story goes, Pennsylvania's Chief Justice Thomas McKean once adjudicated a Fair Play case in the district. Accordingly, he interrogated the Irishman Peter Rodey, a former member of the Fair Play community. Unable to remember the details of the Fair Play code, Rodey quipped, "All I can say is, that since your Honor's courts have come among us, *fair play* has entirely ceased, and law has taken its place." After the laughter in the court died down, the judge halted his line of questioning.<sup>2</sup>

By drawing upon previously unexamined preemption applications, this article seeks to demonstrate the mutual ties that bound the Fair Play community together and to explain Rodey's nostalgic sense of loss. Certainly, the Fair Play settlers did not create an agrarian utopia. Beyond colonial jurisdiction, squatters came under the threat of violence from one another and from Indians. Most families lived in flimsy one-room cabins and barely managed to clear and plant corn on a few acres a year. Perhaps because of these difficulties, some squatters chose to labor for others. Despite access to free land, they found they could earn better livings by planting crops on cleared bottomlands or improving land for men with spare cash. Even those who did not work for their betters relied for their survival on interactions with settlers who lived within the legal bounds of Pennsylvania. Nevertheless, while life in the squatter republic may have been unforgiving, it offered something that legal settlements could not. Squatters could occupy and claim property through the expenditure of labor alone, with no money down. The risks and challenges of living on a remote frontier and illegally entering Indian territory created an opportunity for the bold to secure land that they could not otherwise afford.

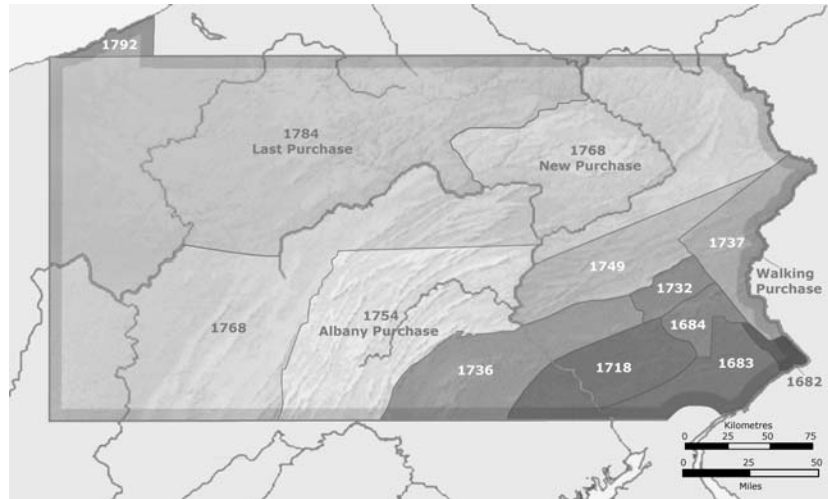
Prior to the Revolution, land in the Fair Play community was abundant, and the squatters' system of self-government protected individuals' claims, preventing any settlers from remaining landless, as long as they chose to clear land and farm for themselves. After the Revolution, some

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*Lycoming County, Pennsylvania* (Chicago, 1892), 193–210, <http://www.usgennet.org/usa/pa/county/lycoming/history/lyco-history-01.html>. On preemption applications and land purchases, see Donna Bingham Munger, *Pennsylvania Land Records: A History and Guide for Research* (Wilmington, DE, 1991), 153–54, 198–207. For the text of the 1784 preemption statute, see Charles Smith, *Laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania*, vol. 2 (Philadelphia, 1810), 194–202, <http://www.palrb.us/smithlaws/index.php>.

<sup>2</sup> John Franklin Meginness, *Otzinachson; or, a History of the West Branch Valley of the Susquehanna* (1857; repr., Ann Arbor, MI, n.d.), 172.

of the squatters made good on their gamble for property, but others were not so lucky. During the decades after American independence, a tide of settlers and speculators advanced into the region, and tenancy soon became widespread. The emergence of a functioning land market transformed how settlers thought about property in the West Branch Valley. No longer could settlers in the Fair Play region claim real estate simply by laboring upon it. Instead, they needed to secure legal titles to their lands by acquiring enough cash to apply for land warrants, pay for surveys, and finance mortgages. The change in the nature of property lay at the heart of Rodey's lament.<sup>3</sup>



A map of Pennsylvania's land purchases, including the 1768 and 1784 purchases conducted at Fort Stanwix. Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Pennsylvania\\_land\\_purchases.png](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Pennsylvania_land_purchases.png).

<sup>3</sup> Preemption Applications, 1785, box 1, Records of the Land Office, RG-17, ser. 17.14 (microfilm reel LO 7.5), Pennsylvania State Archives, Harrisburg, PA. Several "neoprogressive" historians have recently pointed out the difficulties that ordinary Americans faced in the years following the Revolution as well as the disconnect that many common people felt with their political leaders. See, for example, Woody Holton, *Unruly Americans and the Origins of the Constitution* (New York, 2007). Terry Bouton argued that most Pennsylvanians desired broad-based political and economic equality throughout the revolutionary period but lacked the organizational cohesion to bring about an egalitarian social order. Terry Bouton, *Taming Democracy: "The People," the Founders, and the Troubled Ending of the American Revolution* (New York, 2007). Although Bouton did not address the Fair Play squatters, they were one of many similar backcountry groups that resisted elite rule.

*A Republic of Squatters*

In 1768, Sir William Johnson negotiated the Treaty of Fort Stanwix with the Six Nations (Haudenosaunee). The treaty adjusted the Proclamation Line of 1763, pushing the boundary between British colonists and Indians further to the west. The Haudenosaunee did not occupy most of the territory they ceded to the British. Instead, they negotiated on behalf of the nations they considered their “dependants,” including the Delawares and Shawnees. Some sachems expressed concern about giving away land that belonged to other Indian nations in the Susquehanna Valley near “Wioming or the Great Island,” but Johnson soon convinced them that nothing could prevent settlers from overrunning those areas. They agreed that it was better for the Haudenosaunee to sell the land while they still could. Pennsylvania benefited enormously from these negotiations. In exchange for 10,000 Spanish dollars, the Haudenosaunee ceded millions of acres in a thick band stretching across the province’s whole frontier from the southwest to the northeast. No representative from either the Delawares or the Shawnees voiced approval for the sale.<sup>4</sup>

Almost immediately, the land sale led to controversy. Along Pennsylvania’s central frontier, “a Creek called Tiadaghton” defined the new border. Land east of the creek became settler country where Pennsylvania could sell land on the north side of the West Branch of the Susquehanna. West of the creek remained Indian country, with the West Branch serving as the province’s northern boundary. However, settlers called the creeks in this region by different names and could not agree among themselves where Tiadaghton Creek lay. The Penns maintained that the Indian reference to “Tiadaghton” meant Lycoming Creek, and journals from travelers to the region from both before and after the Fort Stanwix Treaty confirm this stance. Drawn by the rich bottomlands

<sup>4</sup> William J. Campbell, “Land and Diplomacy on the Fringes of Empire: Indians, Agents, Speculators, and the 1768 Treaty of Fort Stanwix” (PhD diss., McMaster University, 2007), 127–35. Sachems’ quotations appear in Campbell, “Land and Diplomacy,” and are from E. B. O’Callaghan and B. Fernow, eds., *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York*, vol. 8 (Albany, NY, 1857), 123. Johnson did arrange for a payment of \$500 to the Conestoga Indians with the understanding that their lands would return to the Penns when their nation became extinct. The Paxton Boys had massacred most of the Conestogas in 1763. See Kevin Kenny, *Peaceable Kingdom Lost: The Paxton Boys and the Destruction of William Penn’s Holy Experiment* (New York, 2009), 131–46.



The West Branch of the Susquehanna, as it appeared in a contemporary map. Pine Creek (identified as Tiadaghton in 1784) is labeled. Lycoming Creek (thought to be Tiadaghton Creek in 1768) is the unlabeled creek to the east of Pine Creek. The Great Island sits at the confluence of the West Branch of the Susquehanna River and Bald Eagle Creek. The Sinnemahoning Creek forms a portage with the Allegheny River system in the map's northwestern corner. The Penns purchased the lands east of Lycoming Creek and south of Bald Eagle Creek in 1768. Source: W. Harrison Jr., "A Map of Pennsylvania from the Best Authorities," in *The American Geography; or, A View of the Present Situation of the United States of America*, ed. Jedediah Morse (London, 1794), [http://digitallibrary.hsp.org/index.php/Detail/Object/Show/object\\_id/8536](http://digitallibrary.hsp.org/index.php/Detail/Object/Show/object_id/8536).

around the mouth of Pine Creek, approximately fifteen miles to the west of Lycoming Creek, a small but forceful minority of settlers claimed that “Tiadaghton” meant Pine Creek instead.<sup>5</sup>

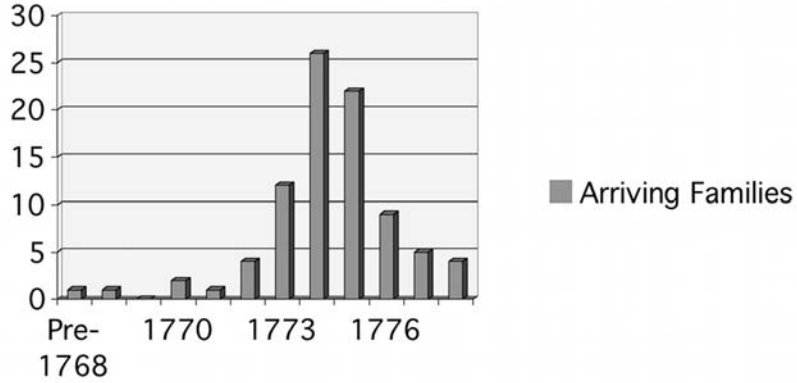
While the exact count is unknown, around 150 to 200 families entered these disputed lands during the 1770s. The first white settlers entered the Pine Creek bottomlands in 1770, joining a handful of pioneers who had already made their way deep into the backcountry prior to the Fort Stanwix Treaty. Settler interest in the area began to peak in 1773. A dozen families recorded coming to the region in that year, adding to the nine families already in Fair Play territory. These records undercount the total by half, as a December 1773 report by the Northumberland County sheriff William Cooke indicated that forty separate improvements stood between Lycoming Creek and the Great Island at the confluence of the Susquehanna River and Bald Eagle Creek. Perhaps 100 additional families entered the region in 1774 and 1775. During the summer of 1775, the Reverend Philip Vickers Fithian reported delivering a sermon to 140 people in the woods north of the Great Island. Beginning in 1776, immigration tailed off due to the onset of the Revolution and because other squatters had already claimed the best bottomlands. Fewer than 40 families came to the region during the war years, with the last few squatter families arriving in 1778.<sup>6</sup>

The best surviving evidence about the lives of these families comes from 132 preemption applications that the settlers filed in 1785 in order to stake claims on their lands. Applicants had to specify when they had settled on the land, how long they had lived there, and what improvements they had made in the form of clearings, houses, and planted crops. If the tract had changed hands, applicants had to provide this information for each previous occupant. The local magistrates who collected these applications also asked for the date during the Revolutionary War when Indians had driven the squatters off of the land. In order to prove their

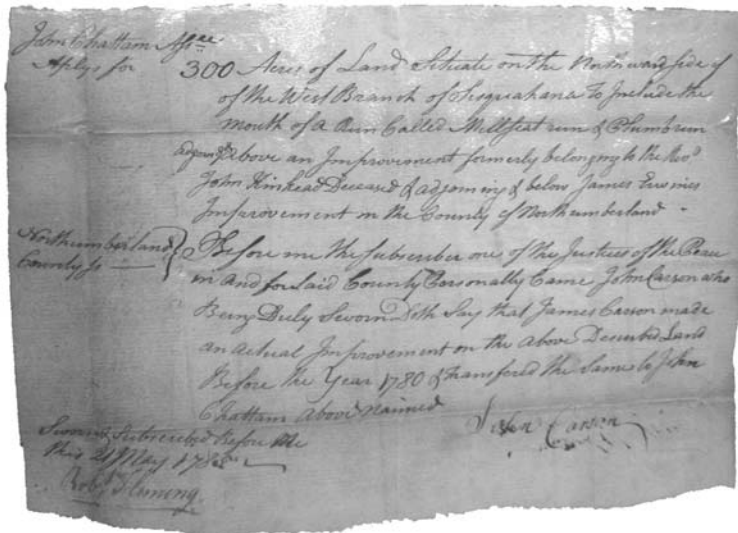
<sup>5</sup> Wolf, *Fair Play Settlers*, 1–15. The 1768 purchase was known as the “New Purchase.” For the treaty’s language, see O’Callaghan and Fernow, *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York*, 8:135–37.

<sup>6</sup> For precise counts of families, see Preemption Applications. Eighty-seven applications specified the year of their first improvements, or the year in which a neighboring deponent knew of an improvement. For forty families in 1773, see William Cooke to James Tilghman, Dec. 11, 1773, in *Pennsylvania Archives*, ed. Samuel Hazard et al. (Philadelphia and Harrisburg, PA, 1852–1935): 1st ser., 12:286–87. For Fithian, see Wolf, *Fair Play Settlers*, 66. Wolf conducted an analysis of the surnames of known Fair Play settlers and concluded that nearly half were Scots-Irish, with Englishmen and Germans making up another 35 percent of the population. Wolf, *Fair Play Settlers*, 18–19.





Known years that families moved to the Indian territory north of the West Branch of the Susquehanna River, as indicated by a portion of the preemption applications of 1785. These records undercount the actual number of immigrants by approximately one-half. Source: Preemption Applications.



John Chattam's preemption application and John Carson's deposition on Chattam's behalf, May 21, 1785. Source: Preemption Applications.

claims, applicants relied on their neighbors to file supporting depositions, ranging from a few sentences to a page in length.<sup>7</sup>

Although confusion over the identity of Tiadaghton Creek may have justified the initial surge into Indian territory, settlers did not limit themselves to the land between Pine and Lycoming Creeks. By mapping out the tracts described in the preemption applications, it is possible to reconstruct the general location of most of the improvements in the region. Approximately one-third of the settlers improved acreage that lay within the disputed territory, in the watershed of Lycoming Creek or Larry's Creek immediately to its west. A little fewer than half of the settlers took up residence along both sides of Pine Creek, the best land in the region. Approximately one-fifth lived in regions far outside the core disputed area. One applicant claimed a territory at the mouth of Towanda Creek, more than forty miles to the northeast, in the North Branch Valley of the Susquehanna River. Approximately 20 families lived in the vicinity of the Great Island, a center of Indian life five miles west of Pine Creek. Twenty miles to the northwest, near a great bend in the Susquehanna, a small cluster of families settled along Youngwomantown Creek. A final cluster of families settled along Sinnemahoning Creek twenty miles further west. Taken together, perhaps as many as 150 families lived in a twenty-five-mile stretch of land between the Great Island (near modern-day Lock Haven) and Lycoming Creek (near modern-day Williamsport). Most lived within a few miles of the Susquehanna River, but some inhabitants cultivated the bottomlands along creeks as far as ten miles upstream.<sup>8</sup>

Most families maintained distance from their nearest neighbors, often spacing their tracts half a mile or more apart. By spreading out, each family could settle a large area without threatening neighboring properties. Despite the lack of formal surveys, the squatters were keenly aware of their claims. For example, in March 1775, and again in the spring of 1776, George Woods paid Robert Fust and James McCleery half a pound

<sup>7</sup> Preemption Applications. See, especially, instructions for an applicant applying for Abraham Dewitt's original improvement, no date. The instructions read: "Prove When Abraham Dewitt Settled upon the Premises—How long he lived there?—What Improvements he made?—When you came to live there?—How long you lived there?—What Improvements You made?—When you were driven off by the Indians?"

<sup>8</sup> Preemption Applications. For Sinnemahoning Creek, see Richard Gillman Application, June 6, 1785; Ludwig Holzworth and Nicholas Miller Application, Apr. 27, 1785; and James McGinley Application, June 1, 1785. For Towanda Creek, see Phillip Fox Deposition Oct. 15, 1785 (Thomas Mahaffy Application). For Youngwomantown Creek, see Sam Cook Application, May 2 1785; Hugh McGinley Application, June 1, 1785; and Thomas Robinson Application, May 11, 1785.

Sinnemahon- ing Creek	Youngwomans- town Creek	Great Island	Pine Creek	Larry's Creek	Lycoming Creek	Towanda Creek
3	3	19	55	17	27	1

Known families in the vicinity of the major geographic features of the Fair Play region, listed from west to east. Source: Preemption Applications.

per acre to clear the woods and plant corn at either end of his property, so as to delineate the boundary line between himself and his neighbors, William McMeen and William Clark. Although they knew the boundaries of their property, reconstructing how much acreage the squatters claimed is impossible. The Pennsylvania land office restricted land sales to three hundred acres per household, but this rule seems not to have limited the squatters. Of 120 applications that listed a precise acreage, 83 requested the full three hundred acres, suggesting that most squatters had claimed at least that much land for themselves. At least one claimed a considerably larger area: on September 12, 1778, Christian Heddick sold a tract of five hundred acres to George Reinecker.<sup>9</sup>

Despite their widely scattered land holdings, the Fair Play settlers were not isolated loners. Squatters who filed depositions supporting other preemption applicants reported on the status of farms throughout the Fair Play region. Usually indicating a squatter's neighbors and the location of the applicant's farm relative to the nearest creek, these depositions provide evidence for networks of communication that stretched across the breadth of the valley. Daniel Bradley filed eight depositions on behalf of settlers from the Great Island to Lycoming Creek, including tracts on Pine Creek and Larry's Creek. Seven other men filed four or more depositions for their fellow applicants; among these seven was Peter Rodey, who filed a deposition on behalf of Bratton Caldwell, one of the known members of the Fair Play tribunal. Two other former Fair Play Men, Henry Antes and James Brandon, swore testimony on behalf of three of their fellow squatters. Another community leader, William McElhatton, who lived near the Great Island before the war and came to command a company of Pennsylvania troops during the Revolution, testified in nine depositions,

<sup>9</sup> I estimate the distances between tracts from the Preemption Applications. See, especially, John Boak Deposition, Sept. 23, 1785 (George Woods Application); and Deed, Christian Heddick to George Reinecker, Sept. 12, 1778. For Pennsylvania acreage policies, see Munger, *Pennsylvania Land Records*, 74, 81. Speculators routinely found ways around these acreage limits, to the dissatisfaction of small farmers. See, for example, Paul Moyer, *Wild Yankees: The Struggle for Independence along Pennsylvania's Revolutionary Frontier* (Ithaca, NY, 2007), 27.

often in support of his former soldiers. Because deponents did not speak just for their nearest neighbors, the squatters' depositions provide evidence of a society of men who formed lasting connections across the twenty-five-mile stretch of the West Branch Valley.<sup>10</sup>

Squatters cemented their land claims by making improvements. In a tradition stretching back to the English conquest of Ireland in the sixteenth century, Anglo-Americans believed that natives who did not put their land to good use had no right to it. In settlers' eyes, hunting grounds remained wildernesses, as did lands planted using Indian methods, with crops interspersed among trees. Only by farming as settlers did—by clearing away the forest and creating fields—could a man transform land from a savage state to a civilized one. For the squatters, it stood to reason that a man who improved the land by building or farming upon it deserved to own it, just as much as, if not more so than, a man who could lay a paper claim to a piece of land but failed to liberate it from the wild. For squatters without paper titles that could secure their land claims in a court of law, the belief that sweat equity amounted to ownership justified the decision to seize Indian lands, improve them, and sell the improvements to one another.<sup>11</sup>

Accordingly, while the squatters augmented their diets by hunting and gathering in the woods, they also promptly set about deforesting their

<sup>10</sup> Daniel Bradley Depositions, Apr. 23, 1785 (Hugh McClean, Rodger Bradley, John Hughes, William Egan, John Dunlop, Daniel Toner, John Toner, Peter Rodey Applications); Peter Rodey Depositions, Apr. 23, 1785 (Daniel Bradley Application), June 17, 1785 (Bratton Caldwell Application), June 25, 1785 (Thomas Ferguson Application), Aug. 19, 1785 (John McLeran Application); Henry Antes Deposition, June 23, 1785 (Henry Thomas Application); James Brandon Deposition, May 18, 1785 (Thomas Forster Application); William McElhatton Depositions, May 21, 1785 (Thomas Procter Application), June 2, 1785 (Jane, Henry, and William Walker Application), June 10, 1785 (George Reinecker Applications), June 14, 1785 (George Reinecker Application), Preemption Applications. A different William McElhatton served as a tenant for Abraham Dewitt and made two depositions, which he signed with his mark because he could not write. See Thomas Procter Application, n.d.; Lewis Lewis Application, Oct. 7, 1785, Preemption Applications.

<sup>11</sup> On the Irish roots of the theory of improvement, see Nicholas P. Canny, "The Ideology of English Colonization: From Ireland to America," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 30 (1973): 575–98. John Locke elaborated on this theory, arguing that "labour, in the beginning, gave a right of property," so that a man possessed the land "he tilled and reaped, laid up and made use of." See John Locke, *Second Treatise on Civil Government* (1690; repr., Indianapolis, 1980), chap. 5, sections 38 and 45, <http://oregonstate.edu/instruct/phl302/texts/locke/locke2/locke2nd-a.html>. For examples of other early American squatters and tenants who rejected the ownership rights of proprietors, see Brendan McConville, *These Daring Disturbers of the Public Peace: The Struggle for Property and Power in Early New Jersey* (Ithaca, NY, 1999); Alan Taylor, *Liberty Men and Great Proprietors: The Revolutionary Settlement on the Maine Frontier, 1760–1820* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1990); and Thomas J. Humphrey, *Land and Liberty: Hudson Valley Riots in the Age of Revolution* (DeKalb, IL, 2004).

claims. In the preemption applications, witnesses assessed the quantity of cleared property on thirty-one separate squatters' claims. The amounts ranged widely, from one-quarter of an acre to forty acres. Thirteen applicants had cleared five acres or fewer, while five had cleared twenty acres or more, leading to an average farm of ten cleared acres and a median farm of seven cleared acres. In most cases, this acreage would not yet suffice to sustain a family, which typically required more than fifteen acres to eke out a living on farm goods alone. Working alone, a man struggled to clear even five acres a year, in addition to conducting other farm duties. However, squatters with independent means could hire men to clear additional acreage, as George Woods did. The largest amount of cleared land in the region belonged to Henry Dougherty, who possessed forty acres. He had the resources to employ both a farm hand and a tenant, which likely accounts for the scale of his improvements. However, Dougherty also had the advantage of being the earliest documented squatter in the region, having first identified a tract of land to improve in 1765. The other farms with twenty or more acres all began as improvements in 1773 or 1774. Each large enough to support a family, these tracts demonstrated the rewards that a diligent squatter could accrue over years of labor.<sup>12</sup>

Cutting logs for a house marked another initial act of improvement. Neighbors often joined in raising a house, as when William McMeen, Thomas Ferguson, and others helped to build a cabin for George Woods. The quality of these homes could range from simple huts to framed houses covered with nailed clapboards. In addition to their initial dwellings, a few squatters put up fences, more comfortable second homes, or significant outbuildings, such as stables. James McClure's home and fences required more than a thousand nails. Two miles from the Great Island, James Parr built a storehouse. Nearby, Eleanor Coldren's husband kept a tavern. Further east, William McElhatton built a house for distilling grain into alcohol. At the mouth of Pine Creek, the Reverend John Kinkead erected a schoolhouse.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Preemption Applications, esp. John Boak Deposition, Aug. 23, 1785 (George Woods Application); William Lucky Deposition, Sept. 23, 1785 (Henry Dougherty Application); and James Parr Deposition, Sept. 19, 1785 (Henry Dougherty Application). On clearing acreage and family acreage needs, see Moyer, *Wild Yankees*, 163–64.

<sup>13</sup> Preemption Applications, esp. James Brandon Deposition, Sept. 5, 1785 (Thomas Forster Application); Elizabeth McMeen Deposition, July 9, 1785 (George Woods Application); James Holiday Deposition, Apr. 15, 1785 (James McClure Application); Thomas Procter and William Antes Applications, May 26, 1785; and William Walker Deposition, June 3, 1785 (Andrew Kinkead Application). On Coldren's tavern, see Wolf, *Fair Play Settlers*, 40.

Cutting down trees or girdling them showed intent, but active farming was the clearest sign of improvement. Fifty-eight applications recorded that a squatter planted a cereal crop. Settlers also planted a variety of fruits and vegetables, including cabbage, onions, potatoes, salad greens, apples, and peaches. A few settlers found ways to bring livestock across the Susquehanna. Bratton Caldwell raised grain and stock on a plot of thirty acres, while Henry Dougherty employed William Lucky to drive his cattle. William Richardson cleared a meadow and planted three acres of timothy seed for grazing.<sup>14</sup>

The squatters' activities brought them into conflict with local Indians, many of whom lived side by side with settlers near the Great Island. In 1773 the spike in immigration caused the first interracial hostilities in the region. The causes of the antagonism remain murky, but most of the squatters chose to flee temporarily during the fall. In the midst of those troubles, Northumberland County sheriff William Cooke visited the north bank of the West Branch to warn men off of their illegal claims. He could find only six squatters, despite seeing forty separate improvements. Although most of the squatters sought a safe place to wait out the troubles, William Dunn informed Cooke that he had "taken a leas from the Indians and Pays Rent." This illegal but mutually beneficial agreement suggests that at least one of the squatters recognized Indian land rights and chose to pay a small fee rather than risk being driven off of his farm.<sup>15</sup>

Settlers quickly returned to the region once the threat of immediate violence ended. A year and a half later, when William Richardson staked claim to a tract near Lycoming Creek in March 1775, he found "no Improvement or Building on the said place . . . only some Old Clearing Grown Up whith Bushes and Briers." Local Indians conversed with him as a fellow neighbor, telling him the place "was Cleared by an Old poor Indian." As Richardson's description suggests, in the intervening period between 1773 and 1775 peaceful relations between the two communities had returned, even as increasing numbers of settlers came to the region. During the colonial period, Indians made no serious attempt to perma-

<sup>14</sup> Preemption Applications.

<sup>15</sup> William Cooke to James Tilghman, Dec. 11, 1773, in *Pennsylvania Archives*, 1st ser., 12:286–87. For an account of the first Treaty of Fort Stanwix from an Indian perspective, including squatters' tendency to ignore Indian sovereignty, see Daniel K. Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country: A Native History of Early America* (Cambridge, MA, 2001), esp. 211–21. On coexistence between squatters and Indians in the colonial mid-Atlantic, see David L. Preston, *The Texture of Contact: European and Indian Settler Communities on the Frontiers of Iroquoia, 1667–1783* (Lincoln, NE, 2009), esp. 116–46.

nently remove squatters from the West Branch Valley. As a result, despite their lack of concern for Indian land claims, Fair Play squatters did not engage in the indiscriminate Indian hating practiced by backcountry Pennsylvanians elsewhere, typified by the murders committed by the Paxton Boys.<sup>16</sup>

While interracial tension in the area developed fitfully, conflicts arose among the squatters. The dramatic increase in their population around 1773 led to the formation of the Fair Play tribunal. Although no written records from the Fair Play Men survive, subsequent court cases from the region and oral tradition suggest that they oversaw both local land distribution and matters of criminal justice. In order to receive land in the region, a squatter had to gain the approval of both his neighbors and the Fair Play tribunal. If a man left the region for more than six weeks, he forfeited his rights to his land, unless he joined the army, in which case his neighbors upheld his claim.<sup>17</sup>

The community as a whole enforced the decisions of the Fair Play Men. In one case, a settler named Robert Arthur built a cabin too close to William Paul's land, infringing upon his claim. After the Fair Play Men decided in favor of Paul, he appealed to the local militia to enforce the ruling. They pulled down Arthur's cabin and sent him and his family down the river in a makeshift raft. The local community also enacted penalties for criminal and moral matters. For example, the Fair Play Men sentenced Francis Clark to a lashing for stealing a dog from an Indian; the settlers drew lots to determine who would execute the punishment. Feeling pity for Clark, the aggrieved Indian asked the Fair Play Men to commute the sentence to banishment instead, which they allowed. On another occasion, the Fair Play tribunal ordered the squatters to ride the Reverend John Kinkead on a rail for abusing his family members. Kinkead's chastisement drew on an ancient European tradition of "rough music"—rituals in which communities publicly humiliated people who transgressed social norms. Given that the tribunal's rulings depended upon mass action for their enforcement, the Fair Play Men could not act

<sup>16</sup> James Richardson Deposition, June 25, 1785 (William Richardson Application), Preemption Applications. William Dunn apparently honored his lease with the Indians, even after the area became part of Pennsylvania. While he filed several preemption applications, none were for land that he had originally improved. On the Paxton Boys, see Peter Silver, *Our Savage Neighbors: How Indian War Transformed Early America* (New York, 2007), esp. 177–83; and Alden T. Vaughan, "Frontier Banditti and the Indians: The Paxton Boys' Legacy, 1763–1775," *Pennsylvania History* 51 (1984): 1–29.

<sup>17</sup> Wolf, *Fair Play Settlers*, 30–41.

arbitrarily. Instead, they had to appeal to a standard of justice that most of the squatters embraced. Enforcing Fair Play decisions cemented bonds of community between men and women who relied upon one another for survival.<sup>18</sup>

Despite their effectiveness at meting out justice, the Fair Play Men could not maintain a monopoly on violence within the squatter community; some settlers chose to settle their disputes without the tribunal's approval. In 1775, for example, James Richardson drove Alexander Irwin off of land five miles up Lycoming Creek that Irwin had held since the previous year. The most egregious episode of vigilantism occurred in connection with a property disputed between John Hughes and Henry Dougherty. In 1773, Hughes's brother James had settled the property but had died before he could make significant improvements. The Fair Play Men reassigned the land to Henry Dougherty, who placed a tenant named Timothy Donahough on his claim. In the spring of 1775, John Hughes and his brother Thomas organized twelve men to forcibly evict Donahough from the property. Eight neighbors soon came to Donahough's aid and forced the Hughes party to retreat.<sup>19</sup>

Although the community's most intractable disputes tended to center on the occupancy of land, squatters often entered into partnerships with one another or employed tenants or hired hands to work their property. David Dean entered into partnerships to improve two separate tracts, both of which he sold. Thomas Ferguson helped his neighbor Henry Dougherty improve his claim. James Carson left Samuel Phips on his

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 38–42. Clark's story first appeared in Meginness, *Otzinachson*, 171. Clark's banishment evidently stuck, because he appears as a neighbor in preemption applications but did not apply for his own land. On the common practice of community enforcement of arrests in early America ("*posse committatus*"), see Pauline Maier, "Popular Uprisings and Civil Authority in Eighteenth-Century America," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 27 (1970): 19. For a detailed discussion of rough music in early America, see William Pencak, Matthew Dennis, and Simon P. Newman, eds., *Riot and Revelry in Early America* (University Park, PA, 2002), 41–176. See also, Moyer, *Wild Yankees*, 136–37.

<sup>19</sup> Alexander Irwin later sold the plot Richardson stole from him, after Fair Play became depopulated because of Indian attacks during the Revolutionary War. See William McElhatton Deposition, June 11, 1785 (William Irwin Application); James Irwin Deposition, May 25, 1785 (William Irwin Application); James Chambers Deposition, June 22, 1785 (James Kyle Application); Thomas Ferguson Deposition, Sept. 9, 1785 (James Kyle Application); and James Kyle Application, n.d., Preemption Applications. For the Dougherty dispute, see *Lessee of John Hughes v. Henry Dougherty*, 1 Yeates 497; 1791 LEXIS 46. Vigilante justice also occurred in the region after the demise of the Fair Play system. In June 1790, three members of the Walker clan enlisted Samuel Doyle to help them kill two Indians whom they suspected of being involved with the scalping of their father. Doyle was later arrested and found innocent, while the Walkers disappeared. See Meginness, *History of Lycoming County*, 193–210.



property when he enlisted in the Continental army. Thomas Dill and the Antes family rented their claims to tenants. Similarly, in return for horses, a plow, and farming equipment, William McElhatton agreed to be Peter Dewitt's "cropper" for one to three years, during which time Dewitt received half of McElhatton's grain yield.<sup>20</sup>

Given the lack of land titles, these arrangements tended to confuse the question of who might claim these tracts. For example, in *Hughes v. Dougherty*, the 1791 court case that addressed the Hughes brothers' vigilante justice, the record states that Henry Dougherty first arrived in the region in the spring of 1775, held his land against an attack by Hughes, and eventually cleared ten acres of land. This conflicts with the depositions in the preemption applications, in which James Parr recounted first seeing Dougherty improve land between Lycoming and the Great Island in June 1765. Similarly, Sheriff William Cooke implausibly remembered warning Dougherty away from the region in 1772, a year before the Pennsylvania government ordered the sheriff to the area. William Lucky claimed that Dougherty lived in peaceful possession of his land from March 1775 until 1778, at which time he had forty acres. Charles Gillespie asserted that Dougherty was not in the neighborhood during Hughes's invasion, and John Dougherty claimed that Timothy Donahough "was keeping Possession" for Dougherty, a form of tenancy. Based on the evidence, either Dougherty claimed more than one Fair Play tract or claimed a tract large enough to sustain tenants, allowing him to be physically absent yet maintain control of his property. Like other Fair Play figures, Dougherty probably lived in Northumberland County and made regular trips to the Fair Play settlement. His absenteeism made him vulnerable to other squatters seeking to stake claims to his land.<sup>21</sup>

Between 1773 and 1778, the Fair Play government cemented strong bonds of community among squatters who had already united around

<sup>20</sup> William Walker and Henry Walker Deposition, Aug. 22, 1785 (William Morrison Application); Thomas Gallagher and Thomas Procter Application, n.d.; Thomas Ferguson Deposition, June 25, 1785 (Henry Dougherty Application); Lewis Lewis Deposition, May 11, 1785 (Thomas Dill Application); William McElhatton Deposition, n.d. (Thomas Procter Application); Robert Love Deposition, May 26, 1785 (John Chattam Application); Elinor Colden Deposition, June 21, 1785 (Thomas Procter Application), Preemption Applications.

<sup>21</sup> See John Dougherty Deposition, Sept. 17, 1785 (Henry Dougherty Application); Charles Gillespie Deposition, Sept. 28, 1785 (Henry Dougherty Application); James Parr Deposition, Sept. 19, 1785 (Henry Dougherty Application); William Lucky Deposition, Sept. 23, 1785 (Henry Dougherty Application); and William Cooke Deposition, Sept. 23, 1785 (Henry Dougherty Application), Preemption Applications.

their shared belief that labor created property. For the years 1775 and 1776, the names of five of the six Fair Play Men are known. That these were five different men suggests a term limit of one year, increasing the likelihood of any particular resident being chosen to serve. As was typical of all early American governments, the squatters likely elected the Fair Play Men from among the relatively wealthy in the community. Known Fair Play Men included Cookson Long, who occupied the former Indian town named Old Muncy and became a captain during the Revolutionary War; Bratton Caldwell, whose farm included two houses and was sizeable enough to produce surplus goods; and Henry Antes, a miller who lived across the river in Northumberland County. Despite establishing an extralegal enclave, the squatters were not radical levelers.<sup>22</sup>

While a modicum of social hierarchy prevailed in the Fair Play region, the neighboring sections of Pennsylvania came to be dominated by powerful elites. Just to the east of Lycoming Creek lay Muncy Township, where the Penns reserved an 1,802-acre proprietary manor in 1768. A number of squatters promptly took up these lands, and in May 1776, as the American Revolution gained momentum, the Penns thought it best to sell their lands rather than continue any attempts to rent them. The wealthy land speculator Samuel Wallis owned much of the rest of the township, acquiring 7,000 acres and building a substantial stone house along with an impressive farm in 1769. Wallis made a habit of conducting illegal surveys to further enlarge his claims. During the first half of 1773, Wallis ordered a survey for nearly 10,000 acres in the area west of Lycoming Creek, the core of the Fair Play territory. Later that year, the Penns successfully brought suit against Wallis for claiming land they had already reserved for themselves. In both cases, Wallis failed to convert his illegal surveys into land titles.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>22</sup> No record remains of the Fair Play electoral process. The names of the Fair Play Men were Henry Antes and Cookeson Long (1775) and Bratton Caldwell, John Walker, and James Brandon (1776). See Wolf, *Fair Play Settlers*, 32–34. Oral tradition and court records refer to Peter Rodey and Thomas Hughes as “Fair Play Men,” so they may have also been members of the tribunal. See Meginness, *Otzinachson*, 172, and *Hughes v. Dougherty*. For the hierarchical and deferential nature of early American politics and society, see Gordon Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (New York, 1991), esp. 11–92, 271–305. A typical farm needed at least twenty acres to produce a surplus. See Bettye Hobbs Pruitt, “Self-Sufficiency and the Agricultural Economy of Eighteenth-Century Massachusetts,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 41 (1984): 333–64.

<sup>23</sup> On the proprietary manor, see *Pennsylvania Archives*, 3rd ser., 27:90; David W. Maxey, “The Honorable Proprietaries v. Samuel Wallis: ‘A Matter of Great Consequence’ in the Province of Pennsylvania,” *Pennsylvania History* 70 (2003): 361–95. On land speculation in the region, see Meginness, *History of Lycoming County*, 66–80, 95–97, 193–210.

The Penns and Wallis represented the antithesis of squatter values. Rather than directly improving their lands, they used their capital and political connections to secure vast land claims, then allowed squatters or renters to produce the initial improvements that boosted the land's value. Early American land developers referred to these initial improvers as creating "hothouse settlements." After the price of their lands increased, the legal owner could sell to these small farmers or go through the more troublesome process of evicting them.<sup>24</sup>

### *Fair Play's Revolution*

Having greatly expanded its borders in 1768, Pennsylvania soon found it impossible to control the frontier. As part of its colonial charter, Virginia claimed the region near Pittsburgh around the forks of the Ohio. Settlers from Virginia flocked to the region, which they administered as the District of West Augusta. Based on its royal charter, Connecticut claimed the northern third of what is now Pennsylvania, above the forty-first parallel. Without explicitly invading Pennsylvania, Connecticut supported the activities of the Susquehanna and Delaware Companies, which claimed a large part of the upper Susquehanna and Delaware Valleys. In the Wyoming Valley along the North Branch of the Susquehanna River, New Englanders violently drove out men with Pennsylvanian land titles and established a community of three thousand settlers by 1776. In both West Augusta and Wyoming, the "invading" colonists offered attractive land prices to would-be settlers, appealing to men willing to fight for their land. With its more staid approach to land development, Pennsylvania had little access to the manpower it would take to expel the invaders.<sup>25</sup>

The incursion from New England demanded the Penns' attention and caused them to consider the small-scale Fair Play community as little more than a nuisance. New Englanders first surveyed tracts around

<sup>24</sup> Often, speculators went to considerable expense to foster the hothouse settlements by building gristmills, sawmills, or other needed infrastructure. For an explanation of hothouse settlements, see Thomas M. Doerflinger, *A Vigorous Spirit of Enterprise: Merchants and Economic Development in Revolutionary Philadelphia* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1986), 317–18.

<sup>25</sup> On the colonial Pennsylvanian government's inability to mobilize on behalf of its frontier inhabitants, see Patrick Kehoe Spero, "Creating Pennsylvania: The Politics of the Frontier and the State, 1682–1800" (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2009), esp. 287–339. For Wyoming's population figures, see Moyer, *Wild Yankees*, 40.

Muncy, east of Lycoming Creek, in 1771. On June 6, 1773, an alarmed Robert Moodie reported that sixty or seventy men from the Wyoming Valley intended to march on the region and build a fort. The next day, the Northumberland County justice William Plunkett organized a party to intercept them. He feared that they would enter the Fair Play settlement and rally the squatters to their cause. If the Yankees made it past Lycoming Creek, Plunkett could not “conjecture what will follow, as of the majority of the People there I have a mean opinion.” On June 11, he led a hundred well-armed men to the north bank of the West Branch. The group tracked down the New Englanders and “with great firmness rushed up to the very muzzles of their Guns.” No exchange of gunfire ensued, because the Pennsylvanians’ boldness caused a panic among the more numerous but poorly armed New Englanders, who either fled pell-mell or surrendered. That December, a petition to the Pennsylvania Provincial Council from Northumberland County expressed the fear that more invaders would follow and warned that Pennsylvanians had barely succeeded in turning back the “large Body of Armed Men from Connecticut . . . at Great Danger of Bloodshed.”<sup>26</sup>

Given the armed confrontation in Muncy, the Fair Play squatters weakened Pennsylvania’s already tenuous hold on its central frontier but did not pose the same existential threat as New Englanders. While the squatters could not cause much mischief, the Yankees could muster hundreds of armed men in defense of their property claims. Thus, the New Englanders’ incursion threatened to embroil Pennsylvanians in an Indian war and permanently deprive the Penns of land revenues. Consequently, although the Penns knew about the widespread squatting by the Fair Play community, they did little to stop it. In September 1773, John Penn issued a proclamation forbidding settlements and surveys in the Fair Play region and threatening offenders with a year’s imprisonment and a substantial fine of £500. Later that fall, Secretary James Tilghman of the Pennsylvania Land Office sent William Cooke to warn the Fair Play set-

<sup>26</sup> *Minutes of the Provincial Council of Pennsylvania, from the Organization to the Termination of the Proprietary Government*, in *Colonial Records of Pennsylvania*, ed. Samuel Hazard (Harrisburg, PA, 1838–53), 10:86–87, 111–12., Robert J. Taylor, ed., *The Susquehanna Company Papers*, vol. 5 (Ithaca, NY, 1968), 148–49. Meginness, *Otzinachson*, 138–47. The leader of the Wyoming force in Muncy was named John Dougherty Jr. A John Dougherty appears as a deponent in the preemption applications, but no other evidence suggests that any men associated with the Susquehanna Company ever reached the Fair Play settlement. In October 1775, Plunkett evicted the New Englanders from the West Branch Valley at the head of a militia.

tlers to leave the area. Despite increases in the number of illegal squatters, the Penns' correspondence with their officers over the following year reflected growing concerns about settlers from Connecticut and Virginia and the lingering border problem with Maryland but made no mention of the squatters on the West Branch of the Susquehanna.<sup>27</sup>

Nevertheless, official warnings issued in 1773 made it clear that the squatters had little hope of securing permanent titles in a timely manner while the Penns continued to control the province. The American Revolution, therefore, offered the squatters a unique opportunity. By aligning themselves on the side of the patriots, the Fair Play settlers could reasonably expect to secure land titles if the revolution succeeded. As the imperial crisis developed, the squatters became politically active, and their community soon passed under the jurisdiction of the Northumberland County Committee of Safety. Men from the Fair Play community enlisted as early as June 1775 to fight against the British in Massachusetts. Squatters such as Cookson Long and Simon Cool served as military officers alongside local Northumberland County notables such as William Plunkett and William Cooke. Revolutionary enthusiasm remained strong throughout the next year; local tradition holds that the Fair Play settlers declared their independence from Britain prior to an official declaration of independence by the Continental Congress. New settlers continued to cross to the north side of the West Branch and take up lands until 1778, and locals still elected Fair Play Men up to that time. Ultimately, however, regardless of how long the tribunals continued to function, the squatter republic could not last long once most of its inhabitants cast their lot with revolutionary Pennsylvania in 1775.<sup>28</sup>

The war devastated the West Branch Valley. In 1776, the Indians living on the Great Island burned their fields and abandoned the area, allowing them the freedom to raid the area at will without fear of local

<sup>27</sup>*Colonial Records*, 10:94–96; William Cooke to James Tilghman, Dec. 11, 1773, in *Pennsylvania Archives*, 1st ser., 12:286–87. On the Penns' correspondence, see Penn Family Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, esp. NV-035 and NV-220 (microfilm XR 170 and XR 464.3), ser. 1, Correspondence.

<sup>28</sup>Meginness, *Otzinachson*, 176–79. On the local declaration of independence and early military service in the Revolution, see Helen Herritt Russell, "Signers of the Pine Creek Declaration of Independence," in *Northumberland County Historical Society Proceedings and Addresses*, vol. 22 (Lewisburg, PA, 1958), 8. No written record remains of a local declaration. However, many communities drafted local declarations of independence before the United States officially declared independence. See Pauline Maier, *American Scripture: Making the Declaration of Independence* (New York, 1997), 217–34.

reprisals. Settlers built a handful of forts along the river to which they could relocate in the event of Indian attacks, and many Fair Play squatters joined revolutionary military units. Because military service disrupted the economy by depriving developing farms of labor, enlistments contributed to a food crisis during the winter of 1777, causing the Northumberland County Committee of Safety to ban further grain purchases by distillers in the valley. To maintain their farms, the enlisted needed to find others willing to take temporary possession of their claims. When men such as Henry Thomas found no takers, their farms fell into disrepair. Meanwhile, raiding soon made farming untenable even for the most steadfast squatters. By June 1778, Indians had killed or captured nearly a fifth of the soldiers in Horn's Fort, at the mouth of Pine Creek. Facing annihilation, settlers across the West Branch Valley abandoned the forts and took flight in a mass exodus known as the "Big Runaway." Many escaped to Fort Augusta, near the town of Northumberland at the forks of the Susquehanna River. In autumn 1778, a slow trickle of settlers began reentering the region, but further attacks continued until 1781 or 1782, slowing the pace of resettlement.<sup>29</sup>

By 1781, Fair Play squatters feared for the legal status of their land claims, because speculators such as Samuel Wallis had designs on the region. Citing the sacrifices they had endured on behalf of the patriot cause, many of the residents of Northumberland County petitioned Pennsylvania's Supreme Executive Council for relief in August 1781 and March 1784. Appealing to the council's sense of justice, they asked it to put a stop to "the evil Tendancy of Engrossing lands" that had originally forced the Fair Play settlers to squat in Indian territory. Furthermore, the squatters maintained that their presence in the West Branch had prevented Connecticut Yankees from claiming that region for the

<sup>29</sup> On the war in the West Branch Valley, see Peter C. Mancall, *Valley of Opportunity: Economic Culture along the Upper Susquehanna, 1700–1800* (Ithaca, NY, 1991), 130–59; Meginness, *Otzinachson*, 184–296; Russell, "Pine Creek Declaration," 9–11. For wartime arrangements to manage property, see Robert Carruthers and Thomas Nichols Deposition, Sept. 16, 1785; Henry Antes Deposition, July 23, 1785, Preemption Applications. On local and national food insecurity during the war, see Meginness, *Otznachison*, 182–83; Barbara Clark Smith, "Food Rioters and the American Revolution," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 51 (1994): 3–38. Thirty-seven preemption applications indicated a date when squatters abandoned their claims. Only six fled in 1777, while thirty-one, approximately five-sixths, left the area in 1778. Two mention men taken prisoner by Indians: Thomas Bridgens and Andrew Armstrong. Thomas Ferguson Deposition, June 12, 1785 (James Hepburn Application); William Shaw Deposition, Sept. 23, 1785 (Henry Dougherty Application), Preemption Applications.

Susquehanna Company, thus strengthening Pennsylvania's control of the region.<sup>30</sup>

The new republican government saw the merits of the squatters' arguments. In 1784, in the second treaty with the Haudenosaunee at Fort Stanwix, the state purchased another huge swath of land, which included the Fair Play region. Following this, the state passed a law allowing Fair Play inhabitants who had taken Indian lands prior to 1780 to purchase up to three hundred acres of their claims, at the standard price of thirty pounds per hundred acres. The legislature placed no geographic limit on the location of the Indian land. However, it did pass a law recognizing Pine Creek—and not Lycoming Creek—as the boundary of the 1768 purchase, retrospectively validating the squatters' belief in Pennsylvania's claim to the region east of Pine Creek. For some of the squatters, the gamble to fight on behalf of the revolutionaries had paid off, as they now secured legal rights to the lands they had improved. For those squatters who had no means to raise the requisite money for a legal title to their lands, the time had come to sell their improvements and find another frontier further west.<sup>31</sup>

### *The Law Takes Its Place*

In theory, the preemption laws secured squatters' rights to the land they had originally improved. However, not all squatters retained possession of their tracts. In 62 of the 132 preemption applications, the applicant's surname was different from that of the squatter who had first

<sup>30</sup> For the petitions, see *Pennsylvania Archives*, 2nd ser., 3:451–52; Russell, "Pine Creek Declaration," 11–13. Thirty-nine inhabitants from Fair Play requested help from the government in 1781. Of these, twenty-eight of the signatories supplied preemption applications or depositions, while only two had surnames that do not appear in the records. In 1784, forty-nine known inhabitants petitioned the government (two others signed without legible surnames). Of these, thirty of the signatories supplied preemption applications or depositions, while nine had surnames that do not appear in the records. These numbers suggest that the Fair Play community was somewhat more numerous than the preemption applications indicate.

<sup>31</sup> Act of Dec. 21, 1784, in Smith, *Laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania*, 2:194–202. It is difficult to determine whether £30 per hundred acres represented a fair market value for the squatters' lands. Land prices in Pennsylvania varied widely throughout the 1780s and 1790s, as a speculative bubble in land inflated and popped over those decades. By 1792, due to a lack of land sales, Pennsylvania's government lowered land prices for vacant land to £5 (\$13.33) per hundred acres. See Munger, *Pennsylvania Land Records*, 140. By 1798, land values in the Wyoming Valley averaged around \$2.00 per acre, nearly three times as expensive as the price offered by the Pennsylvania government to the squatters. See Moyer, *Wild Yankees*, 164, 180. It is likely that £30 per hundred acres represented a cheap price for land, but, nevertheless, one which many squatters could not afford.

improved the land. On occasion, tracts had changed hands as many as four times before being purchased from the Pennsylvania Land Office in 1785. Even before the war drove all settlers out of the West Branch Valley, many squatters had abandoned their tracts or sold their improvements to other squatters before trying to make a living elsewhere. Some men, such as Alexander Donaldson and Christian Heddick, appeared to be serial improvers, claiming and selling multiple tracts over a number of years. Most of these sales have no date associated with them, but many took place in 1784 and 1785. Squatters who held onto their tracts for so long had likely held out hope that the government would grant them outright ownership over their land. When they realized that they could not afford the £90 cost of their own claims, they sold their rights to the improvements on their land for whatever price they could and moved elsewhere.<sup>32</sup>

For the squatters who sold their improvements or who felt they had no choice but to sell, prices varied widely. In 1775, Joseph Haines decided to emigrate to New Jersey and demanded £30 for his claim. Unable to interest purchasers at that price, his nephew sold the claim to the newcomer William King for £9. After raising a cabin with Haines's logs, King faced a party of locals raised by William Paul, who also desired the land. When they threatened King, he sold his right to Paul for £13. Within a few years, prices for farmland had increased dramatically, reflecting the impact of currency inflation during the course of the Revolutionary War more than the intrinsic value of the land. In September 1778, Christian Heddick sold a tract of 500 acres to George Reinecker for £510 in Pennsylvanian money. Similarly, on June 9, 1779, Agnes Fleming and her father, Robert Brightfield, sold a tract of 150 acres to Reinecker for £150. Reinecker later used this deed to claim 300 acres of preempted land. In the same year, Abraham Dewitt sold a large tract of unspecified size to David McKinney for £800. Dewitt's tenant, William McElhatton, simultaneously sold the land to William Dunn at a fraction of the price. When Dewitt confronted McElhatton, McElhatton replied that he "knew he had no write, but if Dunn was a fool to give him forty or fifty pounds, he thought he would be a fool to refuse it." The inflated prices of the war years returned to earth by 1785, when Pennsylvania opened its land office,

<sup>32</sup> Preemption Applications, esp. Henry Antes Deposition, Sept. 14, 1785 (Thomas Foster Application); Morgan Sweeney Deposition, Sept. 2, 1785 (Benjamin Walker Application); Thomas Forster Application, n.d.; Deed, Christian Heddick to George Reinecker, Sept. 12, 1778; Zachariah Sutton Deposition, Apr. 19, 1785 (Nicholas Miller Application).



and its offer of preemption forced many squatters to sell their claims. On April 29, 1785, for example, Zachariah Sutton sold a 300-acre tract with 3 cleared acres to Ludwig Holzworth for £35, approximately one-tenth the price of a similar tract during the war.<sup>33</sup>

While some squatters sold to men who intended to farm the land themselves, others sold to nonresident speculators such as George Reinecker. Sheriff Thomas Procter bought eight tracts, either personally, in partnership, or through his agent John Reed. The Northumberland County justice of the peace Robert Martin bought two squatter tracts. Like several other justices who recorded depositions for the preemption applications, he had sufficient contact with the Fair Play community to act as a witness for a preemption application. In other instances, squatters sold part of their three hundred-acre tracts to speculators, using the proceeds to buy the rest of their claims. On occasion, successful squatters bought out their neighbors. The illiterate squatter William Dunn filed applications for four separate tracts, at least two of which he had bought during the 1770s.<sup>34</sup>

As a result of these sales, many squatters failed to find permanent homes in the Fair Play region. Immediately after the Revolution, the area became part of Bald Eagle Township, and in 1786, following a series of petitions, the region split into several new townships. Lycoming Township contained the formerly disputed land between Lycoming and Pine Creeks on the north bank of the West Branch. To the west, the Fair Play land beyond the disputed territory became Pine Creek Township. Nippenose Township contained the land directly across the river from Lycoming Township, while Lower Bald Eagle Township covered the area across from Pine Creek Township. Of the nineteen squatters known to

<sup>33</sup> Prices for various commodities fluctuated widely during this time. By late 1778, gold and silver exchanged at a five-to-one ratio with paper money in Philadelphia. See Anne Bezanson, *Prices and Inflation during the American Revolution: Pennsylvania, 1770–1790* (Philadelphia, 1951), 39. For William King, see John Blair Linn, "Indian Land and Its Fair-Play Settlers, 1773–1785," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 7 (1883): 422–23. Preemption Applications, esp. Deed, Christian Heddick to George Reinecker, Sept. 12, 1778; Deed, Agnes Fleming and Robert Brightfield to George Reinecker, June 9, 1779; George Reinecker Application, June 14, 1785; Elinor Colden Deposition, June 21, 1785 (Thomas Procter Application); and Richard Mattox Deposition, Apr. 25, 1785 (Zachariah Sutton Application). Few deeds from sales remain in the preemption application records. Those that do were documents signed by the involved parties, which were not notarized.

<sup>34</sup> George Reinecker Applications, June 14, 1785, and n.d.; Thomas Procter Applications, May 12, 1785, May 21, 1785, May 26, 1785, Aug. 17, 1785, Sept. 10, 1785, and n.d.; Robert Martin Applications, May 4, 1785, and May 11, 1785; William Dunn Applications, May 2, 1785, and Aug. 9, 1785, Preemption Applications.

have sold their tracts after the Big Runaway, only five appeared in the 1790 Northumberland County census. The 1800 census records for Pine Creek Township listed one additional squatter, Robert Wilson. Of the seventy-five squatters who filed preemption applications for the tracts they originally improved, only thirteen appeared in Lycoming Township or Pine Creek Township in the 1800 census.<sup>35</sup>

Pennsylvania's decision to allow the Fair Play squatters to purchase up to three hundred acres of their own lands allowed the landholding patterns in the region to remain distinct during the 1780s and 1790s. Indeed, Lycoming and Pine Creek Townships stand out among their neighbors for the low numbers of landholders owning more than three hundred acres. In Lycoming Township in 1786, only 6 out of 108 heads of families owned over three hundred acres; in Pine Creek Township in 1787, only 7 out of 86 householders did. Of those 7 men, 5 were not residents in the district. Across the river in Nippenose and Lower Bald Eagle Townships, 40 percent and 24 percent of householders held more than three hundred acres, respectively. Clearly, the state's preemption policies had prevented wealthy settlers from monopolizing the lands of the Fair Play district.<sup>36</sup>

At the same time, the state's land policies did not prevent tenancy from developing in the region. Among Pine Creek Township's residents in 1787, 51 percent of the heads of household held no land. In Lycoming Township in 1786, the figure was 39 percent. Similar numbers of tenants occupied the lands that had faced the Fair Play community along the south bank of the river. In Lower Bald Eagle Township, 44 percent of resident householders were landless. In the 1787 tax assessment for Muncy Township, across Lycoming Creek from the Fair Play region, 65 percent of householders held no land. A few years later, in 1794, an English diarist named William Davy visited the lord of Muncy, Samuel Wallis, who headed a household of thirty-five, including twenty indentured servants. Davy mentioned that Wallis had tolerated more than a hundred squatters on his lands because their improvements increased his lands'

<sup>35</sup> On the division of township lines, see John F. Meginness, *Lycoming County: Its Organization and Condensed History for One Hundred Years* (Williamsport, PA, 1895), 40–41, 45–48. For a list of petitioners to split the townships, see Helen H. Russell and Carol F. Baker, *The Tiadaghton Tale: A History of the Area and Its People* (Williamsport, PA, 1975), 9–10. Preemption Applications; 1790 Federal Census, Northumberland County, Pennsylvania; 1800 Federal Census, Lycoming County, Pennsylvania, online at Ancestry.com.

<sup>36</sup> For Pennsylvania tax assessments, see *Pennsylvania Archives*, 3rd ser., 19:435–37, 468–71, 484–86, 519–21, 533–35, 557, 560–62, 618–27, 709–11, 713–18, 781–85, 787–801.

<b>Lycoming Township (1786)</b>	<b>Pine Creek Township (1787)</b>	<b>Nippenose Township (1787)</b>	<b>Lower Bald Eagle Township (1787)</b>
6%	8%	40%	24%

Percentage of householders owning more than three hundred acres. Source: *Pennsylvania Archives*, 3rd ser., vol. 19.

<b>Lycoming Township (1786)</b>	<b>Pine Creek Township (1787)</b>	<b>Nippenose Township (1787)</b>	<b>Lower Bald Eagle Township (1787)</b>	<b>Muncy Township (1787)</b>
39%	51%	21%	44%	65%

Percentage of landless householders. Source: *Pennsylvania Archives*, 3rd ser., vol. 19.

value. Many had become his tenants or purchased the lands outright. Nippenose Township also had lain within colonial Pennsylvania. There, only 21 percent of the population owned no land. In stark contrast to the situation before the Revolution, the former Fair Play region no longer stood out from its neighbors as a region where virtually every householder owned land. In this respect, Fair Play came to resemble the early American republic's other frontier regions. By the turn of the century, tenancy rates in Kentucky counties ranged between 30 and 80 percent. Similarly, fewer than half of the adult men in Ohio owned land in 1810.<sup>37</sup>

The 1784 purchase legitimized Fair Play settlers' land claims but also opened the region to economic competition. Like the long-established Muncy Township, the Fair Play region developed a highly stratified society with a permanently land-poor class. The percentage of Pine Creek households owning fewer than fifty acres increased between 1787 and 1799, from 41 to 48 percent. The 1799 tax report from Pine Creek showed that 35 percent of the householders held no land, and an addi-

<sup>37</sup> On Davy, see Norman B. Wilkinson, ed., "Mr. Davy's Diary 1794 Part II," *Pennsylvania History* 20 (1953): 261–63. On tenancy in Kentucky, see Thomas J. Huphrey, "Conflicting Independence: Land Tenancy and the American Revolution," *Journal of the Early Republic* 28 (2008): 180–81. On Ohio, see R. Douglas Hurt, *The Ohio Frontier: Crucible of the Old Northwest, 1720–1830* (Bloomington, IN, 1996), 175. For an extensive treatment of tenancy in the Hudson Valley, see Humphrey, *Land and Liberty*. For a description of a long-settled region of the country with a large landless population, see Steven Sarson, "Yeoman Farmers in a Planters' Republic: Socioeconomic Conditions and Relations in Early National Prince George's County, Maryland," *Journal of the Early Republic* 29 (2009): 63–99.

tional 13 percent held fewer than fifty acres. These dwindling holdings stood in stark contrast to the land holding patterns during the era of the squatter republic, when men spaced their claims far apart from one another so as to claim hundreds of acres each.<sup>38</sup>

During the 1790s, many blacks entered the former Fair Play community, transforming the racial composition of the region. In 1790, Northumberland County had a population of 17,158, including 87 slaves. In addition to whites and slaves, the 1790 census recorded the numbers of “other free persons,” 89 of whom lived in the county. Identified in the local census as “Free Negroes,” rather than by name, only 3 people in the “other free persons” category lived in their own household. Because most of these 89 people lived in white households, it is likely that they labored as servants or tenants. Taken together, nonwhites amounted to 1 percent of the population, slightly less than the 2 percent average across the state of Pennsylvania, which had a population of 434,373, including 3,737 slaves and 6,537 other free persons. Although the number of slaves in the Fair Play region dropped slightly by 1800, significant numbers of black servants and tenants arrived, increasing the percentage of blacks living in the area. In 1795, Northumberland County split into two, and Lycoming County came to encompass the Fair Play region. In the 1800 census, Lycoming County held a total population of 5,408. Of these, 259 were free people of color and 39 were slaves. Only 4 of the 298 appeared in the records under their own names. Out of 711 total residents, Pine Creek Township housed 24 free blacks and 5 slaves, who together represented 4 percent of the population. More than 10 percent of Lycoming Township’s population was black, including 66 free people and 5 slaves, out of a total of 656 inhabitants. In the state as a whole, only 3 percent were black, including 1,706 slaves and 14,564 free people of color, in a total population that had grown to over 600,000.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Russell and Baker have also compiled lists of taxables from the region. *Tiadaghton Tale*, 14–27. Although I relied on their numbers for the 1799 tax report, where possible I used the *Pennsylvania Archives* records. For comparable statistics in western Pennsylvania, see R. Eugene Harper, *The Transformation of Western Pennsylvania, 1770–1800* (Pittsburgh, 1991), 3–80. For the best description of the economic climate of this region after the American Revolution, see Mancall, *Valley of Opportunity*, 160–216.

<sup>39</sup> 1790 and 1800 Federal Census. My numbers are based on the original records of the local census. For the year 1800, these numbers are slightly different than the numbers that appear in the census abstracts, which are available online at <http://www.census.gov/prod/www/abs/decennial/>. For a comparison with slavery rates in western Pennsylvania at this time, see Christopher M. Osborne, “Invisible Hands: Slaves, Bound Laborers, and the Development of Western Pennsylvania, 1780–1820,” *Pennsylvania History* 72 (2005): 77–99.

As a consequence of retaining their lands, many of the squatters who persisted in Fair Play achieved a high social status out of line with their original station. Out of the thirteen squatters who applied for preemption applications and remained on the tax rolls in Pine Creek or Lycoming Townships in 1800, three owned slaves and four employed black servants. John Hughes of Lycoming Township both owned a slave and employed three servants. By becoming wealthy enough to command dependent labor, these former squatters had clearly capitalized on the economic promise they had seen in the region more than two decades earlier.<sup>40</sup>

### *The Legacy of Fair Play*

In 1774, Peter Rodey took up lands on Pine Run, at the heart of the Fair Play territory. During the war, Rodey served as a private in Cookson Long's company. On August 22, 1781, he signed a petition asking for a preemptive right to his land along with thirty-eight of his fellow squatters. He held onto his land after the Revolution and appeared in the 1790 census, which recorded him as the head of a family of two adult men, two boys, six women, and one slave. He could fairly call himself a success, yet when the local historian John Meginness collected anecdotes about Fair Play generations later, the West Branch Valley's inhabitants still remembered Rodey as a squatter who resented the Pennsylvania justice system.<sup>41</sup>

After the first Treaty of Fort Stanwix, a handful of individuals decided to illegally occupy the Indian territory north of the West Branch in order to make better lives for themselves and their families. By 1773, enough had arrived that they formed a community based on shared val-

<sup>40</sup> 1800 Federal Census. Squatters may have owned slaves or black servants during the squatter republic as well. It is unclear how many blacks lived among the Fair Play settlers during the 1770s, but at least one elderly black woman witnessed the local declaration of independence at Pine Creek on July 4, 1776. On blacks in Fair Play, see Wolf, *Fair Play Settlers*, 44, 64. Russell and Baker surmise that thirty free blacks lived in the Fair Play region at the time of the first census of Northumberland County. *Tiadaghton Tale*, 9–10.

<sup>41</sup> Pine Run flows into the Susquehanna River near Larry's Creek, between Pine Creek and Lycoming Creek. Daniel Bradley Deposition, Apr. 23, 1785 (Peter Rodey Application), Preemption Applications. Rodey's application is spelled "Roddy." Helen Herritt Russell, "The Documented Story of the Fair Play Men and Their Government," in *Northumberland County Historical Society Proceedings and Addresses*, 22:16–17. The marginalia in a copy of this book donated by Russell to Shippensburg University indicates that Rodey lived until October 11, 1794, leaving behind his widow Catherine, three sons, and six daughters. The signature on the 1781 petition read either "Peter Godey" or "Peter Hadey." See Russell, "Pine Creek Declaration," 11–12; *Pennsylvania Archives*, 2nd ser., Vol. 3:452.

ues. When squatters rose up to oust a man from a tract he did not deserve, or drew lots to whip a man who stole from an Indian, or publicly humiliated a man who abused his family, they did so because they united around unwritten rules of justice. Lacking access to capital or political connections, the squatters believed that improvement created legitimate private property, and they sold improvements to one another frequently, expecting their neighbors to acknowledge their ownership despite the lack of court-recognized titles. Squatter justice did not enforce equality; each man grabbed as much land as he could without threatening a neighbor's claim. But the squatters valued and protected opportunity. While the population of squatters remained small, the Fair Play system worked, but every Fair Play immigrant knew he would eventually have to buy his own land from a legitimate government or sell his improvements and find the next western frontier.<sup>42</sup>

Desiring permanent land titles, the squatters of the West Branch Valley embraced the American Revolution. In return, the republican government allowed them preemptive rights to their own lands, preventing wealthy speculators from ignoring their claims. Men and women from every creek bottom in Fair Play sought out justices of the peace to record their depositions on behalf of one another, and their testimony provided evidence of a community that united neighbors across twenty-five miles of the river valley. Instead of guaranteeing access to land for each squatter, however, the Revolution flooded the region with new immigrants, granted lands to some squatters who could afford to buy them, and forced others to move west. By the late 1790s, the only vestige of squatter society that remained was the small number of landholders who owned estates larger than three hundred acres. A hierarchical social order based on access to capital entrenched itself, and opportunities disappeared for men without land titles. Nearly half of all the postrevolutionary inhabitants in the former Fair Play region owned little or no land, and the wealthiest residents came to employ significant numbers of servants, increasing the gap between haves and have-nots in the region. Speculators with paper titles inherited many of the farm plots where squatters had

<sup>42</sup>The Fair Play squatters did not reject hierarchy but valued men for their ability to create wealth through their own labor. Similarly, when describing another illegal movement in the colonial backcountry, James Whittenburg argued that North Carolina's Regulators did not desire to level society, but instead wanted a society dominated by planters rather than merchants and lawyers. James P. Whittenburg, "Planters, Merchants, and Lawyers: Social Change and the Origins of the North Carolina Regulation," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 34 (1977): 215–38.

painstakingly labored. Swift justice yielded to the court system, which handled fifty-nine cases involving former members of the Fair Play community between 1784 and 1801. Some cases, such as the complicated *Hughes v. Dougherty*, took as many as five years to wend their way through the courts. During the 1790s, these changes caused men such as Peter Rodey to yearn with nostalgia for the spartan simplicity that had characterized life in the Fair Play community.<sup>43</sup>

Those squatters who stayed and flourished, as Peter Rodey did, expanded their land holdings and acquired dependent laborers. Those who stayed and floundered chose not to organize resistance against their betters. The vast majority of the squatters left the area in the decades after the Revolution, likely joining a growing tide of men and women who made careers out of illegally occupying and improving lands, selling their improvements, then moving on to the next frontier. Perhaps some became “extensive travelers” who lived for a time “in three or four states, and several places in each state” according to the settler John Woods, who wrote about his itinerant neighbors in southern Illinois in 1820. It is unlikely that the squatters forced to seek out these western frontiers saw the rise of economic competition, slavery, and social stratification as positive developments for the Fair Play community.<sup>44</sup>

Originally, the squatters had not sought a revolution. Instead, they formed a government to safeguard the property they claimed through their labor. Life in the squatter republic was harsh, but the Fair Play tribunal had protected its citizens. By 1800, that community based on a shared vision of justice had dissolved, while some of the original squatters had secured their claims and made good by becoming comparatively wealthy. In stark contrast to the justice without appeal that the Fair Play Men and their community enforcers had dispensed, a legal system of Byzantine complexity dragged out land disputes for years. The changed

<sup>43</sup> Richard Maxwell Brown argued that agrarian homestead movements similar to Fair Play, including the Paxton Boys, the Whiskey Rebellion, the Fries Rebellion, and other violent episodes across the country, often appeared to lose in their immediate aims but limited the amount of speculation that took place in the West after the Revolution. See Richard Maxwell Brown, “Back Country Rebellions and the Homestead Ethic in America, 1740–1799,” in *Tradition, Conflict and Modernization: Perspectives on the American Revolution*, ed. Richard Maxwell Brown and Don E. Fehrenbacher (New York, 1977), 73–99. On postrevolutionary court cases, see Wolf, *Fair Play Settlers*, 30–41.

<sup>44</sup> For an example of a violent movement that resisted proprietary control after the Revolution, see Taylor, *Liberty Men and Great Proprietors*. John Woods quoted in John Mack Faragher, *Sugar Creek: Life on the Illinois Prairie* (New Haven, CT, 1986), 50.

reality of the postrevolutionary West Branch Valley gave rise to Rodey's quip, "Since your Honor's coorts have come among us, *fair play* has entirely ceased, and law has taken its place."

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MARCUS GALLO



## NOTES AND DOCUMENTS

### *A Cunning Man's Legacy: The Papers of Samuel Wallis (1736–1798)*

Saml Wallis Dead of the Fever so that his Land Fever is Cured. You and I shall never meet him, even after Death. Of course we can never have any other satisfaction for the injuries he has done, or meditated to do us, than what Fate has administered.

—Robert Morris to John Nicholson, Oct. 17, 1798<sup>1</sup>

ONE SEARCHES FOR AN ADEQUATE identification of Samuel Wallis: birthright Quaker, aspiring merchant, bankrupt, debt collector, agent, partner, surveyor, pioneer settler on the Pennsylvania frontier, land speculator, unyielding combatant, spy, conspirator, lay judge. All of these labels are at least partially accurate, but none of them completely captures a complicated and elusive figure whose contemporaries found him a puzzling personality, even as they repeatedly turned to him for help. Robert Morris, lodged in debtors' prison at the time of Wallis's death in 1798, condemned him for malice and duplicity, as also, in more guarded terms, did John Battin, Wallis's upstate Pennsylvania neighbor and fellow Quaker, who had written to Wallis two years earlier, during a controversy pending between them about title to land: "I acknowledge thou art a very Cunning man, but I believe thee will find thee has been too Cunning for thy Self in these matters."<sup>2</sup>

Yet perhaps there is one word comprehensive enough, in both its eighteenth-century meaning and more modern usage, to do this man justice of a kind. Wallis was an adventurer, a synonym, *avant la lettre*, for an

For their hospitality and assistance, both generously provided, the author owes a special debt of gratitude to his friends in Muncy: Malcolm Barlow, Sheila O'Brien, and Linda and Bill Poulton.

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Norman B. Wilkinson in his published doctoral thesis, *Land Policy and Speculation in Pennsylvania, 1779–1800: A Test of the New Democracy* (New York, 1979), 248. Wilkinson misplaced the letter in the collections at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania; it is properly located in vol. 3, p. 16, George M. Conarroe Autograph Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

<sup>2</sup> John Battin to Samuel Wallis, Apr. 22, 1796, reel 5, Wallis Papers (microfilm), Historical Society of Pennsylvania. The original letter is now in the collections of the Muncy Historical Society, Muncy, PA.

entrepreneur—someone who engaged, cunningly, to be sure, in risky enterprises for personal profit. As adventurer, he was handicapped by neither scrupulousness nor loyalty to any cause other than his own self-interest. The wonder is that through four decades of devious activity he was able to maintain his membership in the Society of Friends and to count among his consistent patrons a Quaker paragon such as Henry Drinker.

Samuel Wallis was born to Quaker parents in 1736 in what was then Baltimore County, Maryland, but today is Harford County. His parents and grandparents had first settled to the south in Calvert County on the western shore of Chesapeake Bay, near Port Frederick; a record of these Wallis forebears may be traced in the minutes of the Clifts Monthly Meeting and the Spring and West River Monthly Meetings. Shortly before Samuel's birth, his father decided to relocate northward, closer to the then contested boundary between the provinces of Maryland and Pennsylvania, thus enrolling the Wallis family in the Deer Creek Preparative Meeting on the western side of the Susquehanna River and the Nottingham Monthly Meeting in Cecil County on the eastern side. A few facts about the Wallis family may be gleaned from these meeting records during the period of Samuel's youth, including evidence that the Wallises possessed an independent streak that brought them into conflict with the discipline of the meeting. As he neared his twenty-fifth birthday in 1760, Samuel Wallis conceived the notion that he might go to England "on account of trade," but the Deer Creek Meeting delayed certifying to Friends abroad that he could make this move free of obstruction. That same meeting again hesitated six years later when Wallis sought, after the fact, to obtain a certificate of removal to Philadelphia—where, in the interval, having abandoned the trip to England but not the thought of pursuing a career as a merchant, he had financed the purchase of cargoes for sale in Quebec and the West Indies. Unable to cover the heavy load of debt he incurred in these ventures, he languished in debtors' prison in Philadelphia, a bankrupt, until the legislature of Pennsylvania in 1764 acted favorably on his petition for relief by passing a special act releasing him from prison but stripping him of all his possessions except "wearing apparel and bedding for himself, not exceeding ten pounds in value in the whole."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> David W. Maxey, "The Honorable Proprietaries v. Samuel Wallis: 'A Matter of Great Consequence' in the Province of Pennsylvania," *Pennsylvania History* 70 (2003): 363–64.

After this unpromising start, Wallis's luck began to change. Two wealthy Philadelphia merchants, Abel James and Henry Drinker, commissioned Wallis, someone who had been imprisoned for debt just a short time before, to collect debts they were owed, instructing him to "press for the payment in the warmest manner." Apparently satisfied with his performance as an enforcer, James and Drinker next relied on Wallis, first as their agent and then as their partner, to assemble land in remote parts of Pennsylvania by actions that often required these fastidious Philadelphia Quakers to turn a blind eye to the methods Wallis employed on their behalf and his. While the relationship between them was not without its troubled moments, Henry Drinker stood by Wallis until Wallis's death in 1798.<sup>4</sup>

Others looking to make their fortune in land acquisition engaged Wallis as their agent, and he soon assembled a stable of backers who supplied him with funds to represent their interests. His connections with these investors over the many years that followed his imprisonment for debt may be traced in a wide variety of collections at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania and elsewhere. The principal source of information about Wallis lies in his own papers, an astonishing array of original material that survived against the odds to throw light on his shady practices. It is the history of that record—its collection, its preservation, the impact on its custodians of an unexpected disclosure, and its final disposition—that will be the subject of this essay.<sup>5</sup>

### *Collection*

Samuel Wallis died in a house located on Philadelphia's Market Street on October 14, 1798, a victim of a yellow fever epidemic that once again ravaged the city. He contracted the disease on his return journey from

<sup>4</sup> James and Drinker to Wallis, June 8, 1765, Muncy Historical Society. See, generally, David W. Maxey, "The Quaker Roots of Samuel Wallis," *Now and Then* 25 (Apr. 2001): 246–54; and Maxey, "Honorable Proprietaries v. Samuel Wallis," 361–95. Various aspects of Wallis's career are also visible in John F. Meginness, *History of Lycoming County, Pennsylvania* (Chicago, 1892); Wilkinson, *Land Policy and Speculation*; Charles Page Smith, *James Wilson: Founding Father, 1742–1798* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1956); Peter C. Mancall, *Valley of Opportunity: Economic Culture along the Upper Susquehanna, 1700–1800* (Ithaca, NY, 1991); and Carl Van Doren, *Secret History of the American Revolution* (New York, 1941).

<sup>5</sup> Samuel Wallis is embedded as a recurrent presence in the following collections at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania: Penn Family Papers; Henry Drinker Business Papers; Jacobs Family Papers; Hollingsworth Family Papers; and James Wilson Papers. As early as 1767, Wallis had a contractual relationship with Reuben Haines, a Philadelphia Quaker brewer; the ties of the Haines family to

Edenton, North Carolina, where he had traveled in a desperate attempt to confer with his beleaguered partner in land speculation, US Supreme Court justice James Wilson, only to learn upon his arrival that Wilson had expired a month earlier. As Robert Morris ruefully observed to John Nicholson, Wallis escaped the worst consequences of one disease, “Land Fever,” as he succumbed to the other. Shortly before he left on this fatal expedition, Wallis’s son-in-law and lawyer, writing to him in Philadelphia, put him on notice that “a sacrifice of all your property real & personal will now take place . . . and ruin to you seems to me to be Inevitable unless Exertions of the most serious & Effective nature are Immediately used.”<sup>6</sup> In forty years of scheming, Wallis had come full circle, from insolvency and imprisonment at the beginning of his career to looming financial collapse at the end of it.

Wallis’s principal base of operations was Muncy Farm, a large property he owned in Northumberland County (subsequently part of Lycoming County) on the West Branch of the Susquehanna River, about 150 miles northwest of Philadelphia. He built a house on this land in 1769, where he took his bride, Lydia Hollingsworth, to live the following year. Subject to forced departures due to the danger of staying at this remote frontier location during Indian uprisings, the struggles of the Revolution, and brutal winters, they raised their numerous family there. When adverse conditions dictated, the Wallises retreated to Philadelphia or to Lydia Wallis’s family home at the head of the Elk River in Cecil County, Maryland. For all of his extensive investments elsewhere and the alliances he had made with prominent Philadelphia investors, it was the threatened loss of Muncy Farm that would have caused Samuel Wallis the greatest concern. He had put years of sweat labor into owning and improving that property.<sup>7</sup>

After Wallis’s death without a will, an administration was raised in Lycoming County for his estate, and appraisers set about valuing all his

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Wallis lasted through the rest of the century, as documented in the Wyck Association Collection, American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia, PA. Significant Wallis material may also be found in the Pennsylvania State Archives, Harrisburg, PA, Samuel Wallis Collection (MG-167), and at the Muncy Historical Society.

<sup>6</sup> Daniel Smith to Samuel Wallis, May 28, 1798, reel 6, Wallis Papers.

<sup>7</sup> See Maxey, “Honourable Proprietaries v. Samuel Wallis,” 368–69; Meginness, *History of Lycoming County*, 66–67, 71–74. A valuable contemporary view of Muncy Farm in Samuel Wallis’s ownership and occupancy is found in Norman B. Wilkinson, ed., “Mr. Davy’s Diary, 1794, Part II,” *Pennsylvania History* 20 (1953): 262–65.

personal property, both at the house he probably rented in Philadelphia and at Muncy Farm. Some time necessarily passed before Robert Erwin and John Dunwoody felt relaxed enough to enter the property on Market Street in Philadelphia where he had died. They itemized possessions totaling £475 15s. 11d., more than half of which sum they assigned to a four-wheeled carriage, together with “harness complete for four horses,” one riding chair or sulky, and two horses, seven or eight years old. The house nevertheless appears to have been comfortably furnished, at least for bachelor occupancy. Wallis had close at hand a variety of books and newspapers to read, including two large print volumes of the Bible, “a Book describing the Indian Nations,” a bound volume of William Cobbett’s *Porcupine* newspapers, and a book of charts.<sup>8</sup>

The inventory in Muncy was completed more promptly, a month after Wallis’s death. John Hollingsworth and Daniel Tallman put a total value of £2,457 2s. 11d. on Wallis’s personal estate at Muncy Farm, which consisted of all manner of items, from the miniscule to farm equipment, horses and livestock, mahogany furniture, and basic household goods. This time, the appraisers compiled a much longer list of the books in Wallis’s library. Educated well above average when he arrived in Philadelphia in the early 1760s, Wallis honed his writing skills in the steady flow of reports he submitted to anxious clients employing him as their agent on the frontier. Moreover, as the years passed, he was able to broaden his intellectual interests. If one should avoid judging a book by its cover, so also one should avoid judging a man solely by the books he keeps on his shelves, and yet, whatever else we may think of Wallis, the library list reveals a person of inquiring mind, eclectic reading habits, and considerable culture. Consider, as a sampling, these inventoried entries:

<sup>8</sup> “An Inventory & Appraisalment of the Personal Estate of Samuel Wallis Esq of Muncy Township, deceased made the 9th of December 1798 by Erwin and John Dunwoody, the Property being in the City of Philad,” reel 6, Wallis Papers. It provides insight into Wallis’s politics that he read, and kept for rereading, the issues of *Porcupine’s Gazette*, a daily newspaper launched a year before Wallis’s death in which William Cobbett mounted an unrelenting attack against pro-French and Jeffersonian-Republican factions. Marcus Daniel, *Scandal and Civility: Journalism and the Birth of American Democracy* (New York, 2009), 187–230. Wallis paid eight dollars for an annual subscription to *Porcupine’s Gazette* ending March 24, 1798. Reel 6, Wallis Papers. Wallis is listed at 270 High Street in Edmund Hogan, comp., *The Prospect of Philadelphia and Check on Next Directory*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia, 1796), 188, which may have placed him on the south side of High or Market Street just west of Eighth Street, although a letter was addressed to him in 1798 at “Market, near Seventh Street.” See Lu Ann De Cunzo, “An Historical Interpretation of William Birch’s Print ‘High Street, From Ninth Street, Philadelphia,’” *Pennsylvania History* 50 (1983): 132. [Unidentified sender] to Samuel Wallis, June 23, 1798, reel 1, Wallis Papers.

Salzmann's *Elements of Morality, for the Use of Children* and Madame de Cambon's *Young Grandison* (both as translated by Mary Wollstonecraft); Bartram's *Travels*; Johnson's *Dictionary*; Vicesimus Knox's *Essays Moral and Literary*; William Gilpin's *Three Essays* (on the aesthetic ideal of the picturesque); Priestley's sermon on the human mind; Shakespeare's *Plays*; Unitarian tracts; Gough's *History of the People Called Quakers*; Bolingbroke's *Letters and Life*; Robert Gibson's *Treatise of Practical Surveying*; Milton's *Works*; David Ramsay's *History of the American Revolution*; Thomas Bromley's *Way to the Sabbath of Rest*; Thomas Salmon's *New Geographical and Historical Grammar*; Isaac Watts's *Logick: or, the Right use of Reason in the Enquiry After Truth*; and Izaak Walton's *Compleat Angler*.<sup>9</sup>

Neither inventory made mention of the huge cache of personal papers that Wallis had begun accumulating as far back as when he left Maryland in about 1760, for the very good reason that at his death they had no ascertainable monetary value. Wallis was, in reality, a compulsive collector of documents of all kinds. Sparing himself neither the pain present in the evidence of his early insolvency and imprisonment for debt nor the growing discomfort he felt in the record of his imminent financial collapse in the 1790s, he retained in his papers running accounts with James and Drinker and other investors he acted for; partnership and agency agreements; warrants, surveys, deeds, and patents; bonds and mortgages; incoming correspondence and copies he often made of his own letters; receipts for payment of various debts; bills of lading; legal form books; records of court and arbitration proceedings; travel diaries; settlement agreements; household accounts; ledger books for Muncy Farm; membership certificates for the Union Library and, later, the Library Company of Philadelphia; and pointed queries from Quaker meetings about his conduct. To these papers would be added documentation relating to the tangled settlement of his estate, which stretched over many

<sup>9</sup> "An Inventory and Appraisalment of the Personal Estate of Samuel Wallis Esqr of Muncy Township, deceased, made the 16th and 17th days of November 1798 by John Hollingsworth and Daniel Tallman," reel 6, Wallis Papers. Abbreviated notations in the inventory have in some instances been expanded to identify more accurately particular volumes, many of which were published in England and presumably acquired by Wallis from a Philadelphia bookseller. Joseph Priestley, the discoverer of oxygen and a founder of Unitarianism in England, left his native land and took up residence for the last ten years of his life in Northumberland, Pennsylvania, at the juncture of the west and north branches of the Susquehanna River, becoming at that location a neighbor of Wallis's. See Jenny Graham, "Revolutionary in Exile: The Emigration of Joseph Priestley to America, 1794-1804" *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, n.s., 85, no. 2 (1995): i-xii, 1-213.

years following his death. In summary, Wallis's papers would provide a richly textured picture of his life in Philadelphia and on the Pennsylvania frontier, with all of its twists and turns, from the 1760s through the end of the eighteenth century—as well as privileged access to significant events, relationships, and chicanery during the critical revolutionary and early national periods.

The ruin that Daniel Smith saw fast coming engulfed Wallis's survivors. His house and Muncy Farm, consisting of several thousand acres, were lost in debt enforcement proceedings. His widow, Lydia Hollingsworth Wallis, who died in 1812, took refuge with her daughter, the wife of Daniel Smith, in nearby Milton, Northumberland County. In spite of their misfortune, the family managed to salvage a few valuable possessions, like the mahogany Chippendale furniture that Wallis had commissioned from a Philadelphia cabinetmaker at the time of his marriage.

As for the Wallis Papers, they were passed on in the male line of the Wallis family through succeeding generations. What persuaded Wallis's heirs to keep the papers intact after the protracted settlement of his estate, one can only speculate. Perhaps they shared with him a record-keeping gene, for Wallis's two sons and a grandson both contributed some of their own papers to the collection. No one in this period, as far as we can tell, ever went through the Wallis collection from beginning to end to try to bring a semblance of order to the hodgepodge of items it contained. It is possible, however, that these later family custodians had an informed appreciation of their ancestor's extraordinary, turbulent career, which may go some distance in explaining their decision to hold on to the Wallis Papers.<sup>10</sup>

By the second half of the nineteenth century, when Wallis's great-grandson Howard R. Wallis, a resident of the town of Muncy, took custody of the Wallis Papers, the collection had begun to attract the attention of local historians. In 1868, J. M. M. Gerner launched *Now and Then*, a magazine of history, biography, and genealogy, which was published irregularly in Muncy until being discontinued after 1892. In a valedictory piece he penned for the magazine in 1878, Gerner referred to the "vast quantity of old papers" originally belonging to Samuel Wallis

<sup>10</sup> Meginness, *History of Lycoming County*, 73–80. For the Chippendale furniture Wallis ordered from William Wayne in Philadelphia, see Susan Garfinkel, "Quakers and High Chests: The Plainness Problem Reconsidered," in *Quaker Aesthetics: Reflections on a Quaker Ethic in American Design and Consumption*, ed. Emma Jones Lapsansky and Anne A. Verplanck (Philadelphia, 2003), 60–62, plate 3; and invoice, dated Feb. 17, 1770, submitted by Wayne for "Mahogany case & drawers & table" and "Mahogany desk & castors," reel 3, Wallis Papers.

that were packed in a “very large store goods box . . . now in the possession of, and carefully treasured by a descendant.” Giving his readers only a general description of these records, Gernerd stated that the holding had come to have “historic interest” and that Wallis had “left a legacy of great value,” although it did not appear that Gernerd had explored the box’s contents in any depth—not enough, at any rate, to cause him to question the status of “Our Distinguished Pioneer, Samuel Wallis,” the title of an article he had written for the prior issue of *Now and Then*.<sup>11</sup>

Another local historian, John F. Meginness, delved more deeply into the Wallis Papers, not only in the revision of his *Otzinachson; or, A History of the West Branch Valley of the Susquehanna*, which, when first published in 1857, contained very little about Samuel Wallis and nothing about his papers, but also for his *History of Lycoming County, Pennsylvania*, published in 1892 and running to some 1,200 pages. A century after Wallis had died, Meginness, drawing on this collection, began to sketch a portrait of him as the “most active, energetic, ambitious, persistent, and untiring land speculator who ever lived in Lycoming County. . . . His energy was marvelous, and his desire to acquire land became a mania, which followed him to the close of his life.” Based on the limited view he had of him, Meginness portrayed Wallis more as victim than villain, overlooking or minimizing in the Wallis Papers his documented career of sharp dealings and contentious disputes.<sup>12</sup>

For the next several decades the Wallis Papers lay dormant in Muncy, in the continued safekeeping of the latest Wallis descendant but neglected by scholars and amateur historians alike. Having completed a stint as president of the Lycoming Historical Society, Dr. T. Kenneth Wood returned to his full-time medical practice in Muncy, where, beginning in

<sup>11</sup> “The Wallis Papers,” *Now and Then* 1 (Feb. 1878); “Our Distinguished Pioneer, Samuel Wallis,” *Now and Then* 1 (Jan. 1878). (The early issues of the journal lacked numbered pagination.) Nineteenth-century local historians necessarily felt the inherent tension between the call for accuracy and a concern for the reputation of the people and places portrayed. David J. Russo, *Keepers of Our Past: Local Historical Writing in the United States, 1820s–1930s* (New York, 1988), 150.

<sup>12</sup> Meginness, *History of Lycoming County*, 66, and *Otzinachson; or, A History of the West Branch Valley of the Susquehanna*, rev. ed. (Williamsport, PA, 1889). In this revised edition of the latter work, Meginness produced two new chapters devoted largely to Wallis (chaps. 15 and 16, 319–404), relying on “his old papers now in the possession of Howard R. Wallis, of Muncy.” Samuel Wallis gets even more extensive treatment in Meginness’s *History of Lycoming County*, 61–80, 183–84, 198–200, 290, 540–41, 546, 1,028–29. Meginness failed, however, to trace Wallis’s final and futile trip to Edenton, North Carolina, to confer with James Wilson, as the Wallis Papers would have permitted him to do, and instead repeated the discredited story, given some currency at Wilson’s death, that Wilson committed suicide by taking an overdose of laudanum. *Ibid.*, 76.



1929, he decided to amuse himself, as he put it, by reviving the long-suspended publication of the journal *Now and Then*. A close friend of the Wallis family, Wood was given free run of the Wallis Papers for the purpose, so it soon seemed, of also reviving Samuel Wallis. The collection represented a bonanza for the magazine's creative editor, as he would proceed to write in a series of articles about "a resurrected jury list" in a 1773 ejectment suit that the Pennsylvania proprietors had brought against Wallis, challenging his title to land in Muncy; the Chippendale high chest Wallis ordered from William Wayne in 1770 just prior to his marriage, which the Wallis family then still owned; an early map of Muncy Manor; various letters to and from Wallis; miscellaneous bills that Wallis paid; and the inventories completed after Wallis's death. To mine the Wallis Papers in this fashion was, however, tiring work and not without risk to one's health; Wood later advised a researcher who planned to follow him that if he had asthmatic tendencies, he should bring a mask to cut down on the intake of dust that Wood had absorbed in his system over the years.<sup>13</sup>

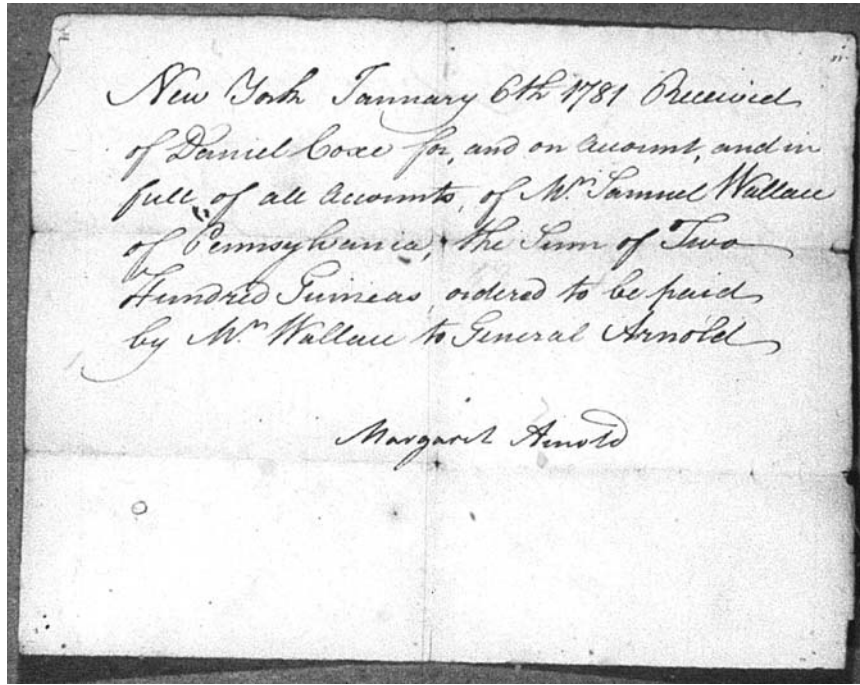
In 1936, Wood made a startling discovery in the Wallis Papers that would have far-reaching consequences. He found a receipt that Wallis obtained for the payment through one Daniel Coxe of the sum of 200 guineas, "ordered to be paid by Mr. Wallace [sic] to General Arnold."<sup>14</sup> The receipt, dated New York, January 6, 1781, was signed by Margaret Arnold, Benedict Arnold's young wife, whose awareness from the beginning—even encouragement—of her husband's treasonable plan historians had debated.

A century and a half after this transaction took place, Wood realized that he might be holding in his hand what amounted to a smoking gun. Why did Samuel Wallis find it necessary to pay a notorious traitor this large sum of money? Wood groped for an explanation that would make Wallis "an innocent party to Arnold's rascality," reasoning that since "January 6th, 1781 was only a couple of months after Arnold's treason and

<sup>13</sup> T. Kenneth Wood, MD, "The Muncy Historical Society," *Pennsylvania History* 22 (1955): 277–81. The articles referred to may be found in published indexes for *Now and Then* on the Muncy Historical Society's website at <http://muncyhistoricalsociety.org/library/now-then>. For Wood's role in reviving the publication, see the memorial tribute to him in *Now and Then* 12 (Jan. 1959): 129–31. For Wood's advice to a subsequent researcher, see Wood to Julian P. Boyd, Jan. 6, 1939 [1938 by mistake], box I-4-216, General Correspondence, 1938 W–Z, 1939 A–B, The Historical Society of Pennsylvania, with the Balch Institute for Ethnic Studies, Institutional Records (hereafter, HSP Institutional Records).

<sup>14</sup> The receipt may be found in reel 6, Wallis Papers.

that the money was sent through the British lines to New York by an emissary, the transaction appears pregnant with hidden meaning but not necessarily sinister.” The best that Wood could do in exculpating Wallis was to advance “a purely imaginary explanation”—that Wallis had acted for Arnold in the secret sale of commissary goods assigned to Arnold’s regiment and that, fearing he himself might fall under dangerous suspicion of being Arnold’s accomplice in committing treason, he belatedly moved to settle up the cash balance he owed. It was almost with an audible sigh of relief that Wood noted in conclusion that “no other mention is made, in the Wallis papers, of contact with Arnold.”<sup>15</sup>



The “Smoking Gun”: 200-guinea receipt signed by Margaret Arnold. Reel 6, Wallis Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

<sup>15</sup> “Old Letters—Samuel Wallis,” *Now and Then* 5 (1936): 175. For Daniel Coxe, a dyed-in-the-wool Loyalist, see Edwin R. Walker et al., *A History of Trenton, 1679–1929: Two Hundred and Fifty Years of a Notable Town with Links in Four Centuries* (Princeton, NJ, 1929), 141–42.

### *Preservation*

In 1935, at age thirty-two, Julian P. Boyd was appointed librarian of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. He had served a brief apprenticeship as assistant librarian before the Board of Councilors appointed him librarian: the title then used to designate the society's chief operating officer and representative to the scholarly community. Before arriving at the Historical Society, Boyd had been the editor of *The Susquehannah Company Papers* in Wilkes-Barre, supervising the publication of the first volumes of that ongoing project in preparation for what would later be his more significant role as editor of *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson* at Princeton, where he also became university librarian.

Belying his comparative youthfulness, polished manners, and southern charm, Boyd had determined to shake up a venerable institution whose board of councilors was staffed by members of Philadelphia's inbred elite. His declared objectives as librarian were to improve and expand the works the society published, to add substantially to its collections, and, generally, to reach beyond the boundaries of parochial Philadelphia to a larger statewide and national constituency. Boyd's pursuit of this ambitious program in the midst of the Depression, not surprisingly, brought him into conflict with his conservative board and curtailed his tenure at the Historical Society.<sup>16</sup>

During Boyd's honeymoon period with the board, he sold the councilors on the investment he recommended making in the new technology of microfilming. He reported in the October 1935 board meeting that he had had "the matter under consideration for some months"; that other libraries had been microfilming successfully; and "that it has been clearly proved that micro-photography is immensely cheaper than photostating and that in considering the reproduction of a single large collection . . . a large part of the initial cost of equipment can be saved." In its next meeting, the board authorized an expenditure of \$325 "for the purpose of [buying] the Zeiss camera equipment, as recommended by the Librarian."<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup> See Sally F. Griffith, *Serving History in a Changing World: The Historical Society of Pennsylvania in the Twentieth Century* (Philadelphia, 2001), 97–148.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 113–14; Oct. 28 and Nov. 25, 1935, box I-2-9, Board Minutes, May 1933–June 1936, HSP Institutional Records.

Now it was up to Boyd to demonstrate in practice that microfilming could be used on the grand scale to bring an entire collection, otherwise unavailable, within the society's holdings. He saw the chance to do so when he attended the annual meeting of the Pennsylvania Historical Association held in Williamsport and Lewisburg at the end of October 1938. After the concluding session on Saturday, October 29, the members left Williamsport to visit the Muncy Historical Society and its recently rehabilitated building, which housed museum exhibits. As a newly elected member of the association's council, Boyd attended all the sessions and joined the group that went to Muncy. On the Monday following, he sent a letter to Dr. Wood telling him "how much I enjoyed my visit to your wonderful Historical Society, and how grateful I am for the many hospitalities showed to me by you and Mrs. Wood." He wrote that he was also impressed by Wood's remarks on Saturday morning about the value of the Wallis Papers, which had led Boyd that same day to write to Howard R. Wallis proposing that the Historical Society of Pennsylvania be allowed to microfilm the entire collection at its cost. If Wallis agreed, "we could all then rest easy in the assumption that in case of a fire there would be no loss of the very valuable information contained in his trunks."<sup>18</sup>

In taking the next step, Boyd had to confront a local issue of self-esteem, since he found Wood offended that his nominal successor as president of the Muncy Historical Society had taken upon himself the assignment of obtaining approval from the Wallis family, which Wood thought he alone was capable of doing. Nevertheless, this contretemps straightened out, approval was forthcoming, as Boyd confirmed in his report to the Board of Councilors on December 20 under the heading "An Experiment in Microphotography":

For the first time during the installation of our Photographic Department, we are in a position to demonstrate on a relatively large scale the value of microphotography in the preservation of historical information in cases where it is not possible for the Society to obtain original documents. In Muncy, Pennsylvania, there exists in a private home, constantly subject to the hazards of fire and other destructive agencies, a collection of several

<sup>18</sup> For the report on the 1938 meeting of the Pennsylvania Historical Association, see J. Paul Selsam, "The Seventh Annual Meeting of the Pennsylvania Historical Association," *Pennsylvania History* 6 (1939): 1-5. Boyd to Dr. T. Kenneth Wood, Nov. 1, 1938, box I-4-216, General Correspondence 1938 W-Z, 1939 A-B, HSP Institutional Records.

thousand documents of Samuel Wallis, who was probably the outstanding land agent in the central part of the State in the last quarter of the eighteenth century. . . . His papers are, therefore, extremely important in revealing the characteristics of one of the chief forms of investment in that period. These papers cannot be secured by gift or purchase, but the owner is willing to permit us to microfilm the entire collection or such portion of it as may be worthy of recording. . . . In this sense, the microfilm camera makes it possible for families who have a justifiable pride in their documentary heritage to keep their papers and, at the same time, to meet the purposes of an institution such as this.<sup>19</sup>

Wood wrote Boyd from Muncy at the beginning of January that “all is arranged for your convenience.” Wood could not estimate, however, how many papers would have to be photocopied and urged Boyd to come prepared with a dozen filing cases. He also found appealing Boyd’s idea that the collection be sorted out and put in chronological order as it was microfilmed, which he said the Wallis custodian would permit. The extent of the task before Boyd convinced him that he needed help onsite; fortunately, he was able to recruit Edwin Wolf, then a young assistant to Dr. A. S. W. Rosenbach in the rare book business (and, later, for many years the librarian of the Library Company of Philadelphia), to accompany him in a support role.<sup>20</sup> The two of them, traveling to Muncy in the dead of winter when that upstate community is often locked in arctic conditions, spent five days painstakingly photographing over ten thousand separate items in the Wallis Papers. The result of their labor, seven reels of film, was in a real sense their handiwork, for a researcher now scrolling through the microfilm at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania will repeatedly observe the hands of these two collaborators anchoring in place particular exhibits.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Wood to Boyd, Saturday [Nov. 5, 1938], box I-4-216, General Correspondence 1938 W–Z, 1939 A–B, HSP Institutional Records; Report of Librarian, Dec. 20, 1938, box I-2-10, Board Minutes, Sept. 1936–Dec. 1940, HSP Institutional Records.

<sup>20</sup> Wood to Boyd, Jan. 6, 1939 [1938 by mistake], box I-4-216, General Correspondence, 1938 W–Z, 1939 A–B, HSP Institutional Records. For Edwin Wolf’s participation, see Griffith, *Serving History in a Changing World*, 134. In a conversation at lunch with the author of this article at the Franklin Inn Club in Philadelphia in the mid-1980s, Wolf emphatically recalled joining Boyd in the expedition to Muncy to microfilm the Wallis Papers.

<sup>21</sup> The seven reels of microfilm may be found at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania under the call numbers XR 93.1–93.7, and it is to this microfilm collection that reference has been made throughout when citing the Wallis Papers.

In his report to the councilors immediately after his return, Boyd specified that “700 feet of film, comprising about 5,600 frames, were required to photograph this collection, conservatively estimated at 10,000 documents but most probably amounting to 12,000 in number.” The cost to the society of the trip to Muncy, everything included, came to \$140, well under the \$250 authorized by the board. Yet Boyd was chagrined in submitting his report to note that “the photographing was done in a manner which I am sure will evoke strong criticism from historians who will make use of the film now and in the future.” Given the constraints to which Boyd and Wolf were subject in Muncy, and not being permitted by the owner to bring the collection to Philadelphia “for the purpose of putting it into some systematic classification before photographing,” he explained, “we were obliged to microfilm the documents as we came to them,” a circumstance, Boyd conceded, that “will enormously complicate their use and their being catalogued, but there was no alternative.” Despite his pledge to try “to remedy this defect as much as possible” by introducing some order to the microfilm collection, it has stayed in the same chaotic condition, much to the frustration, as Boyd correctly anticipated, of historians attempting to use the microfilm.

From Boyd’s report to the councilors in January, it is apparent that he and Wolf occasionally paused in this extended exercise to focus on what they were photographing. The documents pertained in his accounting “to land speculation in the period 1769–1798, but also including much that relates to Wallis’ privateering and mercantile affairs in Philadelphia before and during the Revolution (including some early marine insurance contracts and documents showing Wallis’ relations with Benedict Arnold).” That last parenthetical reference is tantalizing, for the only document that would appear inferentially to fall in that category is the Arnold-Wallis receipt for 200 guineas that Wood had previously discovered. Had Wood alerted Boyd to the presence of this smoking gun in the Wallis Papers? Very likely he did, but whatever the basis for Boyd’s statement to the board, he had obviously elevated conjecture to fact in assessing Wallis’s relationship with Arnold.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Report of Librarian, Jan. 16, 1939, box I-2-10, Board Minutes, Sept. 1936–Dec. 1940, HSP Institutional Records. Wood reported on the microfilming in “Safeguarding the Wallis Papers and Luminary Files,” *Now and Then* 6 (Jan. 1939): 115.

*Disclosure*

Carl Van Doren has not always been granted the credit he deserved as a groundbreaking historian of his era. The winner of a Pulitzer Prize in 1939 for his biography of Benjamin Franklin, and the author of critically acclaimed books to follow on historical subjects, he sometimes received grudging recognition by academic historians as “a pioneering and patriotic popularizer.” That whiff of condescension may be detected in his entry in *American National Biography*, the successor to the *Dictionary of American Biography*: “None of his books . . . with the exception of his *Franklin*, is now very much read, perhaps because he tried to excel in too many insufficiently related fields and, as he himself admitted, he lacked a solid foundation in historical and critical theory.”<sup>23</sup>

But Julian Boyd had no hesitancy in recognizing him as a first-rate historian when in June 1938 Van Doren wrote to him at the Historical Society to ask his assistance on the Franklin book, then nearing publication. By 1939 they were both corresponding on a first-name basis and exchanging ideas. One proposal floated by Van Doren was the publication under Historical Society auspices of an elegant facsimile edition of Indian treaties originally printed by Benjamin Franklin, to which he agreed to contribute an introduction. That undertaking would enhance Boyd’s scholarly credentials, but, because of associated cost concerns and delays, it created further tension between him and the society’s board.<sup>24</sup>

It soon became Julian Boyd’s turn to propose to Van Doren the subject of Van Doren’s next major work. At a party held at New York’s Hotel Astor in late 1938 attended by Randolph G. Adams, the director of the Clements Library at the University of Michigan, Boyd encouraged Van Doren to undertake a full-fledged treatment of Benedict Arnold’s trea-

<sup>23</sup> *American National Biography*, ed. John A. Garraty and Mark C. Carnes, 24 vols. (New York, 1999), s.v. “Van Doren, Carl,” 22:203–4. See Van Doren, *Benjamin Franklin* (New York, 1938). During the interwar period, professional historians found “galling” their recurrent failure to win a lay audience and correspondingly disdained popularizers and debunkers who were successful in doing so. Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The “Objectivity Question” and the American Historical Profession* (New York, 1988), 192–94.

<sup>24</sup> The Van Doren-Boyd correspondence began in June 1938 and may be traced in box I-4-215 and box I-4-226, General Correspondence, 1938 S-W, and 1939 T-W, HSP Institutional Records. Boyd put the proposal for the Indian treaties book before the board at its September meeting, attributing the idea to Van Doren. Report of Librarian, Sept. 19, 1938, box I-2-10, Board Minutes, Sept. 1936–Dec. 1940, HSP Institutional Records; Carl Van Doren and Julian P. Boyd, *Indian Treaties Printed by Benjamin Franklin, 1736–1762* (Philadelphia 1938), of which only five hundred copies were printed. See Griffith, *Serving History in a Changing World*, 131–32.

son, utilizing for the first time the extensive collection of the papers of General Sir Henry Clinton that the Clements Library had recently acquired.<sup>25</sup>

Arnold's treason, when it came to light, was so notorious that inquiries were immediately initiated in both this country and England; consequently, the broad outlines of the plot he engaged in for the better part of two years were known and publicized in official reports. As early as 1835, Jared Sparks, a historian and later the president of Harvard, published an impressive, balanced biography that explored Arnold's complicated personality and motives; Sparks relied heavily in his book on "a large number of original papers in manuscript, which have not before been inspected," including the correspondence found in the public archives in London between General Clinton and the ministry he reported to concerning Arnold's defection and its aftermath. Arnold's place as an arch villain was thus ensured in American history and folklore as scholarly and polemical studies, articles, novels, and speculation of all kinds have flowed forth about him and his treason.<sup>26</sup>

What, then, did Carl Van Doren aim to accomplish? As he gained access to the Clinton Papers, he concluded that, more than simply concentrating on Arnold's treason, he needed to develop a detailed and comprehensive study of American resistance to the Revolution. However, in retrospect, his principal achievement, which he realized thanks to substantial assistance from the staff of the Clements Library, was to identify the network of conspirators, spies, and messengers for hire who assisted Arnold in the plot to betray the American cause. The publication of Van Doren's *Secret History of the American Revolution* removed the shield of anonymity from Arnold's undercover allies.

<sup>25</sup> Van Doren, *Secret History of the American Revolution*, vii (acknowledgment); Randolph G. Adams to Van Doren, Oct. 10, 1941, box 15, folder 4, Carl Van Doren Papers, Manuscripts Division, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library (hereafter, Van Doren Papers).

<sup>26</sup> Jared Sparks, *The Life and Treason of Benedict Arnold* (Boston and London, 1835), vi. Sparks did not have the opportunity, however, to consult the Clinton Papers, which were eventually acquired by the Clements Library. For the unwillingness of Clinton's family in the late nineteenth century to permit further access to this collection after a researcher found intimate private letters revealing Clinton "as somewhat of a philanderer," see R. Langton Douglas's letter to the editor of the *New York Times Book Review*, Nov. 9, 1941, 2. As recent examples of the fictional treatment of Arnold's treason, see John Ensor Harr, *Dark Eagle: A Novel of Benedict Arnold in the American Revolution* (New York, 1999), and Robert Zubrin, *Benedict Arnold: A Drama of the American Revolution in Five Acts* (Lakewood, CO, 2005).



One person whose cover Van Doren's work decisively blew away was Samuel Wallis. Wallis had lingered in protective obscurity for 160 years after Arnold had departed West Point in frantic haste to take refuge with the British in New York. With the possible exception of T. Kenneth Wood, who discovered in the Wallis Papers the receipt signed by Arnold's wife, no one had suggested that Wallis was implicated in Arnold's treachery, much less that he had conspired with Joseph Stansbury and Jonathan Odell, two prominent Loyalists, to carry messages back and forth between Arnold and the British commander in New York. In fact, the Clinton Papers established to a high degree of probability that Wallis had been in the employ of the British from an early stage in the Revolution, dating almost certainly from the British occupation of Philadelphia, and that, for a year after Arnold had fled to the enemy, he maintained a surreptitious correspondence in which he continued to provide intelligence to the British in New York. Wallis had carefully concealed his tracks, leaving in his papers, whether by accident or not, the 200-guinea receipt as the sole telltale clue to his perfidy. That sum, paid to Wallis as Arnold's agent, represented the first down payment on the negotiated compensation General Clinton promised Arnold in return for the latter's defection.<sup>27</sup>

From the nineteenth century onward, Wallis family members have occupied respected positions in the Muncy community. If, even before Van Doren's disclosure, Samuel Wallis's reputation for fair dealing might have been questioned, the reputation of his descendants who had custody of his papers remained above reproach. For the latest custodian of the Wallis Papers to wake up one morning in late 1941 and learn that a distinguished historian's book had just established that his ancestor was a traitor of the darkest dye, acting in cahoots with Benedict Arnold, had, therefore, to have come as unsettling news. Even so, Howard R. Wallis may not have been totally unprepared for such a revelation. Although Samuel Wallis had excluded from his papers compromising correspondence with Arnold and the British, a trunk in the Wallis attic in Muncy did contain that one damning piece of evidence Dr. Wood had discovered and disclosed in the pages of *Now and Then*. If Howard Wallis required a further reminder of the awkward transaction between Samuel Wallis

<sup>27</sup> Van Doren, *Secret History of the American Revolution*, 217–20, 274–80, 409–13, 427–28; John Bakeless, *Turncoats, Traitors and Heroes* (1959; repr., Da Capo Press, 1998), 294–301. See also Van Doren to Boyd, May 5 and May 15, 1940, box 20, folder 1, Van Doren Papers.

and Arnold, involving the payment of a large sum of money, he got it when the receipt was flagged for attention in the WPA's Pennsylvania guide, published a full year before Van Doren's book. In the entry under Muncy, a writer for the guide described the Wallis Papers as filling "five trunks in the attic of Howard R. Wallis," with one item singled out: a "receipt for 200 guineas paid to General Benedict Arnold by Wallis on January 6, 1781, . . . in the handwriting of Arnold's wife, Peggy Shippen," and delivered four months after "Arnold had fled from his post as commander of West Point and joined the British."<sup>28</sup>

Howard Wallis might have learned by still another route that trouble was in the offing. Through all of 1940, Van Doren was hard at work on his new book. He wrote Boyd in May that he had just gotten to the bottom of the "mysterious Arnold-Wallis receipt you sent me" and that Wallis was "in the Arnold conspiracy up to his neck: literally up to it if he had been found out." In August, when the threat of war was on everybody's mind, he regretted that the book hadn't yet been published "in view of Fifth Column talk now! But maybe it is as well, for fear that this might be taken as anti-British, which it is not. The British come out fairly well. It is the Americans of the story who were rats."<sup>29</sup>

Both Van Doren and Boyd were understandably sensitive to the repercussions the book would have in Muncy once it did come out, and Van Doren made a special effort to cultivate Dr. Wood and perhaps even to warn him of what lay ahead. Wood was delighted to receive an unsolicited letter from Van Doren in January 1941 praising *Now and Then* as a valuable source of information for his work, which "has taken me into a somewhat detailed study of Revolutionary activities in the back counties of Pennsylvania, where many things were going on that have been overlooked." What came as music to Dr. Wood's ears was to read in this letter that, while "not at liberty to divulge his present line of historical research," Van Doren—a "truly great modern historian," in Dr. Wood's estimation—had made extensive use of *Now and Then*, "your very useful

<sup>28</sup> Writers' Program, Work Projects Administration, *Pennsylvania: A Guide to the Keystone State* (New York, 1940), 521. The body of the receipt does not appear, however, to be in Margaret Arnold's handwriting, only her signature.

<sup>29</sup> Van Doren to Boyd, May 5, May 15, and Aug. 21, 1940, box 20, folder 1, Van Doren Papers. President Roosevelt in a fireside chat of May 26, 1940, sounded the alert about "new methods of attack": "The Fifth Column that betrays a nation unprepared for treachery. Spies, saboteurs and traitors are the actors in this new strategy" (online at Mid-Hudson Regional Information Center website at <http://www.mhric.org/fdr/chat15.html>).

and interesting magazine”; what’s more, Van Doren had purchased for his library the bound volume of the journal that just happened to contain Wood’s discovery of the Arnold-Wallis receipt.<sup>30</sup>

Together Van Doren and Boyd went to Muncy at the end of June 1941 as Wood’s guests. Boyd made a formal presentation to the Muncy Historical Society, but whether Van Doren said anything publicly about his forthcoming book cannot be determined. He did, however, send another letter to Wood thanking him profusely for the “really grand time I had in Muncy . . . a really perfect evening and a grand night’s sleep,” while also congratulating him on the Muncy Historical Society: “I do not know how it could serve its Community to better purpose, or how there could be a local historical society better fitted to the quality of its officers and members to serve the ends of general history.” Not ready to stop there, he added that *Now and Then* was “the only local history magazine I have listed in the General Bibliography of my ‘Secret History,’ though I have consulted hundreds of such magazines.” According to Wood’s appended editorial note, the manuscript of the Van Doren book had gone to press; the author had informed Wood that he had written “the last word on the day he started for Muncy.”<sup>31</sup>

As soon as the *Secret History* appeared that fall, Wood wrote Van Doren that he was engrossed in reading it, “page by page, and word by word.” Nor did the revelations it contained about Wallis, which Wood called “the meat of the coconut for me,” seem to take him by surprise. Yet the silence that otherwise reigned in Muncy has to be regarded as deafening. Not a word appeared in *Now and Then* about a book that, commanding a national readership, changed radically that community’s perception of its most famous eighteenth-century resident. Until his death in 1950, Carl Van Doren kept sending billets-doux to Wood and the Muncy Historical Society, but in those letters he tactfully omitted any mention of the unforgettable contribution he had made to Muncy history.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Van Doren to Wood, Jan. 28, 1941, in “Miscellany,” *Now and Then* 6 (Jan. 1941): 318–19.

<sup>31</sup> Van Doren to Wood, June 29, 1941, in “Recalling a Red Letter Day,” *Now and Then* 6 (Oct. 1941): 342. Van Doren wrote to Boyd congratulating him on “a very pointed and graceful talk in Muncy. Don’t let yourself tell you otherwise.” Van Doren to Boyd, July 3, 1941, box 20, folder 2, Van Doren Papers. *Now and Then* was listed in the bibliography of the *Secret History of the American Revolution*, 498, and specifically cited several times, most notably, as the source for the Arnold-Wallis receipt. *Ibid.*, 279.

<sup>32</sup> Wood to Van Doren, Nov. 7, 1941, box 19, folder 4, Van Doren Papers, about Wood’s reaction to the book. See Van Doren to Wood, May 14, 1942, *Now and Then* 7 (July/Oct. 1942): 83; and Van

### Closure

The days of Dr. T. Kenneth Wood's rummaging in the Wallis Papers, or, for that matter, anybody else's doing so, were over. This collection of original documents was henceforth off limits to all but a select few. To the extent that *Now and Then* continued to publish articles about Samuel Wallis, it drew on past issues of the journal or on the Wallis material in the Muncy Historical Society's own collection.

Such remained the case until the spring of 2002, when the Wallis Papers, which had stayed in the Wallis family's uninterrupted possession for all of two centuries, were suddenly consigned for sale to an auctioneer in suburban Philadelphia. In a series of regular monthly sales of its varied inventory, the auction house brought on items from the Wallis Papers largely at random. Liquidating the collection in this piecemeal fashion necessitated going over to the following year. No attempt was made at these sales to put Samuel Wallis in context other than as a pioneer Pennsylvania settler and land speculator. To obtain the best price for the famous 200-guinea receipt, prospective bidders should have received ample notice of Wallis's concealed relationship with Benedict Arnold; and in the absence of any such notice, one may reasonably question whether this document of great historical value was meant to be included in the sale.

Faced with the dispersal of the Wallis Papers, the Muncy Historical Society mounted a rescue operation and bid successfully on a number of items that had strong local associations. At the auction, the Historical Society of Pennsylvania added to its early nineteenth-century holdings from outside the Philadelphia region by buying the day books of Wallis's younger son, Samuel Hollingsworth Wallis, a physician in Muncy who kept meticulous track of his patients and their consultation of him; a volume of cases and legal precedents belonging to Wallis's older son, John; and account books of Wallis's grandson Cowden, who owned and operated a general store at midcentury.<sup>33</sup>

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Doren to Wood, Apr. 14, 1950, *Now and Then* 9 (Oct. 1950): 234, in which Van Doren recalled Wood's kindness when he and Julian Boyd visited Muncy. As a lone qualification to the deafening silence in Muncy, Wood's son-in-law, Marshall R. Anspach, reviewed Van Doren's follow-up book, *Mutiny in January*, remarking that, as in his *Secret History*, the author had again disclosed "an unknown course of double dealing." *Now and Then* 7 (Oct. 1943): 149; Van Doren, *Mutiny in January: The Story of a Crisis in the Continental Army Now for the First Time Fully Told from Many Hitherto Unknown or Neglected Sources, Both American and British* (New York, 1943).

<sup>33</sup> E-mail, Mar. 7, 2011, to author from Lee Arnold, senior director of the library and collections at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, who represented the society at the initial auction sale. The

Julian Boyd was prescient, though in a way that he could not have expected, when he urged the councilors of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania in the 1930s to underwrite the cost of purchasing micro-filming equipment and then the modest additional cost of spending five days in Muncy to preserve on microfilm the Wallis Papers against the “hazards of fire and other destructive agencies.” While the integral collection of the papers in Muncy is now lost, history and historians are not yet done with Samuel Wallis. It is not enough that Carl Van Doren unmasked him as a traitor, for any number of questions remain to be investigated about his enterprising career. Were the very qualities that recommended him as a resourceful agent to a diverse group of land speculators such as Henry Drinker, Reuben Haines, Timothy Matlack, and James Wilson the same as those that made him a trusted intermediary in the negotiations between Benedict Arnold and the British in New York? How to account for the seeming ease with which he passed in and out of Philadelphia when the British occupied the city or traveled to New York, after Arnold’s treason but before the British left that city, to pursue in person a commercial claim? Who among those closest to him, starting with his wife, took full measure of his capacity to dissemble? One is left to ponder, for example, what the volatile Robert Lettis Hooper Jr. could possibly have had in mind when late in life he wrote to Wallis, a friend of long standing:

What a World have you & I had to Wade through and what a Blessing it is that We have had so much Fortitude to support our Selves under such recurrent Difficulties as have happened to us. I will assert for you & my self, that we were Sanguine, Just, an[d] Liberal in every Negotiation; that . . . our Individual Characters [have] brought us into the Great Spheres of Life we have filled, and if we have failed in the Performance, the Integrity of our Minds have not—can not, leave us.<sup>34</sup>

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Wallis Family Business Papers, as thus assembled, are catalogued as Collection 3134; a finding aid for that collection may be found by going to: [http://hsp.org/sites/default/files/legacy\\_files/migrated/findingaid3134wallis.pdf](http://hsp.org/sites/default/files/legacy_files/migrated/findingaid3134wallis.pdf). The author was present at two of the Wallis sales in 2002.

<sup>34</sup> Hooper to Wallis, New York, Apr. 18, 1790, reel 3, Wallis Papers. The two were business acquaintances at least as early as 1769. Hooper to Wallis, Oct. 10 and Dec. 8, 1769, reel 6, *ibid.* To get some sense of Hooper as a loose cannon, see Robert L. Brunhouse, *The Counter-Revolution in Pennsylvania, 1760–1790* (Harrisburg, PA, 1942), 48–49; and for biographical detail about him, see also Walker et al., *History of Trenton*, 598–600.

Reading microfilm is, admittedly, never the same as reading original documents. It can be a tedious, frustrating process that researchers approach only as a last resort. But for those on the trail of Samuel Wallis, that cunning man of persistent mystery, the record is still there to consult at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, in the seven reels of microfilm that Julian Boyd and Edwin Wolf traveled to Muncy to obtain.

*Gladwyne, PA*

DAVID W. MAXEY

## HIDDEN GEMS

### *The Map That Reveals the Deception of the 1737 Walking Purchase*

In the summer of 1737 four Delaware sachems agreed to give the Pennsylvania proprietors land west of the Delaware River that could be traversed by a walker in a day and a half. When the Walking Purchase, as it became known, was executed in September, the young men hired as walkers by the proprietors traveled faster and further northwest than Delawares assumed they would. Delawares documented the events of the Walking Purchase, but their version of the story was quickly buried under the considerable weight of the official narrative—a tale based on actual events but with significant details skillfully obfuscated by the Penns and their agents.<sup>1</sup> What actually happened would remain obscure if not for the existence of a fragile map that can be found in the Chew Family and the Penn Family Papers at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.<sup>2</sup> When examined in light of Delaware accounts, this map reveals how the Pennsylvania proprietors deceived the Delawares so they would agree to the purchase.

James Logan, the Penns' primary representative, invited Delaware sachems to Stenton, his estate north of Philadelphia, for August 1737 negotiations relative to the proposed purchase. The sachems were well versed in their history of land transactions with Pennsylvania.<sup>3</sup> Manawkyhickon acknowledged the Delawares' satisfaction with William Penn, stating, guardedly, "he should be sorry if after this mutual Love and

<sup>1</sup> For Delaware versions of these events see "Weshaykanikon's Account of the Walking Purchase of 1686" (1:81), "Petition of Delawares Regarding the Walking Purchase, Nov. 21, 1740" (2:24), "Petition of Delawares Regarding the Walking Purchase, Jan. 3, 1741" (2:25), "Moses Tatamy's Account of Delaware Claims, c. Nov. 1756" (3:163), and "Moses Tatamy's Account of Indian Complaints, c. Aug. 1757" (3:296), all in Alden T. Vaughan, general ed., *Early American Indian Documents: Treaties and Laws, 1607–1789*, 20 vols. (Washington, DC, 1979–2004).

<sup>2</sup> This map, included with an affidavit by James Hamilton, William Allen, and Richard Peters on the matter in 1762, can be found in three places at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. The map pictured here is from box 42, folder 2, Chew Family Papers. Copies can also be found in series 9 of the Penn Family Papers in NV-003, p. 103 and NV-004, p. 22.

<sup>3</sup> Weshaykanickon's Account of the Walking Purchase of 1686, NV-004, p. 61, ser. 9, Penn Family Papers.

Friendship any thing should arise that might create the least Misunderstanding.” Offering a belt of wampum, he explained that the Delawares were hesitant to agree to terms because they were not sure exactly how much land Penn’s sons were asking for.<sup>4</sup>

Neither the Penns, Logan, nor William Allen, the foremost investor in the land in question, wanted the Delawares to comprehend the vastness of the acreage they sought—the entire greater Delaware and Lehigh Valleys north of Wrightstown, Pennsylvania. Logan was especially anxious since he and Allen had conspired with surveyors and scouts to identify the finest land in the coveted upper Delaware and Lehigh Valleys. By the time he met with the sachems at Stenton in August 1737, Logan had already sold several parcels and desperately needed to clear Delaware claims in order to satisfy paying customers.

Thus, when Manawkyhickon expressed the Delawares’ willingness to come to terms if the amount of land sought by the Penns could be clarified, Andrew Hamilton, an agent of the proprietors, created a map “to shew and explain to the Indians the Boundaries of the said Land, and the Course of the one and Half Day’s Walk, which was to determine and fix the Extent or Head Line of that Purchase to the Northward.”<sup>5</sup>

As William Allen remembered the events of August 25, 1737, after the four sachems had the map explained to them and “fully considered what had been then shewn and said to them, they declared themselves fully satisfied and convinced of the Truth thereof and that the Lands mentioned in the said Deeds had been fairly sold by their Ancestors to the said William Penn; and that they were willing to join in a full Confirmation thereof to the said Proprietaries.”<sup>6</sup> The sachems marked a document that confirmed an earlier draft deed and called for the walk to be made. The minutes of the meeting agree with this account, but they also reveal how the deceptive image disguised proprietorial intentions.

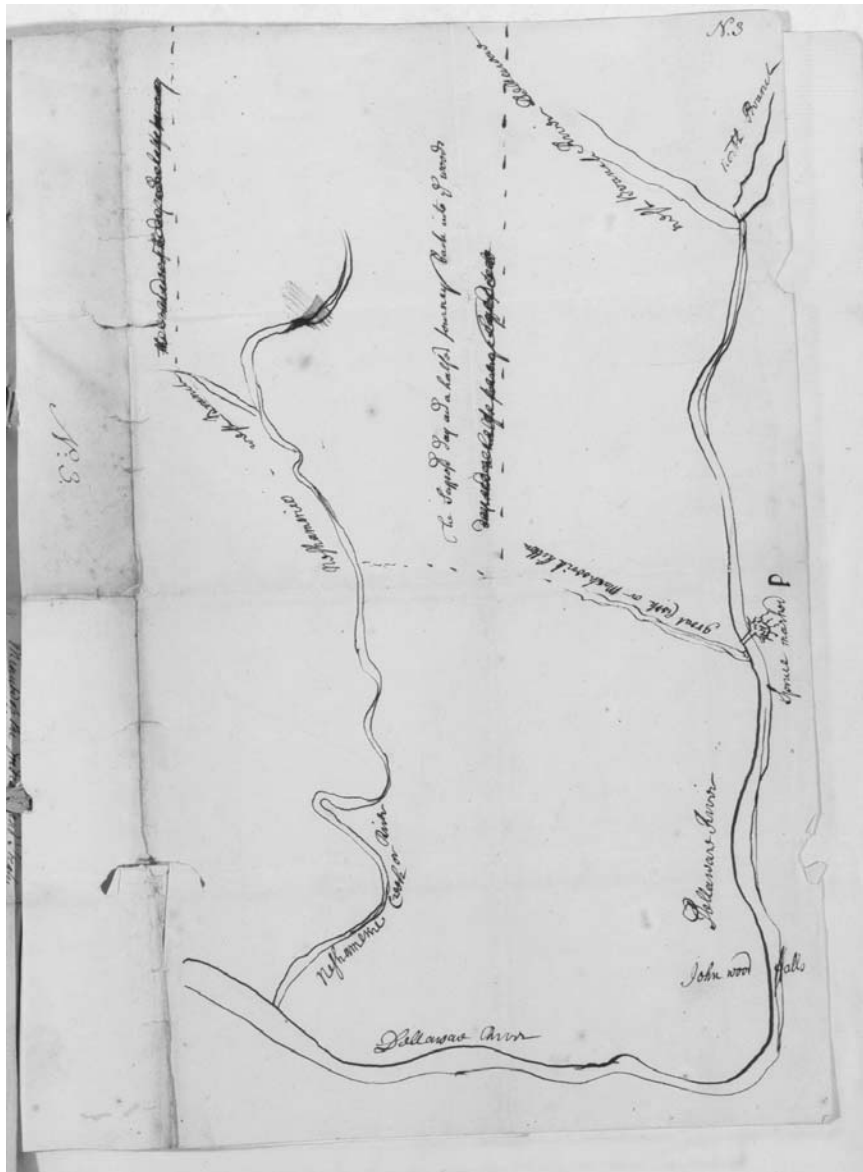
Hamilton’s map holds the key to the proprietors’ duplicity. Though a crude sketch, it was carefully crafted to miscommunicate to Delawares that all they were requested to relinquish was land south of Tohickon Creek. The map depicted the Delaware River from its west-east bend east of Philadelphia to its turn northward. It represented a spruce tree on the Delaware and Neshaminy Creek, between which the northern boundary

<sup>4</sup> Minutes of the Council, Aug. 24, 1737, NV-003, p. 103, ser. 9, Penn Family Papers.

<sup>5</sup> William Allen Deposition, NV-003, p. 101, ser. 9, Penn Family Papers.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*





Hamilton map, box 42, folder 4, Chew Family Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

of an earlier purchase extended east to west. Further north, though greatly compressed in scale, the map showed the “West Branch Delaware River,” or the Lehigh, flowing into the Delaware. Between these two lines it purposely did not represent Tohickon Creek, the land south of which Delawares had long been willing to grant. Hamilton penned a dotted line to depict the direction the walk would take, jutting east from Neshaminy and then abruptly north toward the Lehigh River. The map’s misleading scale, the conspicuous absence of Tohickon Creek, and the dotted line parallel to the general course of the Delaware River than the actual walk caused the sachems to conclude that what the map showed as the Lehigh River was actually Tohickon Creek. And since the Lehigh (disguised as Tohickon) and the dotted line portraying the course of “the supposed day and a half’s journey back into ye woods” both ended near the top of the map, the document created the illusion that the Penns were simply asking for what Delawares were willing to grant—a fact which only becomes clear when one reads the map in light of Delaware accounts.<sup>7</sup>

The August negotiations ended with Delawares requiring the same promise from Penn’s heirs that they had required from Penn: “as the Indians and white People have ever lived together in a good Understanding, they, the Indians, would request that they may be permitted to remain on their present Settlements and Plantations, tho’ within that Purchase, without being molested.” Thomas Penn repeated earlier assurances on this point “and confirmed to them.”<sup>8</sup> These were promises he did not intend to keep. The Penns and their agents executed the infamous walk in September and began creating alternative history.<sup>9</sup> Delawares objected immediately, but their protests were dismissed. They were forced to move west or to completely assimilate. Only in the last generation have their historical voices finally been heard. Moreover, thanks to the Hamilton map, the precise nature of the deception the Penn government enacted upon the Delawares is now clear.

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<sup>7</sup> Minutes of the Council, Aug. 24, 1737, and map, NV-003, p. 103, ser. 9, Penn Family Papers.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.; Jean R. Soderlund, ed., *William Penn and the Founding of Pennsylvania, 1680–1684: A Documentary History* (Philadelphia, 1983), 160.

<sup>9</sup> Minutes of the Council, Aug. 24, 1737; and Document G, NV-003, p. 100, ser. 9, Penn Family Papers.

## *Charting the Colonial Backcountry: Joseph Shippen's Map of the Susquehanna River*

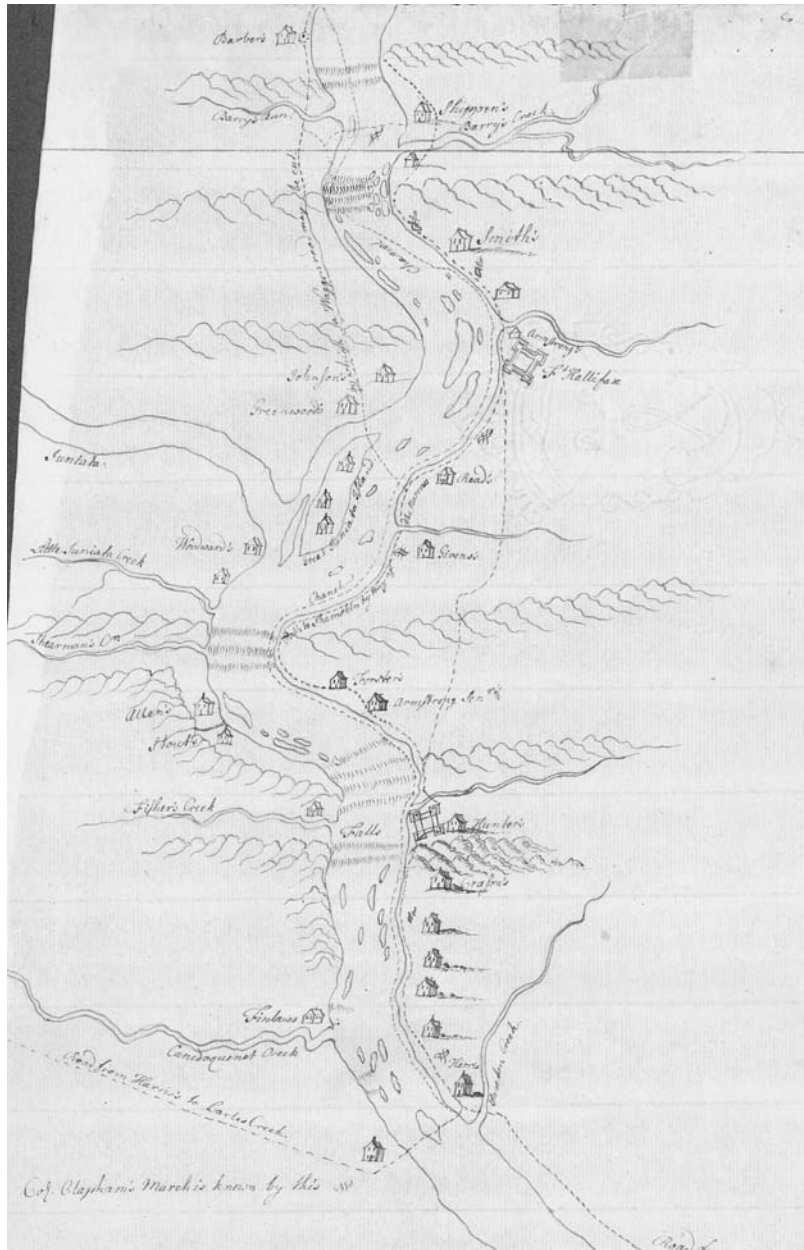
In the confusing and complex period after the outbreak of the French and Indian War in 1755, the Susquehanna River acted as an important space that encompassed the competing and overlapping spheres of influence of both the British and the French in Pennsylvania. The confluence of the north and west branches of the river was also the site of the Indian town of Shamokin, where from 1747 through 1755 Moravian missionaries lived alongside Iroquois, Delawares, and Shawnees. Here the Moravians developed warm relations with such influential figures as Shikellamy, the Oneida sachem to the area's Iroquois, as well as with other native peoples who had been displaced from the area around the Chesapeake Bay.

The presence of Moravian missionaries at Shamokin might explain the existence in the Moravian Archives in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, of a four-piece manuscript map of the Susquehanna River drawn by Joseph Shippen around the time the fort system was being built along the river.<sup>1</sup> The map accurately marks the route that Colonel William Clapham and four hundred troops took in July 1756 from Harris's ferry at the mouth of Paxton Creek up the eastern shore of the river to Fort Hunter, Fort Halifax, and Fort Augusta. The map also traces the water route taken by canoes and "bateaux," laden with provisions, as they tried to avoid the dangers of the rapids, falls, and riffles. To this end, Shippen's map details with great precision the numerous river islands and obstacles that such a flotilla had to navigate.

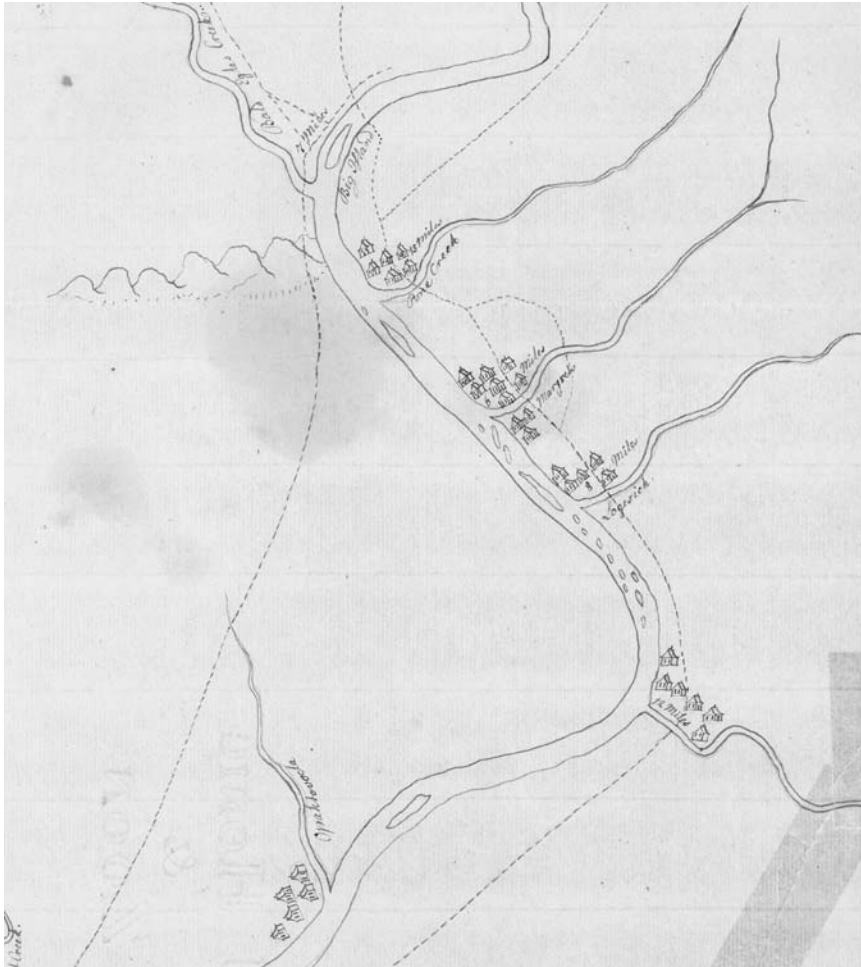
Reproduced here are two details of the map that demonstrate some of its significance to researchers. The first portion charts the main stem of the Susquehanna River from Harris's ferry up to Shipman's property on Barry's Creek. The two routes taken by land and water are clearly delineated (marked with a hash), as are the houses of settlers on both sides of the river and the names of creeks and tributaries.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The complete map, consisting of four sections, can be found at f.037.10–13, Drawings and Prints, Moravian Archives, Bethlehem, PA.

<sup>2</sup> An account of Clapham's march can be found in Herbert C. Bell, *The History of Northumberland County, Pennsylvania* (Chicago, 1891), 50–60.



Main stem of the Susquehanna. Reproduced with the permission of the Moravian Archives, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.



“Long Reach” of the West Branch of the Susquehanna. Reproduced with the permission of the Moravian Archives, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.

The second segment depicts the positions of villages along the “Long Reach” of the West Branch of the Susquehanna River that had been inhabited up to and during this period by the extended family of the Indian interpreters Madame and Andrew Montour.<sup>3</sup> The Shippen map shows the villages at the mouths of the Muncy, Loyalsock (Ostonwakin), Lycoming (Quenischachachque), and Pine Creeks, respectively. In June 1753 Bernhard Grube, a Moravian missionary then residing at Shamokin, travelled up the West Branch to visit the members of the Montour family who were still living there. Of the place where once Madame Montour had lived, he wrote:

as I got to Ostonwakin I relaxed on the spot where earlier the Indian Town had stood, and I refreshed myself with strawberries, and thought a great deal about our dear Disciple and his dear travel company that pitched their tents here ten years ago. It is a pleasant area but now no one lives here any more. Now I could easily bathe in the Ostonwakin, the last time however it was up to my armpits and the current was very strong.<sup>4</sup>

Grube continued to French Margaret’s Town, as it is marked on the Shippen map, and provided the following description:

In the afternoon, around 5 o’clock, I arrived at the first little town on this side of Quenischachachque, where the deceased Madame Montour’s daughter Margaret and her family live. She is a very rich woman, has 30 horses, several cows, and 40 pigs. This year she planted 8 acres of Indian corn.<sup>5</sup>

Although this portion of the map is far less detailed than the representation of the main stem, Shippen accurately marks the existence of two

<sup>3</sup> For a detailed account of the Montours, see Jon Parmenter, “Isabel Montour: Cultural Broker on the Frontiers of New York and Pennsylvania,” in *The Human Tradition in Colonial America*, ed. Ian K. Steele and Nancy L. Rhoden (Wilmington, DE, 1999), 141–59. The Moravian missionary John Heckewelder claims that Quenischachachque is also the Lenape name for the West Branch, meaning the “river of long reaches.” See “Notes and Queries,” *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 11 (1887): 126.

<sup>4</sup> “Diary by Grube, April 14–July 31, 1753,” ms. 01.32.121.6, Moravian Archives (translation mine). For Count Nicholas von Zinzendorf’s account of his meeting with Andrew Montour at this same place, see William C. Reichel, ed., *Memorials of the Moravian Church*, vol. 1 (Philadelphia, 1870), 95–97; and William C. Reichel, ed., *Count Zinzendorf and the Indians (1742; repr. Lewisburg, PA, 2007)*.

<sup>5</sup> “Diary by Grube.”

villages at the mouth of the Lycoming Creek. The village on the western side of the water, the larger of the two, was Grube's actual destination. He recorded:

On the 6th of June I went to Quenischachachque and as I came into the town an Indian by the name of Thomas Freeman came up to me and said immediately "Welcome Brother! I know who you must be and I want to take you into the Lodge," and so he took me to James David's house where Christian Renatus lodged, who also came out to meet me and was very pleased. Soon several Indians arrived and asked whether this was the Brother about whom they had heard so much and they were very friendly towards me. Then I was treated to bear meat.<sup>6</sup>

Although Grube's account is rich in detail of the area, Shippen's map is not; Shippen did not travel this far along the West Branch himself, but, rather, relied on the reports of scouts who were sent forward up the Susquehanna's branches to look for hostile French Indians.

One other copy of Colonel Clapham's "March to Fort Augusta" can be found in the Pennsylvania State Archives.<sup>7</sup> The version of Shippen's map contained therein is not as detailed, but the relief drawing of the islands and steep cliffs on the banks of the river is more expertly rendered, which might lead one to believe that this is a later, more polished, version of the map. Why the supposed original of a map that was drawn for primarily colonial military interests should be in the Moravian Archives, however, is unknown. The detail and condition of Shippen's map in the Moravian Archives mark it of paramount interest to researchers focusing on the fascinating confluence not only of the Susquehanna River but also of the native and colonial settlers who lived along its shores in the mid-eighteenth century.

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> [Map of Col. Clapham's March to Fort Augusta, ca. 1756, by Joseph Shippen], MG11-Map Collection, Map 105, Pennsylvania State Archives, Harrisburg, PA. "Begins at Harris's near Paxton Creek, past Fort Halifax to Fort Augusta. Then up the East Branch of the Susquehanna to Nanticoke Town and Mamuncis[?] Town. Shows the West Branch of the Susquehanna to and past Shonemahone. Original, hand drawn in 3 colors. Laminated, 8 sections."

## *John Harris, Historical Interpretation, and the Standing Stone Mystery Revealed*

In the early spring of 1754, John Harris, operator of a trading post and ferry on the Susquehanna River, described for the provincial government two paths of travel through the Pennsylvania wilderness to the Native American village of Logs Town (present-day Ambridge) on the Ohio River. Titled “An Acct. of the Road to Logs Town on the Allegheny River, Taken by John Harris, 1754,” his sketch provides marvelous details of the natural and man-made features of backcountry Pennsylvania on the eve of the French and Indian War. Recorded as a deposition before Provincial Secretary Joseph Shippen, Harris’s description is one of several made for the government by frontier traders, among them Andrew Montour, Hugh Crawford, and Phillip Davies.<sup>1</sup> But Harris’s deposition in particular would later cause historical confusion about the dimensions of one of the landscape features he listed—the Standing Stone.

The traders interviewed provided in their depositions various routes from east to west, but Harris’s description of the two routes to Logstown is long and quite detailed, listing many features of the landscape, and thus is helpful for researchers interested in reconstructing and studying the frontier at that time.<sup>2</sup> Giving written instructions and the number of miles to each stopping place, this document provides the contemporary equivalent of Google mapping. Harris’s two routes, like those described in the other depositions, are along established Indian trails, ideal for a small party traveling by foot or horse. One follows in part the Raystown (Bedford) Path to the south, and the other in part the Frankstown (Altoona) and Kittanning Paths to the north.<sup>3</sup> Harris begins by describing

<sup>1</sup> In the spring of 1754, the government, needing to verify if French incursions were indeed within Pennsylvania’s borders, was keenly interested in the number of miles to the western parameter of the colony. The western border of Pennsylvania was specified as “five degrees of longitude” west of the Delaware River in William Penn’s 1681 charter for Pennsylvania.

<sup>2</sup> Harris’s deposition is #177 in Miscellaneous Papers (ser. 21.9), Record Group 21, Records of the Proprietary Government, Pennsylvania State Archives, Harrisburg, PA. All depositions, including Harris’s, were later printed in *Pennsylvania Archives*, ed. Samuel Hazard et al. (Philadelphia and Harrisburg, 1852–1935), 1st ser., 2:133–36. Paul A. W. Wallace relied on many of these documents in his *Indian Paths of Pennsylvania* (Harrisburg, PA, 1965).

<sup>3</sup> Although Harris states Logstown is on the “Allegheny,” by present standards it sits on the Ohio River. The Allegheny is the main tributary of the Ohio, and both names were given for the river in the early eighteenth century.



a course from his ferry, past George Croghan's and Andrew Montour's homes along Sherman's Creek, to a junction around present-day Concord in Franklin County. The two routes then diverged, one branching toward Raystown and the other to Frankstown. He enumerates the distances between landmarks along the Raystown Path to the Forks of the Ohio and down the river to Logstown, calculating the total distance of this "Old Road" at 246 miles.<sup>4</sup> Then the lengths of the Frankstown/Kittanning Path are described; although Harris does not provide a total distance, adding the lengths of the segments reveals the second route to be 220 miles. This last total is surprisingly accurate, for a simple internet search today reveals that the distance between Harrisburg and Ambridge via various interstates is 221 miles.

The Harris deposition is particularly significant for the fact that it records the physical dimensions of the Standing Stone along the Frankstown Path, the only contemporary record known to do so. The Standing Stone was a long, thin rock, erected by Native Americans at the junction of Standing Stone Creek and the Juniata River at what would become the borough of Huntingdon. Harris gave the dimensions as "abot 14 ft. high, and 6 inchs square." The rock had stood there for many years previous to his description; likely of spiritual importance to the Indians, it was also a guidepost to any traveler on the Frankstown Path. The stone was said to have been removed by the Lenape people around 1768, after the Treaty of Fort Stanwix, and taken west with them.

The original Harris deposition, retained by the Pennsylvania government, eventually became part of the records of the Provincial Council now at the Pennsylvania State Archives. The document was recognized for its value by I. D. Rupp and published in part in his 1847 *History and Topography of Northumberland, Huntingdon, Mifflin, Centre, Union, Columbia, Juniata and Clinton Counties*.<sup>5</sup> In 1851, it was cataloged as document #640 by Samuel Hazard, who had been hired by the government to arrange and catalog many of the unorganized provincial and state records. Harris's deposition was published the next year in its entirety in volume 2 of the first series of *Pennsylvania Archives*, edited by Hazard, increasing awareness of the record among historians, who recognized its

<sup>4</sup> Later adapted as part of Forbes Road in 1758, the route of the South Penn Railroad in the nineteenth century, and, eventually, the Pennsylvania Turnpike.

<sup>5</sup> Israel Daniel Rupp, *History and Topography of Northumberland, Huntingdon, Mifflin, Centre, Union, Columbia, Juniata and Clinton Counties, Pa.* (Lancaster, PA, 1847), 396 and 397.

significance as the only contemporary description of the Standing Stone. The deposition was partially quoted in U. J. Jones's *History of the Early Settlement of the Juniata Valley* (1856) and reproduced, also in its entirety, in J. Simpson Africa's *History of Huntingdon and Blair Counties, Pennsylvania* (1883). Charles Hanna, in *The Wilderness Trail* (1911), provides not only a reprint of the full document but a twenty-one-page explication of each place listed.<sup>6</sup>

By the 1920s, the original document, having broken along fold lines into several pieces, was mended by State Archives staff using glue and strips of paper, standard repair materials at the time. The simple mends generated a controversy that would last nearly seventy-five years among Huntingdon County historians. In 1939, Lefferd A. M. Haughwout, a sometime historian who vacationed in Juniata County, wrote a history of the Standing Stone in two parts for the *Lewistown Sentinel*.<sup>7</sup> In his narrative, he recounts visiting the public archives in Harrisburg and viewing the original Harris deposition:

An inquiry at the Archives Division of the State Library at Harrisburg proved successful, and the historic document was readily made available for examination. . . . The initial entries are as follows . . . "to the Standing Stone about 4 feet high, 6 inch square. . . ." The discovery of a plainly written "4" instead of 10 [sic] was a great a surprise to the present writer. . . . Members of the Archives staff were called to verify it one by one, and all without hesitation agreed the reading was correct. In order that there may be no doubt of the matter the writer has placed a photostat of the original in the Juniata College Library where it may be consulted by those who are interested. . . . The manuscript itself, indeed, may easily be misread by a careless reader, for the down stroke of the "t" in the word "about" is so close to the "4", and is made in such a way that it looks at first as a numeral one. The crossing of the "t" is faint but unmistakable.

Haughwout criticized Jones and Africa for relying on the published *Pennsylvania Archives* version of the deposition rather than the original, and his claim that the Standing Stone had in fact been four feet tall stood for many years. In 1966, the document, along with the other records of

<sup>6</sup> U. J. Jones, *History of the Early Settlement of the Juniata Valley* (Philadelphia, 1856), 183–85; J. Simpson Africa, *History of Huntingdon and Blair Counties, Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia, 1883), 27; Charles A. Hanna, *The Wilderness Trail; or, The Ventures and Adventures of the Pennsylvania Traders on the Allegheny Path*, 2 vols. (New York and London, 1911), 1:252–73.

<sup>7</sup> *Lewistown Sentinel*, Aug. 17 and 18, 1939. The quote is from the August 18 article.

the Provincial Council, was microfilmed in the condition in which Haughwout had encountered it and became widely used by researchers.<sup>8</sup>

In 2011, Fred Lang and Nancy Shedd, distinguished Huntingdon County historians, approached the State Archives. The pair were suspicious that the paper mends on the document in the 1920s might have obscured a numeral “1” in the original, leading Haughwout to read the height of the Standing Stone as “4” rather than “14.” Close examination revealed that a pencil had been used to fill in portions of text obscured by the paper mends. Lang and Shedd reasoned that a well-intentioned document restorer, assuming the height was four feet, not fourteen, likely inserted a number 4. As Harris’s deposition was significant to the early history of Huntingdon and the only physical description of the Standing Stone, they decided to take action. Through their entreaties, the Isett Foundation of Huntingdon generously provided funding to undo the old mends and re-repair the document. Harris’s deposition was sent to the Conservation Center for Art and Historic Artifacts in Philadelphia in the fall of 2011. The old paper mends were removed, clearly revealing a number “1” next to the “4.” The document was again repaired, this time using a nearly translucent mending tissue, and was cleaned, deacidified, and encapsulated between two sheets of clear polyester film. With the height of the Standing Stone now restored to fourteen feet, the newly refurbished record was then displayed for ten days at the State Museum (March 9–18, 2012) as part of the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission’s annual Heritage Week activities.

Historians are trained to review original sources as definitive and to think of printed versions as secondary sources. In this case, the printed version was the true one, faithfully copied from the original, and the original unintentionally camouflaged, leading to an incorrect conclusion.

*Pennsylvania State Archives*

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<sup>8</sup> Haughwout was right to be suspicious about Jones’s work, well known to be spurious on many accounts; Donald H. Kent, project director, *Records of the Provincial Council, 1682–1776, in the Pennsylvania State Archives*, microfilm edition, 26 rolls (Harrisburg, PA, 1966).

## *Rev. John Elder and Identity in the Pennsylvania Backcountry*

While scholars have often cited the letters of the Reverend John Elder, housed in the archives of the Historical Society of Dauphin County, for information concerning the political atmosphere in the Pennsylvania backcountry during and immediately after the French and Indian War, few historians have taken notice of the clues that Elder's letters provide regarding the complicated nature of identity in the region.<sup>1</sup> Born in Scotland in 1706 and educated at the University of Glasgow, Elder served as the minister of Paxton Presbyterian Church along the banks of the Susquehanna River in northwestern Lancaster County from 1738 to 1792.<sup>2</sup> During the crisis of Pontiac's Uprising in 1763, when Delaware and Shawnee warriors attacked settlements throughout the backcountry in an effort to stop the further encroachment of British settlers onto their lands, Elder served as a liaison between the backcountry residents and the provincial authorities. In this role, he exchanged numerous letters with Governor John Penn, Colonel Joseph Shippen, and other government officials, providing information on conditions in the backcountry.

Elder's letters reveal the backcountry residents' deepening hatred for Native Americans and their desire to eliminate all Indians, both friendly and unfriendly, from the region in the aftermath of the uprising. Elder routinely referred to Native Americans as "Savages" in his letters to provincial authorities.<sup>3</sup> His letter to the governor in October 1763 reveals Elder's belief that all Native Americans should be removed from the region: "it is evident," he wrote, "that till that Branch of the [Susquehanna] River is cleared of the Savages, the frontier settlements will be in no safety."<sup>4</sup> In a letter to Colonel Shippen in the aftermath of the Paxton Boys' brutal murder of Conestoga Indians living under the provincial government's protection in Lancaster County in December 1763, Elder reiterated the backcountry settlers' insistence on ending all friendly relations with any Native Americans. "The country seems deter-

<sup>1</sup> Rev. John Elder Correspondence, 1754–1763, Elder Collection, MG 070, Historical Society of Dauphin County (hereafter Elder Correspondence).

<sup>2</sup> *Commemorative Biographical Encyclopedia of Dauphin County* (Chambersburg, PA, 1896), 169–70.

<sup>3</sup> John Elder to Gov. John Penn, Aug. 4, 1763, and Oct. 25, 1763; and John Elder to Col. Joseph Shippen, Feb. 1, 1764, Elder Correspondence.

<sup>4</sup> John Elder to Gov. John Penn, Oct. 25, 1763.

mined,” he reported, “that no Indian Treaties shall be held or Savages maintained at the expense of the province.”<sup>5</sup>

The Elder correspondence also documents the complexity of ethnic identity among European settlers in the colonial Pennsylvania backcountry. Elder’s letters in the wake of the Paxton Boys affair make clear the role that ethnic identities played in the political conflict that emerged after the murders of the Conestogas. After the massacres, the Quaker faction that dominated the provincial assembly had published a series of pamphlets blaming the murders exclusively on the Scots-Irish Presbyterian settlers in the backcountry. In his letter to Shippen, Elder revealed that “the Presbyterians are enraged at their being charged in bulk with these facts [the murders].”<sup>6</sup>

Moreover, Elder’s letter to Shippen provides insight into the confused identity of the Scots-Irish settlers themselves. The Scots-Irish congregants in Paxton Presbyterian Church did not, according to Elder, identify themselves as Scots-Irish during the 1760s; the Presbyterians, he claimed, were particularly angry about being labeled “under the name Scotch Irish and other ill-natured titles” by the pamphlet authors. Further reflecting the ethnic dimension of the conflict, Elder claimed that the Presbyterians were especially outraged because “the killing [of] the Connestoga Indians is compared to the Irish Massacres and reckoned the most barbarous of either” in the pamphlets.<sup>7</sup> By referring negatively to the Irish killings of Anglo and Scottish Protestants in Ulster during the Irish Rebellion of 1649, Elder and his Presbyterian neighbors demonstrated that they did not identify with the native Irish, either.

In many ways, the Elder correspondence raises more questions than it answers. How did the Scots-Irish Presbyterians in the Pennsylvania backcountry identify themselves? Did they view themselves as Irish, Scottish, Scots-Irish, British, or American? Did all backcountry settlers share a common identity based on their European ancestry and white skin color, in opposition to the Native American ancestry and red skin color of the Delawares, Shawnees, and Conestogas with whom they increasingly came into conflict? These challenges presented by the John Elder letters provide fertile ground for historians of the Pennsylvania backcountry to explore.

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<sup>5</sup> John Elder to Col. Joseph Shippen, Feb. 1, 1764.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

## *A Failed Peace: The Friendly Association and the Pennsylvania Backcountry during the Seven Years' War*

Scholars interested in the complex, violent, and ultimately tragic relations between native peoples and colonists in eighteenth-century America could do worse than to examine the Friendly Association Papers at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.<sup>1</sup> The Friendly Association was a Quaker organization dedicated to ending Indian attacks on Pennsylvania's frontier by addressing native grievances over the loss of Indian lands to colonization. The association, which operated from 1755 to 1764, was supported by wealthy Philadelphia Quakers, most notably Israel Pemberton. The documents found in the Friendly Association collection reflect the myriad and conflicting responses of Friends, settlers, government officials, and the region's native inhabitants to the violence that engulfed Pennsylvania's backcountry during the Seven Years' War.<sup>2</sup>

The Friendly Association occupied a unique space at the intersection of Quaker idealism and backcountry violence. The organization emerged as part of a broader shake-up within Pennsylvania Quakerism precipitated by the war and the gradual decline of Quaker influence in provincial government. Consequently, Quaker reformers looked to Indian philanthropy as a means by which to reassert their influence in the colony. From 1755 to 1758, the Friendly Association took part in the government's treaty negotiations with warring Lenape and Ohio Valley Indians. Pemberton and the Friendly Association failed to stop the war—Indian diplomatic maneuvering and the British conquest of Fort Duquesne accomplished that.<sup>3</sup> Settlers cast the Quakers as pacifist Indian sympathizers and

<sup>1</sup> The full name of the organization is "Friendly Association for Regaining and Preserving Peace with the Indians by Pacific Measures." Its papers are located in box 18, ser. 7, Cox-Parrish-Wharton Papers (Collection 154), Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Cited hereafter as Friendly Association Papers.

<sup>2</sup> My summary draws from Jack Marietta, *The Reformation of American Quakerism, 1748–1783* (Philadelphia, 1984), and Kevin Kenny, *Peaceable Kingdom Lost: The Paxton Boys and the Destruction of William Penn's Holy Experiment* (New York, 2009).

<sup>3</sup> See Michael McConnell, "Peoples 'in Between': The Iroquois and the Ohio Indians, 1720–1768," in *Beyond the Covenant Chain: The Iroquois and Their Neighbors in Indian North America, 1600–1800*, ed. Daniel K. Richter and James H. Merrell (Syracuse, NY, 1987), 93–112; see also Fred Anderson, *Crucible of War: The Seven Years' War and the Fate of Empire in British North America, 1754–1766* (New York, 2000).

blamed them (as well as the provincial government) for native attacks on their homes and families.

Researchers will find more than just Quaker concerns in the Friendly Association Papers. The collection, though relatively modest at fourteen folders, broadly addresses the problem of race and colonial violence in Pennsylvania from multiple perspectives. William Penn, the founding Quaker proprietor, believed that compensating the Lenape for their lands would lay the foundation for peaceful coexistence between settlers and Indians. Yet Quaker and Euro-American colonization resulted in the forced westward displacement of the region's Native Americans. Colonization, in turn, led to Indian retaliations in Pennsylvania's backcountry, culminating in 1763–64 with the pan-Indian uprising known as Pontiac's War and the Paxton Boys' massacre of Conestoga Indians.

Among the Friendly Association Papers at the Historical Society is an early manuscript copy of the Paxton rioters' rationalization for "killing those Indians at Lancaster," whom they blamed for supporting "our avowed, imbittered [Indian] Enemies." The petition castigated the Pennsylvania government for insufficiently protecting backcountry settlers and pointedly blamed Israel Pemberton and the Quakers for giving their Indian enemies "a Rod to scourge the White People."<sup>4</sup> Fear and hatred of Indians—and the racial exclusion of Quakers—was essential to settlers' construction of a pan-Euro-American, interreligious notion of whiteness.<sup>5</sup>

Faced with the specter of uncontrollable racial violence in Pennsylvania, different Euro-American factions sought to shift blame onto one another. In one letter, Susannah Wright, a Friend, complained about the settlers' "Glaring Misrepresentations" of Pennsylvania's Quakers.<sup>6</sup> In another letter, written in 1757, Virginia's Governor Loudoun chided the Pennsylvania government for "obstinately . . . carrying on Negotiations with the Indians" without due regard for the strategic and diplomatic aims of the Crown government.<sup>7</sup> William Johnson, the renowned British diplomat to the Iroquois, lamented in a 1768 letter over "the Barbarity exercised on the unhappy Conestoga Indians [and] . . .

<sup>4</sup> "Declaration of the Frontier Inhabitants of Pennsylvania," [1764], folder 1, Friendly Association Papers.

<sup>5</sup> Peter Silver, *Our Savage Neighbors: How Indian War Transformed Early America* (New York, 2007), see esp. 122–23.

<sup>6</sup> Susannah Wright to Dr. Reiger, [1764], folder 3, Friendly Association Papers.

<sup>7</sup> Lord Loudoun to Governor Denny, May 5, 1757, folder 3, Friendly Association Papers.

the unjustifiable Settlements formed within their Country without the least Colour of right.”<sup>8</sup>

The meeting minutes of the Friendly Association from 1756 to 1764 are the most prominent part of the collection, complementing the better known, five-volume collection of Friendly Association papers at Haverford College’s Quaker and Special Collections.<sup>9</sup> The minutes painstakingly detail the efforts of Friends to portray themselves as peace-makers, using the myth of Penn’s benevolent relations with the Lenape to legitimate their Indian advocacy. Though filtered through Quaker eyes, native voices occasionally emerge between the lines. At the 1756 Easton conference, for example, Quakers recorded Teedyuscung, the “King of the Delawares,” giving the Friendly Association “Liberty to search into the Foundation of [his] Complaints.”<sup>10</sup> In the face of Pennsylvania’s strategic alliance with the Iroquois, who presumed to speak on behalf of the Lenape, Teedyuscung needed the Friendly Association as much as the Quakers needed him.<sup>11</sup>

In the end, however, Teedyuscung and the Friendly Association failed in their ambitions. But the greater loss undoubtedly was suffered by the Lenape and Ohio Valley Indians, who retreated westward at the end of the war after the Pennsylvania government broke its promise to prevent throngs of settlers from crossing the Allegheny Mountains.

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<sup>8</sup> William Johnson, to Joseph Galloway, Jan. 22, 1768, folder 3, Friendly Association Papers.

<sup>9</sup> The collection comprises the first part of the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Indian Committee Records, ca. 1745–1983, Quaker and Special Collections, Haverford College, Haverford, PA.

<sup>10</sup> Quotation from Minutes, 1756–59, folder 10, p. 39, Friendly Association Papers.

<sup>11</sup> See Kenny, *Peaceable Kingdom Lost*, 83–111.



## *Letter to Farmers in Pennsylvania: John Dickinson Writes to the Paxton Boys*

One of “Pennsylvania Farmer” John Dickinson’s earliest public documents, recently processed by the John Dickinson Writings Project, is titled “Letter to the Inhabitants of the Frontiers on their intended Expedition ag[ains]t the Indians under the Protection of the Gov[ernmen]t.”<sup>1</sup> Dickinson wrote this seventeen-page draft to convince the Paxton Boys, who had recently slaughtered a group of peaceful Conestoga Indians, not to do the same to the Moravian Indians in protective custody in Philadelphia. Although “hidden” in plain view in the Delaware Public Archives, this document has not surfaced in past attempts to publish Dickinson’s writings, nor is it included in John R. Dunbar’s *The Paxton Papers* (1957). Though undated, the content of the missive indicates that it was written no earlier than January 6, 1764, and that it may have been a response to the Paxtonians’ *Declaration and Remonstrance*, read in assembly on February 17. The letter does not appear to have been published.

When he wrote, Dickinson was a member of the assembly, sympathetic to Quaker interests, and actively involved in managing the crisis moving from the frontier toward Philadelphia. His letter highlights the difficulties Quakers faced in balancing their political ideals with the realities of governing people who did not share their commitment to pacifism and friendship with the Indians. Specifically, it shows how Dickinson, as a non-Quaker, used means that Quakers politically and theologically could not in order to realize their hopes that “the Disturbances might more easily be quieted than by harsher Methods.”<sup>2</sup>

Dickinson’s aim was to avoid further bloodshed by using the most tactical arguments possible, even if doing so involved a degree of disingenuousness. Whereas other writings surrounding the episode denounced the Paxtonians and enlisted evidence to show that their murderous ways were contrary to the law—natural, civil, and divine—Dickinson took a unique

<sup>1</sup> Box 6, folder 1, John Dickinson Letters Collection, Small Manuscript Collection, Delaware Public Archives, Dover, DE. The John Dickinson Writings Project (JDP) is collecting and will publish all of Dickinson’s writings on public affairs. Quotes from the document are rendered here according to JDP’s transcription policy: abbreviations are expanded with brackets, deletions are struck-through, and insertions are in curly braces.

<sup>2</sup> *Pennsylvania Archives*, ed. Samuel Hazard et al. (Philadelphia and Harrisburg, PA, 1852–1935), 8th ser., 7:5,554.

approach: in temperate language he sympathized, praised, and reasoned with the Paxton Boys, appealing to their self-interest to persuade them to abandon their plan. Presenting himself as a “sincere Friend,” he explained that his “Heart weeps Blood, for the dear Relations You have lost by [the Indians’] Savage Barbarity.” The Indians, meanwhile, he described as “poor miserable despicable, ~~yellow Ragamuffins,~~ {Wretches}.” Dickinson proclaimed, “Your Zeal is Noble,” and gave his readers a most un-Quakerly assurance that were the Indians’ guilt certain, “my Arm shall give the first Stroke—I will be the foremost Man among You.” But, he queried, “are You not mistaken in this Point?”

Knowing that arguing on behalf of the “Savages” would be counter-productive, Dickinson devoted relatively little time to “their Friendship & Faithfulness to the English” or to the fact they “have been baptizd in the name of the Blessed Trinity.” Nor did he dwell on the violent behavior of the Paxtonians, except to remind them gently that Joshua did not kill the Gibeonites and that the Paxton Boys’ plan was “contrary to the Laws of our Country.” He focused instead on the negative consequences for them: never-ending war, more killing of whites, and the loss of liberty they would suffer should the English seize on the Paxtonians’ actions as an excuse to establish a military presence in Pennsylvania.

After the *Declaration and Remonstrance*, the assembly desired a meeting with the frontiersmen, believing that “their Discontents are founded upon false or mistaken Facts.”<sup>3</sup> The meeting did not take place, and Dickinson may have planned his letter as a substitute. To an audience deeply hostile to the government, he styled himself “no Gov[ernmen]t Man” as he explained the assembly’s position. He assured them the assembly was truly representative, “chosen by Us {& sent from every Part of the Province}.” Furthermore, it was responsive: “they feel your Misfortunes in the most tender Manner; & are contriving every Method of making You secure & happy.” As proof, he pointed out that the assembly recently voted to raise a thousand men at the cost of £50,000. Naturally, Dickinson omitted the fact that the assembly was pressured to these votes by the governor of New York and General Thomas Gage. But in acknowledgment of the Paxtonians’ hardships, the assembly had agreed to “generously ~~exempt~~ {discharge} our unhappy Brethren on the Frontiers from bearing any share of the Load.”

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

Yet, though he cajoled and placated the Paxtonians, Assemblyman Dickinson was not as sympathetic as he pretended to be. He fully intended to bring “to Justice the Perpetrators and Abettors of the said inhuman and illegal Act.”<sup>4</sup> He had already worked with Governor Penn to “strengthen his Honour’s Hands” and raise money for a military force, and he co-authored a bill “for preventing Tumults and Riotous Assemblies and for the more speedy and effectual punishing the Rioters.”<sup>5</sup> Read in context of the assembly’s official actions, Dickinson’s letter gives us an alternate view of how it hoped to preempt the crisis on the frontier.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 8th ser., 6:5,500.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 8th ser., 7:5,537–38.

## *The Kittanning Destroyed Medal*

On May 1, 2006, western Pennsylvania began the celebration of the 250th anniversary of the Seven Years' War with an exhibit entitled *Clash of Empires: The British, French, and Indian War, 1754–1763*, the largest known exhibition on the conflict, at the Senator John Heinz Regional History Center in Pittsburgh. Nestled among the nearly three hundred rare artifacts and paintings was the “Kittanning Destroyed Medal,” the first documented medal engraved and struck for military honor in British North America. Originally struck in silver by order of the Corporation of the City of Philadelphia, it was presented by Mayor Attwood Shute to Colonel John Armstrong, who led the Second Battalion of the Pennsylvania Regiment against the Indian village of Kittanning on September 8, 1756, in retaliation for the raiding and burning of Fort Granville approximately a month before. The front of the medal displays the battle at Kittanning; it shows a military officer followed by two soldiers, with an Indian prostrate on the ground before them. In the background, the Indian village is burning. The reverse side portrays the Philadelphia Corporation's coat of arms. Although this original medal is one of the rarest American treasures, it is easy to find in the historical literature—it is invariably mentioned as a fitting commemoration of Armstrong's raid. Despite its historical significance and value, however, there has been no attempt to document the medal's history or explain its meaning.<sup>1</sup>

These insignia were bestowed upon Armstrong and his men for their “signal Proofs of Courage and personal Bravery” on January 5, 1757.<sup>2</sup> The medals were engraved by Edward Duffield, a watchmaker, and were struck by Joseph Richardson, a noted silversmith. Armstrong and his officers received silver medals; later, his noncommissioned officers accepted medals struck in bronze, while the enlisted soldiers collected theirs in pewter. By 1800, the original dies were placed in the US Mint in

The author would like to thank Ronald E. Crytzer, vice president of the Armstrong County Historical Museum and Genealogical Society, for generously providing all the available information on the Kittanning Destroyed Medal in the society's archives and Karim Tiro and Geoff Plank for reading and offering sound advice in earlier versions of this article.

<sup>1</sup> “Investigation Regarding the Authenticity of Several “Armstrong Medals” also Known as “Kittanning Destroyed Medals” Currently in Possession of the Armstrong County Historical Museum and Genealogical Society” (Oct. 23, 2006), 7.

<sup>2</sup> *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Feb. 17, 1757.

Philadelphia by Joseph Richardson Jr. It appears that these dies lasted until approximately 1874, when they became cracked and were rendered useless. The last strike from the original dies was most likely in the early 1860s.<sup>3</sup> The medal has been restruck for many of America's commemorative anniversaries and celebrations, but the dates have been rarely recorded. An examination of the six medals in possession of the Armstrong County Historical Museum and Genealogical Society proves both the popularity of the medal and the difficulty in tracing subsequent strikes.



Facsimile in copper of the original silver medal given to Gen. Armstrong in 1756. Courtesy of the Philadelphia History Museum at the Atwater Kent, The Historical Society of Pennsylvania Collection. According to Armstrong's battle report, the Allegheny River would have been behind or to the left of the attackers, not on the right as depicted on the medal. Moreover, the battle itself was unorganized and chaotic due to the unfamiliarity of the area, perhaps belying the portrayal on the medal (Hunter, "Victory at Kittanning," 383–94, 405).

<sup>3</sup> C. Wyllys Betts, *American Colonial History Illustrated by Contemporary Medals*, ed. William T. R. Marvin and Lyman Haynes Low (New York, 1894), 178–79; "Colonel Armstrong and the Kittanning Medal," *MCA Advisory* 8, no. 1 (2005): 9–10.

Some of these restruck medals were produced as fundraisers to support local celebrations, while others were donated by private owners. Within the museum's collection are Kittanning medals that were reproduced in honor of the 250th anniversary of Armstrong's raid in 2006, the nation's centennial and bicentennial, and George Washington's 200th birthday in the 1930s. The final two artifacts, a silver medal struck sometime between 1810 and 1840 in England by jeweler Thomas Halliday and a copper medal struck from the original dies, are significantly more important historically because of their age and composition. Although both medals were difficult to assess, the copper medal easily revealed its age because it has visual imperfections caused by an air bubble that damaged both the medal and the die.<sup>4</sup> The society currently does not have any of the original silver medals, which remain the rarest and most valuable.

In an age when medals are regularly awarded within the US military for various achievements, most Americans are ambivalent to what all these decorations represent. The proliferation of medals has greatly numbed their true value. Perhaps the reason why the Kittanning Destroyed Medal continues to be reproduced and admired is that it is attractive and possesses many of the characteristics most desirable to collectors: narration, perspective charm, commemoration, image, beauty, and longevity.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, it was the very first military medal in North America awarded for courage and bravery, predating the Badge of Military Merit or Purple Heart by approximately twenty-five years. Finally, medals are largely awarded for morale. Contemporary medals are now considered by many in the military community to be unexceptional and commonplace;<sup>6</sup> the Kittanning Destroyed Medal, on the other hand, provided a real boost in morale for the backcountry inhabitants desperate for relief from relentless attacks by Native Americans.

In historical memory, the medal awarded to Armstrong and his men illustrates the significance of how a global war transformed the backcountry from relatively peaceful coexistence between Indians and whites to one engulfed in bloodshed and hate. For nearly seven decades William Penn's vision of a Peaceable Kingdom succeeded to make Pennsylvania

<sup>4</sup> "Investigation," 4–7.

<sup>5</sup> D. Wayne Johnson, "Okay, Then, What Are the Characteristics of Medals," Medal Collectors of America website (2004), <http://www.medalcollectors.org/Questions/#Q10>.

<sup>6</sup> Raymond M. Powell, USAF, "Medals for Mediocrity: How to Restore Meaning to Air Force Decorations," *Air and Space Power Journal* 23, no. 1 (2009): 41–43; Neal Creighton, "Restoring Meaning to Medals," *Chicago Tribune*, Feb. 25, 1992, 15.

unique among the British North American colonies, but the Seven Years' War redefined that relationship. Beginning in the summer of 1756, as depicted on the medal, killing Indians and burning down their villages, crops, and other property, distinguished how Pennsylvanians dealt with their "Indian problem."<sup>7</sup> Colonel John Armstrong, often referred to as the "Hero of Kittanning," is celebrated as a model of American manhood; he is displayed prominently, orchestrating the attack and directing his men to shoot the Indians and burn their village.

Native Americans, Britons, and the French were immersed in a three-way struggle for the possession and ultimate control of North America during the conflict that began in western Pennsylvania and raged there for four long years. The Kittanning Destroyed Medal is a reminder of how that conflict played out on a local, continental, and global stage. Thus, with its symbolic importance in western Pennsylvania history and the fact that the medal has been reproduced numerous times for America's most significant commemorations and anniversaries, the preservation of the Kittanning Destroyed Medal and its meaning is important for the understanding of early American history for future generations.

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<sup>7</sup> William A. Hunter, "Victory at Kittanning," *Pennsylvania History* 23 (1956): 376–407; James P. Myers Jr., "Pennsylvania's Awakening: The Kittanning Raid of 1756," *Pennsylvania History* 66 (1999): 399–420; and Daniel P. Barr, "Victory at Kittanning? Reevaluating the Impact of Armstrong's Raid in the Seven Years' War in Pennsylvania," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 131 (2007): 5–32.

## *Pennsylvania's Warrantee Township Maps*

Pennsylvania's warrantee township maps represent a valuable research tool for the amateur and professional historian alike. Available through the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission (PHMC) they were constructed in the 1940s from original drafts then available at the Pennsylvania Land Office. Characterized by their complexity, the hand-drawn and hand-detailed maps are a tribute to the meticulousness and patience of the people who created them. Aside from their artistic value, the maps are a treasure trove of data, as they record information such as the names of original applicants; acreage and location of tracts; dates of application, warrant, survey, and patent; and the names of patentees.

Used in conjunction with other land office records available at PHMC's website, individual maps are useful for amateur historians searching for the location of a particular family. Moreover, when a chart marks the trees that served as corner posts for individual tracts, one can figuratively replant an ancestor's ancient forest. Using this information in tandem with modern forestry texts and selected works of fiction, it is possible to imagine the pioneers' sense of wonder—or dread—as they encountered the primeval forest. Place names on the warrantee maps offer further evidence of the physical environment. Details about native fauna are revealed in designations such as "Deer's Watering Place," "Wildcat Hollow," and "Pigeon's Roost." Marrying these names with early accounts of regional wildlife allows us to bring extinct species back to life.

For historians who study land ownership and settlement patterns, the entire collection is a gold mine. As an example, by examining the township maps for the Lykens Valley in northern Dauphin County, one could determine that the earliest settlers located close to the Susquehanna, along the creek bottoms, or within access to the old Tulpehocken Trail. In what was perhaps a typical settlement pattern, farmers arriving later purchased what were probably less desirable parcels. Notably, the Lykens Valley maps reveal a cluster of warrants filed for land in the eastern end of the valley after coal was discovered in the region.

Using other methodologies, a researcher could compare maps for regions purchased in different periods. In Upper Paxton Township in Dauphin County, where settlement began around 1765, the parcels were

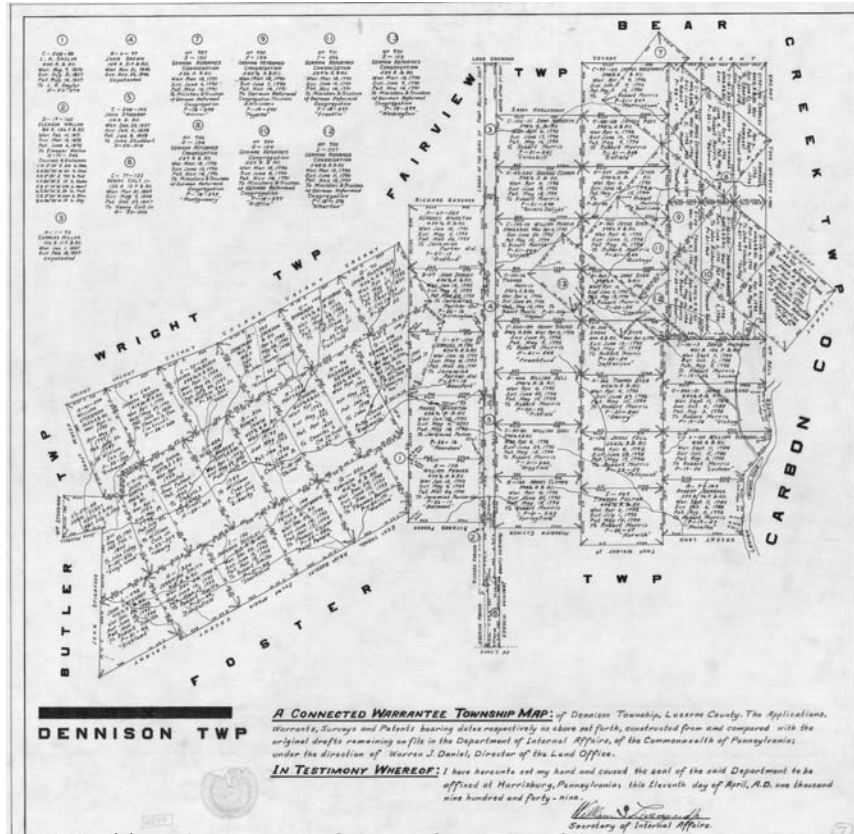




Upper Paxton Township, Dauphin County. Courtesy of the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, Pennsylvania State Archives, Harrisburg, PA. Available at <http://www.phmc.state.pa.us/bah/dam/rg/di/r17-522/WarranteeTwpMaps/r017Map2671DauphinUpperPaxtonWeb.pdf>.

laid out in an irregular pattern, and the size of individual lots remained small to medium—ranging from about fifty to three hundred acres. Compare that with Dennison Township in Luzerne County, where settlement began in 1790. We discover that Dennison Township was laid out in a grid pattern and that our Revolution's financier, Robert Morris, was the original owner of almost half of the land.

With hundreds of warrantee township maps available, the possibilities for their use are limited less by imagination than by the amount of time a researcher has to study them. Access to the maps and terms of use infor-



Dennison Township, Luzerne County, Courtesy of the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, Pennsylvania State Archives, Harrisburg, PA. Available at <http://www.phmc.state.pa.us/bah/dam/rg/di/r17-522WarranteeTwpMaps/r017Map2877LuzerneDennisonWeb.pdf>.

mation may be found at [http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/land\\_records/3184](http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/land_records/3184).

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PAT SPETH SHERMAN

## *Joseph Priestley House*

On a hillside in Northumberland, a white Federal-style mansion with symmetrical wings perches a quarter mile above the Susquehanna River. Crowned with a diamond-patterned balustrade on its slate roof, the house boasts a commanding view of the river's north branch. Before the canal and the railroad cut across the expansive lawn, travelers arriving at the riverfront reached the house by following a semicircular carriage drive that echoed the arched fanlight above the pedimented entrance. Sparsely ornamented with a frieze board of triglyphs and a Palladian window centered on the second story of the façade fronting the street, the five-bay residence was the eighteenth-century American version of an English gentleman's country house. In this case, the English gentleman was the famous—some would say notorious—Joseph Priestley: pioneering chemist, political philosopher, and dissenting theologian.

Joseph Priestley (1733–1804) was a leading figure in the Enlightenment who produced more than a hundred works on science, politics, and religion. By profession a Presbyterian minister, he became one of the early founders of the controversial Unitarian movement. Befriended by Benjamin Franklin, who described him as an “honest heretic” for his opposition to state religion and his unorthodox religious beliefs, Priestley popularized Franklin's scientific experiments in *The History and Present State of Electricity* (1767).<sup>1</sup> His own experiments resulted in the discovery of oxygen and the invention of carbonation, for which he was made a member of the Royal Society in London and the Lunar Society in Birmingham. An advocate of American independence and a supporter of the French Revolution, Priestley's pamphleteering antagonized royalists in Birmingham who destroyed his house, library, and laboratory during a riot on Bastille Day in 1791.

Fearing for their lives in England, the Priestley family decided to emigrate to America. In 1793, an advance party of Priestley's three sons and his colleague, the attorney-cum-chemist Thomas Cooper (1759–1840), traveled to the Pennsylvania backcountry, where they planned to establish a haven for British dissenters near the forks of the Susquehanna. The poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge and his friend Robert Southey hoped to join

<sup>1</sup> Benjamin Franklin to Benjamin Vaughan, 1788, quoted in Edgar F. Smith, *Priestley in America* (Philadelphia, 1920), 5.

them, but their dream of living in an egalitarian society named “Pantisocracy” never went beyond the poem Coleridge wrote about it. Priestley received a hero’s welcome when he arrived in the United States in 1794. The press declared that Americans “will be proud to rank among the list of their illustrious fellow citizens, the name of Dr. Priestley.”<sup>2</sup> David Rittenhouse lauded Priestley’s scientific contributions at the American Philosophical Society in Philadelphia, and Dr. Benjamin Rush offered him the chair in chemistry at the College (now University) of Pennsylvania. But Priestley declined the position in order to be near his sons in Northumberland, a backcountry town 130 miles northwest of Philadelphia.

Established in 1772 by Governor Richard Penn Jr., William Penn’s grandson, Northumberland was laid out as an English village around a green square. Priestley and his wife, Mary, bought riverfront land and built a high wooden wall shielding their property from the street. Unlike the stone or brick mansions favored by Philadelphians, the Priestley’s clapboard-covered house, constructed with kiln-dried wood, resembled the domestic architecture of New England. Designed by Mary, the house interior displayed elements of the Adam style fashionable in England and practical features such as built-in storage under the staircases. Separate one-story wings housed the kitchen and the laboratory, which was conveniently connected to Priestley’s library. “Nothing can be more delightful, or more healthy than this place,” Priestley wrote to an English friend, but the following year his youngest son, Harry, died from an infection, and his wife passed away nine months later.<sup>3</sup> Priestley moved into the house in 1797, immersed himself in scientific research, and within two years had discovered carbon monoxide. He made annual visits to Philadelphia, then the capitol of the United States, met with President Washington, and gave lectures at the First Unitarian Church that were attended by John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, and members of Congress.

Priestley lived for only a decade in Northumberland, but during that formative period in American history he brought the Enlightenment into the Pennsylvania backcountry. His international role in science and politics linked the provincial interior of the state to the latest developments in American and European culture. A catalyst for political liberty, he emboldened the British émigrés in Northumberland to protest the Alien

<sup>2</sup> *American Daily Advertiser*, June 5, 1794, quoted in Smith, *Priestley in America*, 167.

<sup>3</sup> Smith, *Priestley in America*, 52.

and Sedition Acts passed by the Federalists in 1798. Thomas Cooper wrote scathing criticisms of the Adams administration in the *Northumberland Gazette* and was imprisoned for six months in 1800. The Dublin journalist John Binns (1772–1860), jailed for supporting the Irish Rebellion, founded the anti-Federalist newspaper *Republican Argus* in Northumberland in 1802. Binns later published the *Democratic Press* (1807–29) in Philadelphia, where he served as an alderman. Priestley's firebrands contributed to the defeat of the Federalists and the election of President Jefferson in 1800 and 1804.

During Jefferson's first term, the president corresponded regularly with Priestley, who shared his conviction that democracy depended on an enlightened citizenry. An advocate of the liberal arts curriculum, Priestley was prepared to donate his 1,600-volume library, one of the largest in the country, to establish a new college in Northumberland. Although that college never came to fruition, President Jefferson consulted Priestley in planning the University of Virginia. "Yours," he told Priestley, "is one of the few lives precious to mankind."<sup>4</sup>

Priestley's contributions to chemistry proved to be his most enduring legacy. After his death in 1804, his research was continued by Cooper, who inherited his laboratory equipment and brought it to Dickinson College, where he taught chemistry. The centennial of Priestley's discovery of oxygen was celebrated at his Northumberland home in 1874 and led to the founding of the American Chemical Society. The Priestley House was designated a National Historic Chemical Landmark and is open to the public as a museum.

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PATRICIA LIKOS RICCI

<sup>4</sup> Thomas Jefferson to Joseph Priestley, Mar. 21, 1801, in *The Works of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. 9, ed. Paul Leicester Ford (New York and London, 1905), 217.

## *Ezechiel Sangmeister's Way of Life in Greater Pennsylvania*

The Reformation ran headlong into the Enlightenment between the Delaware and Susquehanna Rivers in eighteenth-century Pennsylvania. The most radical byproducts of sixteenth-century Europe's religious reform movements settled in this colony hailed by Enlightenment thinkers as a beacon of toleration. Nothing probed the parameters of that toleration as pointedly as the celibate sect that established the Ephrata Cloister on the banks of Cocalico Creek. *Leben und Wandel*, the autobiography of Ezechiel Sangmeister, offers historians the most detailed perspective on the daily life and culture surrounding that community in Pennsylvania and flowing south down the Shenandoah.<sup>1</sup>

"Leben und Wandel" means "Life and Change" in direct translation. As Sangmeister moved around German-speaking Europe and North America, he roamed a world with a liminal "Lebenswandel"—a "way of life" suspended between Reformation and Enlightenment—lost to our Anglo-American histories. His autobiography, which he began writing on May 6, 1754, while living on the Shenandoah, describes the network of practices that constitute a culture—from food and furniture to sex and sacraments.

Sangmeister's account begins with his birth "into this miserable world" in 1723 "about one mile from Wolfenbuettel."<sup>2</sup> His father, grandfather, and great-grandfather all belonged to the bottom rung of the Lutheran clergy. They were schoolmasters. Sangmeister's father maintained the family's tentative claim on respectability through piety but struggled with "constant burdens, sickness, and distress" and enjoined the future monk to "stay single." Following the deaths of his father and three siblings, Sangmeister left school at the age of nine and spent the next seven years as an underfed carpenter's apprentice. With his training complete, Sangmeister bid farewell to his mother and set forth as a journeyman car-

<sup>1</sup> *Leben und Wandel des in GOTT ruhenten Ezechiel Sangmeisters; Weiland Einwohner von Ephrata*, 4 vols. (Ephrata, PA, 1825–27), trans. Barbara Schindler in *Journal of the Historical Society of the Cocalico Valley* 4–10 (1979–85). Felix Reichmann, "Notes and Documents: Ezechiel Sangmeister's Diary," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 68 (1944): 292–313, questions the authenticity of the document; Jeff Bach, *Voices of the Turtledoves: The Sacred World of Ephrata* (University Park, PA, 2003), 61, testifies to its veracity.

<sup>2</sup> Schindler, "Leben und Wandel," 5:63, 64.

penter. He landed in Wuerttemberg and joined those who had decided “to travel to America in the hope of finding joy in the new world.” Once docked in Philadelphia, the ship’s merchant conspired with a profiteer to place him in a four-year indenture.

Sangmeister’s spiritual awakening followed the arrival of Anton Hellenthal as a fellow servant in the household. After a time with the devout Hellenthal as his “priest,” God “rapped” on Sangmeister’s heart and produced “a great desire to begin another life.”<sup>3</sup> Hellenthal met a shoemaker connected to the Seventh-Day Baptists who had formed the Ephrata Cloister near Lancaster under the leadership of another orphaned German journeyman, the charismatic Conrad Beissel. In 1748, Sangmeister sold all his possessions and went to Ephrata with Hellenthal. In contrast with Peter Miller’s laudatory *Chronicon Ephratense*, Sangmeister’s *Leben und Wandel* describes the difficult physical and psychic adjustment to life without personal belongings or independence of action in a community of immigrant men and women divorced (legally, physically, and metaphorically) from the bonds of European patriarchal society but reconstituted into their own spiritual meritocracy.

Three years before Sangmeister’s and Hellenthal’s arrival, scandal had rocked the cloister when the Eckerlin brothers (Israel, Samuel, and Gabriel)—three Salzburg orphans who had played a crucial role in the cloister’s formation—decided to leave. Beissel had come to see Israel as an intellectual and Samuel as an economic threat to his domain. The cloister’s greatest economic success came out of the brothers’ efforts to develop craft and agricultural expertise, and Israel had become the prior of the institution. His ego and Beissel’s proved incapable of coexistence; the brothers moved south to start their own settlement. They came back for a visit to the cloister, met Sangmeister, and convinced him to move away from Ephrata’s complex social structure to lead a solitary life near their current camp on the Monongahela.

On October 2, 1752, Sangmeister and Hellenthal escaped the cloister under cover of night and headed southwest on foot. Shortly before winter, they stopped on the Shenandoah, where they bought six acres from Mennonite Henry Funk. They bunked in Funk’s stable while Sangmeister returned to carpentry and Hellenthal “worked on the land.”<sup>4</sup> As spring approached, they built a house.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 5:67.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 6:14.

With the establishment of Sangmeister's household, three groups of celibates existed in the geographic region culturally dominated by Philadelphia and populated by migrants from southern Germany and northern Ireland. Although he technically resided in Virginia, Pennsylvania remained the center of Sangmeister's society. Whether seeking cures for physical or spiritual ills, Sangmeister and his neighbors looked to Ephrata, Lancaster, and Germantown for the serums and sermons to salve their ever-ailing bodies and souls.

Sangmeister and Hellenthal exchanged visits with the Eckerlins, and both settlements of celibates aroused anxiety in the wider area as tensions rose with France. Sangmeister built a prayer hut where his neighbors feared he practiced alchemy and/or Catholic rites. The Eckerlin brothers' more remote location near French-allied Indians convinced many—including George Washington—that they were spies. Sangmeister "really did not know from which side to anticipate the greatest danger, from the savages or from the so-called Christians."<sup>5</sup> Israel and Gabriel Eckerlin died while being detained by the French, even as their brother Samuel argued their innocence in Virginian custody.

Samuel Eckerlin joined Sangmeister after his brothers' deaths, and their household became the medical and spiritual hub for nearby German settlers. In 1759, he returned from a trip to Ephrata with a scandalous woman, Barbara Landes; set up housekeeping; and, according to Sangmeister, "dressed her in white according to his impression with an English gown, which wasn't really English and not really Irish."<sup>6</sup>

Sangmeister spent five more years tormented by women and worn down by work—on the farm, in Eckerlin's pharmacy, as a carpenter for his neighbors, and at home, where he shared household tasks with increasing numbers of Ephrata's outcasts. In 1762, Brother Anton disappeared in the night, leaving Sangmeister without his closest companion.

When the Proclamation Line set parameters for civilized settlement and the Paxton Boys marched on Philadelphia, Sangmeister sought safety back in Lancaster County with a group of celibate siblings he met on the Shenandoah. He retreated into the smaller life of this ad hoc family and died among them in 1785 as Pennsylvanians debated their place in a new nation. The moment when orphaned German artisans could take advan-

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 7:69.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 7:91.



tage of Enlightenment toleration to promulgate the Reformation's most radical reveries had passed.

Sangmeister's autobiography unveils the tenuous coexistence and violent ruptures in a gender-bending, interracial, multiethnic, nondenominational world that lacked cohesion beyond the need to survive and the desire for salvation.

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## *John McMillan's Journal: Presbyterian Sacramental Occasions and the Second Great Awakening*

John McMillan (1752–1833) was an industrious Presbyterian official who moved to the Pennsylvania backcountry during the revolutionary era, and his journal helps us understand an important Presbyterian practice during those days: the sacramental gathering. McMillan was known for his leadership in churches, presbyteries, ministerial education, revivalism, war, and politics. The son of immigrants from northern Ireland, McMillan was born in Chester County, Pennsylvania. After receiving a Presbyterian revivalist education (which included a stint at the College of New Jersey), he moved west over the Allegheny Mountains to Washington County, Pennsylvania, where he arrived in 1776 to pastor two congregations, Chartiers Creek and Pigeon Creek. McMillan and several Presbyterian ministers who moved to that area formed presbyteries and educational institutions that trained frontier ministers and created ministerial networks for cooperative endeavors.

One of those cooperative endeavors was administering the “Sacrament of the Supper.” McMillan’s journal, now in print, provides a glimpse into these communion gatherings, which were the venue for many revivals during the revolutionary era and the so-called Second Great Awakening.<sup>1</sup> Presbyterian sacramental gatherings, days-long celebrations of the Lord’s Supper, had become a staple in the Scottish Presbyterian calendar by 1750, and Scots-Irish immigrants to the New World continued the practice.<sup>2</sup> Sacramental occasions typically included a fast day on Thursday, preparation sermons on Friday and/or Saturday, communion sermons on Sunday, and thanksgiving sermons on Sunday night and Monday.

<sup>1</sup> John McMillan, *Journal*, in *John McMillan: The Apostle of Presbyterianism in the West, 1752–1833*, ed. Dwight Raymond Guthrie (Pittsburgh, 1952), 202–57. Guthrie printed part 1 (Oct. 1774 to Aug. 1776) of the journal from a 1909 copy of the holograph, now lost. Guthrie acquired the holograph of parts 2 (Aug. 1776 to July 1791) and 3 (Jan. 1820 to Oct. 1833) of the journal from Mrs. Helen Wragg, great-great-great-grandmother of John McMillan. Guthrie discusses these sources on pages v and 202. The archival department of U. Grant Miller Library at Washington and Jefferson College has a transcript of McMillan’s journal from Oct. 26, 1774, to Aug. 6, 1776, and a transcript of his Aug. 1776 through July 1791 diary. I have not been able to locate a transcript of part 3 of his journal (Jan. 1820 to Oct. 1833).

<sup>2</sup> The best account of sacraments in this period is Leigh Eric Schmidt, *Holy Fairs: Scottish Communion and American Revivals in the Early Modern Period* (Princeton, NJ, 1990), 50–68.

According to brief notations in McMillan's journal, which we have for the years 1774 to 1790, he organized sacramental gatherings for his congregations as early as 1780 and always had the assistance of area ministers.<sup>3</sup> He, in turn, assisted other Presbyterian ministers with sacramental gatherings at their various congregations. McMillan recorded his participation in as many as seven sacramental occasions in one year, though he averaged about five per year in the 1780s.

Sacramental occasions were an important part of the social and religious fabric of revivalistic Presbyterian life in the backcountry. Every year new communicants were welcomed and old ones renewed. These gatherings created space for social bonding, identity formation, rekindling of friendships, and discussion of politics, war, and God. McMillan certainly combined political and religious discourse at these meetings. A member of the Washington County militia during the Revolutionary War and well-known for his patriotism, he brought his politics into the pulpit—even threatening to refuse the sacrament to those in his congregations who did not oppose the Whiskey Rebellion. The occasions were also a central venue of Presbyterian revivalism, the place where people experienced conversion and joined the church. In a magazine article, McMillan reported:

At the first sacramental occasion after the work [of God for revival] began [in 1781], forty-five were added to the church. . . . This time of refreshing continued in a greater or lesser degree, until the year 1794. Upon every sacramental occasion, numbers were added to the church, who gave comfortable evidence of their having obtained a saving change of heart.<sup>4</sup>

The sacramental gatherings were a locus of backcountry culture wherein religion, politics, economics, war, and isolation created the perfect storm of emotion and devotion to Christ and country.

McMillan's journal demonstrates that sacramental gatherings were consistently held in his area throughout the 1780s and that numerous backcountry ministers assisted one another throughout each communion

<sup>3</sup> McMillan, *Journal*, 202–36. Unfortunately, the extant manuscripts of the journal are incomplete. The journal stops in the early months of 1791 and does not resume until 1820.

<sup>4</sup> John McMillan, "A Brief Account of the Revivals of Religion, Which Have Taken Place in the Congregation of Chartiers, in Washington County, Pennsylvania," *Western Missionary Magazine* (Jan. 1805): 353. In this quote McMillan is referring to the "out-pouring of the Spirit," synonymous with the "work," which started in December 1781 and continued until 1794, not to the gatherings themselves, which he began in 1780.

season. Backcountry Pennsylvanians thus perpetuated an important Presbyterian practice that eventually became a central venue of early Second Great Awakening revivalism. James McGready (ca. 1760–1817), a pupil of McMillan's, experienced conversion at one of these communion-gathering revivals. As McMillan's journal notes, McGready later assisted him at a sacramental occasion in October 1788. Toward the end of the 1790s, McGready began replicating the sacramental practice in Kentucky, stimulating what became known as the Second Great Awakening.

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## *An Eighteenth-Century Linguistic Borderland*

In the eighteenth-century Pennsylvania backcountry, English, Scots-Irish, and German colonials and immigrants met Iroquoian, Algonquian, and Siouan speakers pushed by European settlement or pulled by the Six Nations to buffer Iroquoia. They created a complex, and at times confusing, linguistic landscape. Racial and ethnic diversity was audible, but language was also a permeable boundary. The journals of the Quaker trader James Kenny (1758–59, 1761–63), in manuscript at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania and published in this journal nearly a century ago, are remarkable sources that provide insight into intercultural communication and multilingualism amid the overlapping ethnic revitalizations of the Great Awakening and prophetic nativism, pervasive rumors of violence, and warfare.

Among his first orders of business, Kenny set “about making a dictionary of ye names of goods in ye Delaware tongue” and, as his proficiency grew, he found that Delawares were “mightly pleas’d” when he “preferr’d their Tongue in learning most of it so that I can converse with them a little.” In his “considerable dealings” with native people, skins and cloth, pelts and wares changed hands, but Kenny and his customers also traded in information. Even as the Delaware prophet Neolin urged Indians “to quit all Commerce with ye White People,” native visitors frequently “Inform’d” Kenny of things in the region, “report’d” what transpired at councils, and sometimes “confess’d” their opinions. They also “quried” [*sic*] him on people and events in the province and empire. Kenny’s multilingualism was not unique. Native people could frequently speak more than one Native American language, and Kenny encountered more than one Delaware who “talks English well.” European or colonial captives acquired linguistic skills involuntarily, and others found “having ye Languages” in their interest, whether they pursued trade, political intrigue, or missionary work. The “conversation” and “discourse” that circulated news between Indian country and colonial settlements was the lifeblood of the backcountry.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> John W. Jordan, ed., “James Kenny’s ‘Journal to ye Westward,’ 1758–59,” *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 37 (1913): 395–449, at 420, 423; John W. Jordan, ed., “Journal of James Kenny, 1761–1763,” *ibid.*, 1–47, 152–201, at 169, 188, 157, 37, 10, 12, 37, 18, 12. See also *ibid.*, 40, 42, 154–55, 191. On this linguistic borderland, see Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650–1815* (Cambridge, 1991), 186–89; James H. Merrell, *Into the American Woods: Negotiators on the Pennsylvania Frontier* (New York, 1999); Elizabeth A. Perkins, “Distinctions and Partitions amongst Us: Identity and Interaction in the

Beyond allowing communication, language and linguistic behaviors also signified other forms of difference. Scots-Irish Presbyterians and German Moravians engaged Kenny in “sober conversation,” “bigotted . . . censures,” and the occasional “Argument.” Missionaries facing native people “prejudiced” against them realized that communicating the Word rested on linguistic expertise. This was especially true for Moravians such as Christian Frederick Post. His linguistic virtuosity could be of “Great Service to ye English Intrest,” but his variance from Quaker belief and practice—toasting health, using honorifics, and being open to religious images—made him seem dangerous. Once, Kenny dreamt that “ye Devil . . . appear’d to have Frederick Posts ficognomy [physiognomy] & Dress.” Kenny declared that the “Prayers & Singing” of non-Quaker Europeans and Indians were equally “Abominations.” Nativist Indians attracted to Neolin’s message of racial separation and cultural purification used these to send their “petitions” to the “Great Being,” who was “too High & mighty to be Spoke to” directly. Divergent speechways marked another linguistic divide that made social interaction and cultural exchange fraught.<sup>2</sup>

Indian affairs, from Kenny’s perspective, depended upon linguistic mastery. Problems pivoted on communication. Officials “Spoke” to Indians too “timorously,” making them “Bolder, & more insulting,” those “most conversant” with Indians were usually “Base” men, and Friends’ “private Council with ye Indians” was a source of tension with non-Quakers. Kenny possessed “Influence with ye Indns,” as other colonists believed, but frequently he had to accept “churlish” or “impudent” words that stemmed from native recognition that the language barrier offered Englishmen an opportunity to “deceive.” Yet there was always the hope that a “friendly Conference with ye Indians” would preserve native “regard,” and Kenny believed that “well affect’d Subjects, Protestants,

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Revolutionary Ohio Valley,” in *Contact Points: American Frontiers from the Mohawk Valley to the Mississippi, 1750–1830*, ed. Andrew R. L. Cayton and Fredrika J. Teute (Chapel Hill, NC, 1998), 219–24. On interpreters, pidgins, and multilingualism generally, see Michael Silverstein, “Dynamics of Linguistic Contact,” in *Handbook of North American Indians*, vol. 17, *Languages*, ed. William C. Sturtevant and Ives Goddard (Washington, DC, 1996). For intimate intercourse, see Laura J. Murray, “Fur Traders in Conversation,” *Ethnohistory* 50 (2003): 285–314. Peter Silver, *Our Savage Neighbors: How Indian War Transformed Early America* (New York, 2007), 3–31, stresses unease over diversity.

<sup>2</sup> Jordan, “James Kenny’s Journal,” 404; Jordan, “Journal of James Kenny,” 191, 46, 155, 170–71, 191, 9, 5, 193, 172. See also *ibid.*, 46–47, 172, 182, 191–93. John Smolenski, *Friends and Strangers: The Making of a Creole Culture in Colonial Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia, 2010), 92–94, stresses the importance of speechways to Quaker identity and understanding of difference.

should have a free access to heare ye same." It was not always clear, however, what "subtile & Politick" Native American speakers were "Signifying." Public and private meetings required difficult maneuvering through Shawnee "perswasions," the "Lyes" of Mingos and former captives alike, Delawares who "Prognosticate . . . Two or Three Good Talks & then War," and the "Frightful" and "frequent rumours" that flew from all sides.<sup>3</sup>

In this polyglot place, people even discussed linguistic similarity and difference itself. "Dutch" boys, taken captive in war, who could "Only talk Shawana" were noteworthy. Sharing knowledge of his people's linguistic relations, one Lenape man informed the trader that there was "a Nation of Inds. settled over ye Missipi . . . who talks ye Delaware Tongue." More strikingly, in December 1762 a man named Old Indian told Kenny that several years earlier, he had journeyed to heaven in a dream. There, the "Great Creator" had chastised him, proclaiming that "Indians did not do right in giving such particular Names to Creatures." Opening a door, the "Almighty being Called all Species of Creatures One after another with a mighty Sound, & each kind of Creatures appeared & took notice of their name when called." Left with the instruction that the "General Name was Enough for Each Species," the dreamer awoke. Those divine admonitions paralleled the criticisms of Native American languages by some missionaries, who may have shared their frustrations with the pace of language learning with their native tutors. As Kenny reflected, "dreams often come from ye Idies or thoughts that are prevalent in ye mind." Although philosophers speculated that linguistic poverty defined the "savage" state, Moravians repeatedly complained that Indians possessed a wealth of words, abounding with names for distinct trees, animals of different sex or ages, and actions performed in different ways, while lacking generic terms that encompassed all varieties. Communicated to the learned, this emerged as a dominant understanding of Native American languages and thought in the nineteenth century. Crossing the language line could, itself, produce new ideas of difference.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Jordan, "Journal of James Kenny," 187, 182, 167, 46, 424, 201, 10, 31, 171; Jordan, "James Kenny's Journal," 423–24, 426–27. On rumor, see Gregory Evans Dowd, "The Panic of 1751: The Significance of Rumors on the South Carolina-Cherokee Frontier," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 53 (1996): 527–60; and Tom Arne Midtrød, "Strange and Disturbing News: Rumor and Diplomacy in the Colonial Hudson Valley," *Ethnohistory* 58 (2011): 91–112.

<sup>4</sup> Jordan, "Journal of James Kenny," 178, 177, 176–77. Cf. Carla Gerona, "Imagining Peace in Quaker and Native American Dream Stories," in *Friends and Enemies in Penn's Woods: Indians*,

Historians have seized on traders' accounts and official records for social interactions and ethnographic information, but these documents also provide details about the texture of communication that allow us to recover something of eighteenth-century Pennsylvania's language frontier.

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*Colonists, and the Racial Construction of Pennsylvania*, ed. William Pencak and Daniel K. Richter (University Park, PA, 2004), 58, which reads this as referencing native ideas of guardian spirits. Thanks to Prof. Kyle Volk for suggesting the phrase "crossing the language line." These linguistic criticisms can be found in Archer Butler Hulbert and William Nathaniel Schwarz, ed., *David Zeisberger's History of the Northern American Indians* (n.p., OH, [1910]), 144; and John Heckewelder, "An Account of the History, Manners, and Customs, of the Indian Nations who Once Inhabited Pennsylvania and the Neighbouring States," *Transactions of the Historical and Literary Committee of the American Philosophical Society* 1 (1819): 316–18. Patrick Erben, *A Harmony of the Spirits: Translation and the Language of Community in Early Pennsylvania* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2012), 301–23, gives the fullest account of Moravians' linguistic endeavors. On "the savage word," see Edward G. Gray, *New World Babel: Languages and Nations in Early America* (Princeton, NJ, 1999), 85–111. Marianne Mithun, *The Languages of Native North America* (New York, 1999), 37–67, gives modern linguistics' description of the functions of Native American words.



## *Buried in Plain Sight: Indian “Curiosities” in Du Simitière’s American Museum*

Sometimes the most interesting items in an archive are those that point to what is missing. While perusing a box in the Pierre Eugène du Simitière Collection at the Library Company of Philadelphia, I came across a remarkable document that illustrates a number of losses—both archival and personal.

In July 1782, Du Simitière received a human scalp from the Pennsylvania Supreme Executive Council, along with an explanation of its provenance. As Du Simitière noted in his records of “curiosities” and their donors, the scalp was “taken from an Indian killed . . . in Washington County near the Ohio in this State by *Adam Poe* . . . it has as an ornament a white wampum bead a finger long with a Silver Knob at the end the rest of the hair plaited and tyed with deer skin.”<sup>1</sup> In the archive, I had located the original account of the battle on the banks of the Ohio that had resulted in the death of the anonymous Indian man. What I could not locate, however, was the scalp itself, long gone.

Pennsylvania had offered a bounty for Native American scalps in 1780—the reason that Poe had submitted the object, along with his story, to the government.<sup>2</sup> Both items had a financial purpose: the scalp was worth 2,500 Continental dollars, while the account not only verified the scalp’s origins but also acted to solicit charity on Poe’s behalf. Having been wounded during the fight, his arm was “rendered Useless,” and, the account petitioned, “he is a Poor Man, and has a large Family of Children. . . . Such Bravery, and Perserverance, Merits the reward of his Country [and] the Notice of the Charitable.”<sup>3</sup> After resolving Poe’s reward—

<sup>1</sup> William John Potts, “Du Simitiere, Artist, Antiquary, and Naturalist, Projector of the First American Museum, with Some Extracts from His Note-Book,” *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 13 (1889): 369. The original notebooks excerpted in Potts are found in the Library of Congress. Du Simitière’s papers are largely distributed between the Library of Congress and the Pierre Eugène du Simitière Collection at the Library Company of Philadelphia.

<sup>2</sup> Pennsylvania Supreme Executive Council, *By His Excellency Joseph Reed, Esq. president, and the Supreme Executive Council, of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. A proclamation.: Whereas the savages in alliance with the King of Great Britain, have attacked several of the frontier counties . . .* [Philadelphia, 1780].

<sup>3</sup> *Account of Adam Poe’s Indian encounter*, box 8, folder 129, Pierre Eugène du Simitière Collection, 1492–1784, Library Company of Philadelphia.

“twelve pounds ten shillings specie”—officials transferred both items to Du Simitière.<sup>4</sup>

An artist and prodigious collector, Pierre Eugène du Simitière had a wide-ranging curiosity that led him to continually gather information and artifacts, from insects to Chinese calligraphy to stone tools from Tahiti. His collection became one of the first public museums in America.<sup>5</sup> Living in Philadelphia, Du Simitière knew many leading figures of the revolutionary era, drawing their portraits and corresponding with them to request new items for his proposed “American Museum.” A native of Geneva, he had first traveled in the West Indies with the intent of writing and illustrating a history of the islands before coming to the American mainland in 1764 or 1765. Du Simitière made various efforts to secure income from his findings, but they failed to come to fruition.<sup>6</sup>

He finally turned, perhaps reluctantly, to the idea of opening his house and his collection to paying visitors. The American Museum opened in the summer of 1782, only a few weeks before the scalp was donated. Du Simitière was particularly intrigued by “indian antiquities”; as he explained to Governor George Clinton of New York, this was “a new subject and not touched upon . . . every new specimen I get is different from the former ones, so that where there is such variety one cannot increase the number too much.”<sup>7</sup>

Du Simitière’s announcement of the “natural” and “artificial” curiosities to be seen in his home near Fourth and Arch Street mentioned fossils, preserved animals, and seashells as well as Indian clothing, weaponry,

<sup>4</sup> *Minutes of the Supreme Executive Council*, Apr. 2, 1782, in *Colonial Records of Pennsylvania*, ed. Samuel Hazard (Harrisburg, PA, 1838–53), 248. Continental currency stopped circulating in 1781, having rapidly depreciated, so 2,500 Continental dollars, if treated as worth one seventy-fifth of their face value by 1782, would have amounted to “Twelve pounds ten shillings specie.” My thanks to Dror Goldberg for this observation.

<sup>5</sup> Hans Huth, “Pierre Eugène Du Simitière and the Beginnings of the American Historical Museum,” *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 69 (1945): 316. There are mentions of visits to Du Simitière’s “museum” as early as 1775 in letters of members of the Continental Congress, although he did not begin to advertise and sell tickets until 1782.

<sup>6</sup> His proposals included writing a history of “the Origin and Present State” of the new nation, based on his meticulous collection of pamphlets, broadsides, and newspapers relating to the American Revolution. While the idea was approved by a congressional committee, it was dropped after other members apparently objected to paying a foreigner (who had avoided military service during the conflict) to write a history of the Revolution. See Huth, “Pierre Eugène Du Simitière,” 319–20.

<sup>7</sup> Potts, “Du Simitiere, Artist, Antiquary, and Naturalist,” 348. Clinton gave Du Simitière a “Mask of an Indian conjurer” a few years later. See Potts, 372.

and “utensils.”<sup>8</sup> The unadvertised scalp almost certainly joined the rest of the collection, viewable by anyone who had a half-dollar for a ticket. Whether the scalp would have been placed alongside “artificial” items such as weapons or “natural” biological specimens is unknown.

Backcountry turmoil wove itself into the lives of all eighteenth-century Philadelphians, including early naturalists, ethnographers, and museum organizers. While Du Simitière refused to travel in the countryside—confiding to a correspondent in 1789, “if I was to lose sight of Christ Church steeple I would think myself bewildered”—the backcountry came to him in the Indian artifacts he solicited from his military and political contacts.<sup>9</sup> In November 1779 he acquired a “mask of wood representing a ghastly human face [found] in an Indian town called *Chemung* which was burnt by the Contl army under Gen Sullivan in his expedition last Summer . . . a long horse tail that belonged to it . . . was destroyed by the soldiery.”<sup>10</sup>

The violent provenance of many such “Indian curiosities” is discernible in Du Simitière’s papers, but the objects themselves are conspicuously absent.<sup>11</sup> With Du Simitière’s death in 1784, his estate went to auction, and the Library Company purchased much of his manuscript collection, including his invaluable compilation of Revolutionary War pamphlets and broadsides. The fate of the “curiosities” is uncertain; Ebenezer Hazard, one of the estate’s administrators, may have sold them to Charles Willson Peale as the basis for Peale’s own museum, which opened the following year.<sup>12</sup>

That a human body part took on the status of “curiosity” is itself revealing of the relationship between Philadelphia and the backcountry. The violence behind the scalp’s presence in the city was obscured when it entered a museum, even while many of the other artifacts in the collection were also acquired by force. Displaying the scalp in the backcountry, as Adam Poe and his friends likely did before transmitting it and its story to Philadelphia, must have prompted rather different reactions from viewers. Curiosities were curious not least in their spatial, temporal, and

<sup>8</sup> Pierre Eugène du Simitière, *American Museum. The subscriber having been induced from several motives, to open his collection . . .* [Philadelphia, 1782].

<sup>9</sup> Huth, “Pierre Eugène Du Simitière,” 316.

<sup>10</sup> Potts, “Du Simitiere, Artist, Antiquary, and Naturalist,” 366.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 345.

<sup>12</sup> The Peale collections went on to be bought by P. T. Barnum for his own “American Museum.”

emotional dislocation; Philadelphians could learn about the backcountry without leaving the city, a scalp could exist without a body, and a story could be separated from an object.

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## *Fort Rice*

Fort Rice was a small Revolutionary War stronghold built between 1779 and 1780 by the German Regiment of Maryland and Pennsylvania, the first ethnically based unit in the American military. The fort was built to protect the inhabitants of Northumberland County from Native American and British attacks. Regulars of the Eleventh Pennsylvania Regiment had been stationed loosely throughout the area to bolster the defense provided by the unreliable militia of the county, but they were called up to join Major General John Sullivan's campaign in 1779. In July of that year, while the Continental soldiers were gone, the area's wooden fort—Fort Freeland—was burned after a war party surrounded it and forced the people inside to surrender.<sup>1</sup> As a response to the increased violence, the German Regiment was sent in to reinforce the militia and to rebuild two different fortifications, one of which was Fort Rice. Bloodshed on this central Pennsylvania frontier affected all settlers, no matter their distance from the Continental and British armies; the construction of Fort Rice, the only limestone fortification built, demonstrated that these people were determined to live in the area despite constant attack by their enemies.

In order to protect those living on the frontier county of Northumberland, the German Regiment was sent to Sunbury, a little over fifty miles north of Harrisburg, to be deployed as a renewed backbone of defense to local militia. Normally, a regiment sent in to reinforce an area would be welcomed as a blessing, but when it arrived in October 1779 at Sunbury's Fort Augusta, Colonel Samuel Hunter complained that the German force was too small. This reception caused a strained relationship between him and the German commander, Colonel Ludwig Weltner. When the unit had been recruited in 1776, it boasted over 400 members and had even been referred to by General George Washington as "a large regiment." By 1779, after years of desertion and fighting the British and Native Americans during Sullivan's Expedition, the number of soldiers had dwindled to 120 men.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Northumberland County Historical Society, *Northumberland County in the American Revolution*, ed. Charles F. Snyder (Sunbury, PA, 1976), 96, 180–81.

<sup>2</sup> Henry J. Retzer, *The German Regiment of Maryland and Pennsylvania in the Continental Army, 1776–1781* (Westminster, MD, 2000), v, 35.

Despite their small number, the members of the German Regiment were responsible for reconstructing two forts, built no more than a single day's march apart so the forts could support each other against attack. One of these forts was Fort Rice. Named after Captain William Rice, who commanded the detachment sent to erect and man the limestone structure, the fort was seated on the land of John Montgomery, who had fled after attacks in 1778 burned local homes and fortified structures. Located two miles outside of present-day Turbotville (approximately a twenty-five-minute drive south and east of Williamsport), Fort Rice remains mostly intact to this day.<sup>3</sup> Captain Christian Myers, who was stationed at the fort during the spring of 1780, referred to the fort as Fort Montgomery, after the former property owner, in garrison orders written in March 1780.<sup>4</sup> Rice was constructed out of grey limestone found on the surrounding farmland. The building stands two-and-a-half stories tall over a spring that supplied the occupiers with fresh water. Limestone walls a foot thick, dotted with gun ports, ensured that no small arms could penetrate and prevented the building from being burned down while allowing soldiers within to fire on the enemy in safety.<sup>5</sup>

Work on Fort Rice started in the fall of 1779 and was completed in early 1780. According to Captain Christian Myers, whose company of eighteen men was stationed at Fort Rice in early 1780, work on the defenses continued into March of that year. With spring came renewed fears of attacks on farms by raiding parties. In October of 1780 the German Regiment was recalled by General George Washington to rejoin the main army in New York. Less than three days after the soldiers left Fort Rice, a British raiding party tried to attack. Colonel Hunter moved local militia inside the limestone walls to replace the Continental soldiers who left. The two sides fired on one another for a short time before the raiders realized the men inside were well equipped to repel an attack and more militiamen were on the way to flank the enemy combatants.<sup>6</sup>

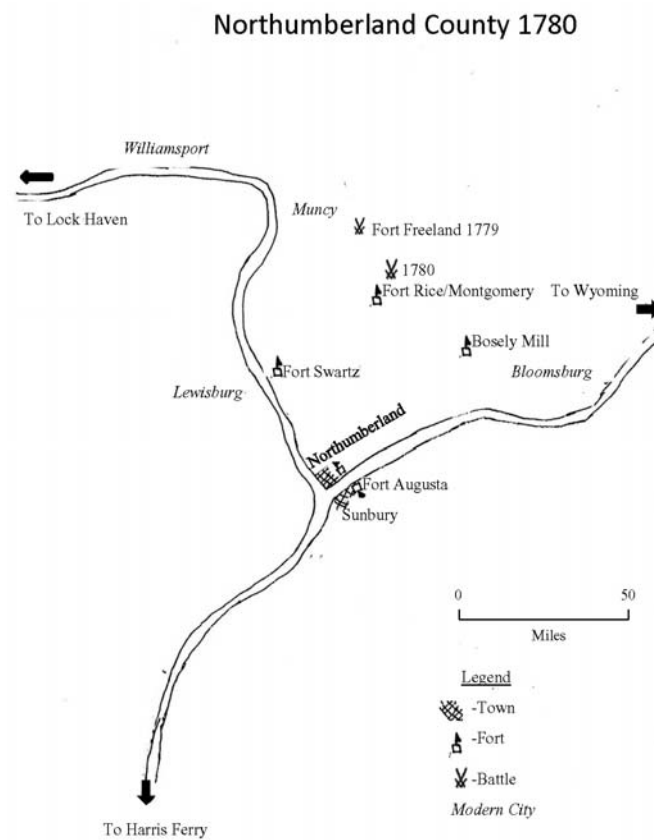
Today the fort stands proudly and bears a commemorative marker placed by the Daughters of the American Revolution in 1912. Fort Rice is the last piece of standing evidence of the American Revolution in central Pennsylvania. While Forts Augusta, Freeland, and Muncy have been

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 66–67.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, 62.

<sup>5</sup> Henry Melchior Muhlenberg Richards et al., *Report of the Commission to Locate the Site of the Frontier Forts of Pennsylvania*, 2 vols. (Harrisburg, 1896), 1:375–81.

<sup>6</sup> Retzer, *German Regiment*, 36, 40.



explored archeologically and preserved by local historical societies, Rice continues to remain intact only through the generosity of private landowners throughout the years. Their efforts have allowed this author to travel back in history to a place his ancestor helped to build those many years ago and share its story with anyone who cares to listen.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Northumberland County Historical Society, *Northumberland County in the American Revolution*, 518.

## *A Voice in the Wilderness: Alexander Addison's Case for Peace during the Whiskey Rebellion*

On the first day of September 1794, while tension seized western Pennsylvania over whiskey excises, Alexander Addison, president of the Court of Common Pleas for the Fifth Circuit, delivered a charge to the Grand Jury of Allegheny County on behalf of peace and order. Addison's presentation came at an important moment, as new whiskey excise laws had threatened to sever relations between the young United States government in Philadelphia and the western counties of Pennsylvania. At the time of Addison's presentation, the citizens of western Pennsylvania, gathered together in township halls, were asked to choose whether or not to consent to legal terms of submission to the United States in an effort to avoid a violent confrontation between the government and western "insurgents."<sup>1</sup> In his presentation, Addison made a plea for submission to the laws of the United States and to peace.

The alarming and awful situation of this country, at this time, are [*sic*] too well known to require a statement.—On the part of government, we are now offered a forgiveness of all that is past, on condition that we sincerely submit to the excise law, and all other laws. The question now is, whether we will accept of the terms proposed or not.

The decision of this question is of such importance, that I am sure it will receive a solemn consideration from every citizen of a sober mind. If we accept of the terms, we shall have *peace*. If we reject them, we shall have *war*. . . . War is so dreadfull [*sic*] a calamity, that nothing can justify its admission, but an evil against which no other remedy remains. . . . If we determine on *war*, look forward to the consequences. Either we shall *defeat* the United States; or the United States will *subdue* us. If the United States subdue us; we shall, at the end of the war, be certainly not in a better situation, than we are at present. . . . In a state of open war, we shall be considered as any other enemy, with the additional rancour attached to a

<sup>1</sup> As H. M. Brackenridge—son of Hugh H. Brackenridge, a central person in the events of the Whiskey Rebellion—records, "the President issued his proclamation of the 25th of September, declaring the western counties in a state of insurrection, and calling on the militia force to march for its suppression." H. M. Brackenridge, *History of the Western Insurrection in Western Pennsylvania, Commonly Called the Whiskey Insurrection* (Pittsburgh, 1859), 266.



civil war. Our agriculture will be destroyed, our fields laid waste, our houses burnt, and, while we are fighting our fellow citizens on one side, the Indians, (and God knows how soon) will attack us on the other.—The consciences of many among ourselves will shrink back with horror, at the idea of drawing a sword against our brethren. . . . And O! may the God of wisdom and peace inspire this people with discernment and virtue, remove from their minds blindness and passion, and save this country from becoming a field of blood.<sup>2</sup>

Addison's statement reveals the substantive political discussion and profound moral reasoning that residents of western Pennsylvania grappled with during the Whiskey Rebellion. Addison, arguing that individuals are empowered to choose between "wisdom" leading to "peace" and "blindness" leading to "a field of blood," illustrated for the people of western Pennsylvania (the publication of his speech on the front page of the *Pittsburgh Gazette* broadcast his message far beyond the confines of the courthouse) the dreadful consequences of initiating a civil war. Both Addison's eloquent appeal and the attention western Pennsylvanians paid to his words challenge the popular images that abounded then and continue today of western frontiers inhabited by rancorous, unenlightened frontiersmen.<sup>3</sup> On the contrary, western Pennsylvanians read, digested, and ruminated on the consequences—legal, political, and moral—of their public actions.

Addison's work did not fall on deaf ears. William Findley, member of the House of Representatives, recorded in his 1796 *History of the Insurrection in the Four Western Counties of Pennsylvania* that "on the Monday previous to the day appointed for signing the assurances to government, the court at Greensburgh was opened by a sensible speech, well adapted to the occasion, by president Addison, and he was not insulted nor the business of the court interrupted, and he went through the circuit

<sup>2</sup> "Charge, Delivered by Alexander Addison, Esq; President of the Court, to the Grand Jury of the County of Allegheny, at Pittsburgh, September 1st, 1794," *Pittsburgh Gazette*, Sept. 6, 1794. The above section is merely a small portion of Judge Addison's presentation, the charge consuming the entirety of the first page and the majority of the second page of that edition of the *Pittsburgh Gazette*. The entire work is an effort to convince citizens against initiating a civil war. Reprinted in *Hazard's Register of Pennsylvania*, Oct. 19, 1833, and in *Pennsylvania Archives*, ed. Samuel Hazard et al. (Philadelphia and Harrisburg, PA, 1852–1935), 2nd ser., 4:201–9.

<sup>3</sup> Brackenridge reports, "there is even at this day an astonishing amount of prejudice against the villainous insurgents." Brackenridge, *History of the Western Insurrection*, 251.

without meeting with any embarrassment.”<sup>4</sup> Alexander Addison’s charge reveals the sophisticated oration and philosophical conversation that took place in western Pennsylvania during the Whiskey Rebellion.

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<sup>4</sup> William Findley, *History of the Insurrection in the Four Western Counties of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia, 1796), 137.

*“Upon God Knows What Ground”:  
African American Slavery in  
Western Pennsylvania<sup>1</sup>*

Between 1790 and 1820 western Pennsylvania changed from a struggling backcountry to a burgeoning industrial power at the epicenter of trade and commerce—one in which the “invisible hands” of African American laborers were the principal driving force.<sup>2</sup> The process by which they negotiated the complex, always ambiguous, legal terrain between slavery and freedom is readily visible in recently unearthed slave manuscripts from the Allegheny County Recorder of Deeds Office.<sup>3</sup> Aged, brittle, yet as vivid as the day they were initially penned, these documents are now in the hands of Samuel Black, curator of African American collections at the Heinz History Center in Pittsburgh.<sup>4</sup> Only a cursory glance at the fifty-seven documents in the archives is necessary to verify their authenticity. Changes in penmanship reflect the turnover of political officials in office. Information on presiding judges was also recorded and tells us more about early political history in the region.<sup>5</sup> Signatures and “marks” on these documents make visible gradations in literacy among slaves and slaveowners. Much can be learned from the manuscripts; an attempt is made here to suggest some potential entry points.

The history of US slavery and its decline encompasses a diverse range of experiences. Accurately tracing the historical trajectory of slavery and

<sup>1</sup> The final words of Judge William Gazzam’s ruling on behalf of James Cooper, who was accused of being a runaway slave and “confined in the Common Jail of Allegheny County” in 1803. The phrase reads, “I certify that John Johnston and Arch’d Sinclair, offered to bring forward four or five Others to prove that the said Cooper committed (upon God knows what ground) by Justice Wilkins is a free man.” Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, Recorder of Deeds, Manumission and Indenture Records, 1782–1857, MSS #0949, Library and Archives Division, Senator John Heinz History Center, Pittsburgh, PA.

<sup>2</sup> Christopher M. Osborne, “Invisible Hands: Slaves, Bound Laborers, and the Development of Western Pennsylvania, 1780–1820,” *Pennsylvania History* 72 (2005): 75–99.

<sup>3</sup> Sally Kalson, “History Center Gets Documents Tracing Slaves’ Legal Status,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, Nov. 14, 2007.

<sup>4</sup> Unlike most primary texts that can only be deciphered by expert historians, the slavery records were recorded by perhaps the most able scribes in the region. Parchment and ink used by the office were of the highest quality. The script is clear and easily readable, making them more accessible to the everyday historians seeking to know more about Pennsylvania history.

<sup>5</sup> The succession of slaveowning judges—William Gazzam and John Wilkins—reflect the evolution of a social order in which one’s race, economic role, and status in society were absolutely congruent.

African American life in western Pennsylvania, however, has proved difficult for scholars. Early historians, influenced by prevailing social attitudes on slavery and race, stressed the institution's "mildness" and low economic importance in this region. Furthermore, scholarship on African American history in western Pennsylvania was impeded by a "decided paucity of . . . statistics" and nationalistic interpretations of society as entirely free and white. Recent studies tend to focus on Philadelphia from the colonial era until 1780 and ignore temporal and geographic context.<sup>6</sup>

In 1780, the revolutionary government of Pennsylvania, spurred by reminders that slavery was "disgraceful to any people, and more especially to those who have been contending in the great cause of liberty themselves," legislated gradual emancipation.<sup>7</sup> The experiences of African Americans in Pennsylvania from this moment forward hinged on the interplay of social and economic forces over which they had very little control. Some slaveowners yielded to the logic of the Revolution and freed their slaves or allowed them to purchase their liberty. Jacob More and Caleb Mills were emancipated in 1804, and in 1806 Jack Walls was "manumitted—and set free at Twenty-six years of age" by Presley Nevill of Pittsburgh. Peter Cosco, on the other hand, purchased his freedom from John McKee in 1795 "for the consideration of the sum of one hundred pounds."<sup>8</sup> Other slaveowners, following gradualist laws, required slaves to agree to long-term indentureships, thereby reviving the older system of subordination and providing masters a profitable exit from slaveownership.<sup>9</sup> Mary Smith, "a black Girl aged thirteen years," for example, was set free by "Horatio Berry of Baltimore . . . for the sum of

<sup>6</sup> Edward R. Turner, *The Negro in Pennsylvania: Slavery, Servitude, Freedom, 1639–1861* (Washington, DC, 1911); Edwin N. Schenkel, "The Negro in Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, 1789–1813" (unpublished manuscript, 1931), Library and Archives Division, Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania; Edward M. Burns, "Slavery in Western Pennsylvania," *Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine* 8 (1925): 202–14; Gary B. Nash, "Slaves and Slaveowners in Colonial Philadelphia," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 30 (1973): 223–56; Gary B. Nash and Jean R. Soderlund, *Freedom by Degrees: Emancipation in Pennsylvania and Its Aftermath* (New York, 1991).

<sup>7</sup> The Pennsylvania Gradual Abolition Act of 1780 declared that persons enslaved as of March 1, 1780, would remain so for life, so long as their masters registered them in their county of residence. The children of enslaved women born thereafter were subject to *partus sequitur venetrum*, making them the property of their mother's master until the age of twenty-eight. See James T. Flanders and Henry Mitchell, eds., *The Statutes at Large of Pennsylvania from 1682 to 1801* (Harrisburg, PA, 1896–1911), 10:63–67.

<sup>8</sup> Unless otherwise noted all citations are from Allegheny County, Pennsylvania Recorder of Deeds, Manumission and Indenture Records, 1792–1857, MSS 0949.

<sup>9</sup> Ira Berlin, *Generations of Captivity: A History of African-American Slavery* (Cambridge, MA, 2003).

Five hundred dollars being paid by George Poe Jr. of the Borough of Pittsburgh,” after which the young woman “b[ou]nd and put herself servant to the said George.”

John McKee and Presley Nevill were engaged in a variety of commercial and industrial enterprises driving the maturation of western Pennsylvania. Slaves worked at a wide range of jobs, and at least some had special skills. Beyond its inherent value, their labor was important to economic development; enslaved persons engaged in substance production, granting their owners time and security to branch out financially.<sup>10</sup> As the institution dwindled, freedmen and freemen joined ranks and laid the foundations for Pittsburgh’s first African American communities.<sup>11</sup> Between 1790 and 1820, the slave population dropped to only a handful, while the free black community increased 300 percent and encompassed men such as Henry Holt.<sup>12</sup> In 1807, Holt was described as “full faced . . . his complexion Black, considering his Mother was in part White.” Furthermore, he was “well educated, reads & writes well, did understand figures and plays well on the Violin, either by note or otherwise,” and he worked as a waiter—one of the few occupations available for free blacks. Perhaps as a middle-aged man he witnessed the emergence of Martin Delaney, Lewis Woodson, and John Vashon. Their generation marked the arrival of a new class of seminal ideological leaders of the black struggle.<sup>13</sup>

The slave manuscripts at the Heinz History Center provide a unique opportunity to trace African Americans’ trajectory from slavery into American politics. They also document proceedings in Missouri, Louisiana, and Virginia. Collectively, these manuscripts complicate our understanding of law and slavery in America, prompting a reevaluation of the place of slavery and capitalism not only in western Pennsylvania, but more broadly in a democratic society.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Osborne, “Invisible Hands.”

<sup>11</sup> Edgar J. McManus, *Black Bondage in the North* (Syracuse, NY, 1973).

<sup>12</sup> Clarence R. Turner, “Black Pittsburgh: A Social History, 1790–1840” (unpublished manuscript, 1974), Library and Archives Division, Senator John Heinz History Center.

<sup>13</sup> Tunde Adeleke, *Without Regard to Race: The Other Martin Robinson Delany* (Jackson, MS, 2003); Laurence A. Glasco, ed., *The WPA History of the Negro in Pittsburgh* (Pittsburgh, 2004).

<sup>14</sup> Seth Rockman, “The Unfree Origins of American Capitalism,” in *The Economy of Early America: Historical Perspectives and New Directions*, ed. Cathy D. Matson (University Park, PA, 2006), 335–61.

## *Little Britain Ledgers*

An exciting view into the Pennsylvania backcountry can be found in the account ledgers and daybook of the Little Britain General Store, which are housed in the manuscript reading room at the Hagley Museum and Library in Wilmington, Delaware. Little Britain, located in central lower Pennsylvania, Lancaster County (modern-day Quarryville), was a hub of activity at the turn of the nineteenth century. Scots-Irish immigrant farmers founded Little Britain Township, and the general store most likely served an area within wagon distance; it was connected, however, to a much wider world. There had always been a flow of goods between Philadelphia—one of the main exporters to the Atlantic world—and the surrounding countryside. The area now also had commerce with the emerging port city of Baltimore. Transporters sent agricultural products and raw materials—the largest exports were flour, wheat, and ironware—to the cities, and haulers brought city-made and European manufactures overland to country stores and mills. The store's ledgers, particularly ledgers A and B, which contain records from 1796 to 1800 and 1799 to 1803, respectively, and daybook, which covers some of the same trading years (1799–1803), provide a window into trade, economy, and everyday life in this area in the early years of the new republic.

Account books can be a valuable source for studying consumer practices, for they reveal the importance of credit in the early republic's economy and society. Book debt, as opposed to paper currency, was more common in this era of a developing nation and economy. The owners registered the goods and services traded through the business of the store in pounds (£), shillings (s), and pence (d). US dollars had not come into general use in trade books yet, but some people of the region did bring in dollars to credit their account. The ledgers show credit for the goods that haulers and merchants in Philadelphia brought to the store, but there are not corresponding manuscript sources that show the relationships between the owners and other businessmen or the quality and quantities of goods.<sup>1</sup>

To add credit to their accounts, customers brought in produce and services as well as cash. An example of this can be found in a record from

<sup>1</sup> Colleen Frances Rafferty, "To establish an intercourse between our respective houses": Economic Networks in the Mid-Atlantic, 1735–1815" (PhD diss., University of Delaware, 2012), 265–67.

July 1799, when the store ledger credits Widow McCreary for five and one-half yards of tow linen. Most likely she or someone in her household made this fabric. Customers received credit on items such as peaches, bacon, leather, mowing services, calf skins, and homemade goods (candles, butter, coats, and breeches). The owners put up for sale necessities as well as luxuries such as ribbons and hair combs. Credit records show a trade in labor between customers of the store and neighbors in the region. Isaiah Brown, his son, and another man, Robert Love, all brought in cash for Brown's account. Isaiah Brown paid his account in smithing, in hops, and in "work in full"; in exchange, he purchased buttons, linen, and calico. The store also sold homespun goods that can be considered labor, such as "Jones' spinning."

Store accounts, for the most part, listed the debits and credits—recording date, item quantity, and value—for households, and most records are under the names of male heads of households. Women's names are rarely recorded as heads of household accounts, and in those rare cases, they always bear the designation of "widow." Women's names do appear in records of weeks or months of labor performed that credited accounts. A deeper look at such account books affords us a view of women in the community who traded goods, services, and work contracts on other people's farms. Similarly, we can get a glimpse of the lower ranks of society who did not have a household account but are still listed in the ledgers. For example, William Morrow paid cash into Job Haines's account but did not have an account of his own, Mackey McCullough only appears as a credit to an account, and Samuel McHesson simply received ten yards of linen from Alexander Ewing.

The ledgers of Little Britain's general store show the relationship between people and the land they worked. This hidden gem reveals networks of connections: labor was converted into credit; farmers interacted with townspeople; wagoners and buyers for the store encountered Philadelphia traders; raw backcountry rabbit, muskrat, and cat skins met finished foreign goods. The store's records reveal an interwoven web of domestically made goods and services traded for objects from throughout the Atlantic world.

*Newark, DE*

MICHELLE M. MORMUL





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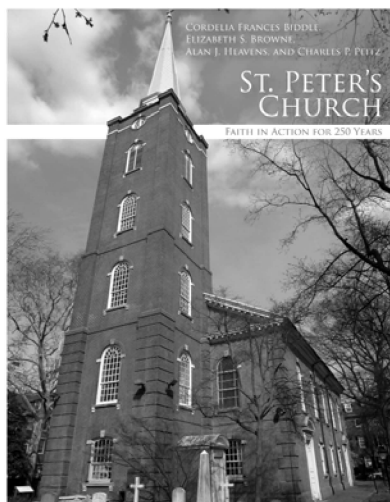
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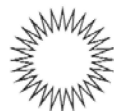
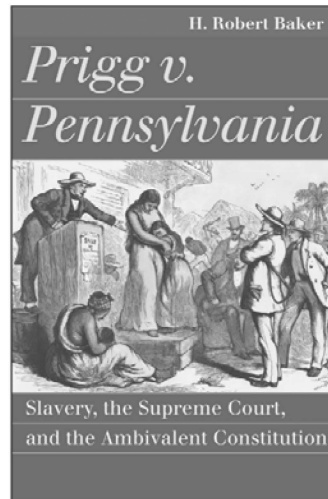
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