If we measured time by the majestic stride of centuries, instead of by the fleeting flight of the season, we would find ourselves tonight, not far removed from the tremendous and stirring events that transpired and were enacted on this and surrounding territory, in the valley of the Ohio, about one and three-quarter centuries ago. These events had to do, not only with the making of the great State of Pennsylvania, but with the Nation. They had to do not only with the taming of the savage and the subduing of the wilderness, but with the advance of civilization. The fierceness of the struggle, and its frequent recurrence, called for men—men of strong wills, men of heroic mold, men of character and decision; men skilled in civil affairs, keen in diplomacy, wise in action, as well as men skillful in military tactics—capable to lead, discipline, and command.

Conspicuous among these in civil life, but ever active in the defence of the Province, was that wise old philosopher and statesman—Benjamin Franklin; among the Indian agents and interpreters—Conrad Weiser, who rendered invaluable service; and in both civil and military affairs, the military predominating, was John Armstrong, the subject of this sketch.

Birth and Ancestry.

John Armstrong was born in Brookborough Parish, County Fermanagh, Ireland, in the province of Ulster, on the 13th day of October, 1717. His father was James Armstrong—son of Edward, who, doubtless, was an emigrant or the descendant of an emigrant from "Bonny" Scotland. I think we can fairly and safely assume that the father of John was a man of considerable intelligence and of some means, who not only desired, but was of sufficient ability, to give his son a liberal education in the classics and mathe-
matics, for at an early age we find John choosing surveying as his profession.

It is most probable that while attending school John heard glowing accounts of Penn's "Holy Experiment" in America and most likely he communicated these, with something of the old Viking spirit, to his parents and brothers, residing in County Fermanagh. Also at about this time, the religious controversy in Ireland was acute, and many sumptuary laws were being enacted and enforced that militated against personal freedom, insomuch that many of the best people of that island emigrated to America. Methinks I can hear them say—"Over there is a land of great extent, of unknown proportions, of wonderful opportunities, where the worship of Almighty God is not prescribed or limited by civil laws, and where freedom of conscience is not dictated, controlled or denied." So to this land of freedom came young Armstrong—still in his 'teens—with several of his brothers.

**As a Pennylvanian.**

Just when he arrived in the Province of Pennsylvania, I am unable to state accurately. Some historians give one and others a different date, but suffice it to say that it was certainly some time prior to 1736, for in that year, when he was only nineteen years of age, there was warranted to him a tract of land, consisting of several hundred acres, lying west of the Susquehanna River, and most likely within the territorial limits of what is now Cumberland County.

His profession as surveyor—and he was a skillful one—brought him into immediate notice, as demand after demand was made upon him to survey tracts of land for the settlers, who were now in great numbers pushing their way westwardly into the Cumberland Valley.

His proficiency and character were soon recognized by the Proprietaries, by whom he was appointed a Deputy Surveyor for the Province of Pennsylvania, and it is said that the major part of the original surveys of lands in the County of Cumberland were made by him or his assistants by and pursuant to his directions.

With keen appreciation and sound judgment as to the value of these rich, virgin lands, with his extensive opportunities to observe them, by reason of his professional duties, he was not slow in securing some of the best for himself,
besides several tracts donated to him by the Proprietaries for distinguished services rendered the Province somewhat later in life.

After the organization of Cumberland County, in 1750, he, with a Mr. Lyons, under the direction of the Proprietaries, plotted and laid out the town of Carlisle, and in the year 1762 resurveyed and laid it out according to its present plan.

Here in the town of Carlisle, so near and dear to his heart from personal touch, he established his home, where he endeared himself, not only to the people of the town, but to the entire County, by whom he was held in the highest regard and as opportunity offered honored by responsible official positions.

**Military Life.**

It is generally thought and believed that John Armstrong received military training before coming to this country. This belief is confirmed by the meritorious and distinguished services rendered the Province and the English cause during the French and Indian War.

When General Braddock was appointed and commissioned as Commander-in-Chief of his Majesty’s forces in America, and charged with the conquest of the French stronghold—Fort Duquesne—the authorities of the Province of Pennsylvania were solicited and urged, and they finally agreed, to open a road from Carlisle to the three forks of the Youghiogheny, and also from Carlisle to Will’s Creek, now Cumberland, Maryland; so that over the first of these roads when opened, supplies might more readily and expeditiously be forwarded to the army. Armstrong, Croghan, James Burd, William Buchanan and Adam Hoopes were appointed Commissioners for this purpose. Armstrong was the surveyor, and in this capacity he rendered a distinct service to the Province and particularly to the Southwestern part thereof.

Governor Denny about two years later had this to say concerning this road: “A new road was opened and cleared from Raystown over the Allegheny hills for the use of General Braddock and is now in good condition.”

After the unfortunate and disastrous defeat of Braddock, the remnant of his army became panicky, and during the humiliating retreat of Dunbar, it was largely through the instrumentality of Armstrong that the retreating army
was provisioned and kept together, so that, at least to the French, it presented the appearance of a formidable force, which they deemed unwise to follow and give battle. The fact that the French did not follow up their victory with a prompt advance and pursuit, saved, for a time, the frontier inhabitants from the scalping knife of the Indians, but only for a time.

In January, 1756, Armstrong was commissioned a Captain and in May following was promoted and made Lieutenant Colonel of the Second Battalion of the Provincial forces — thus becoming commander of all the provincial troops in the Cumberland Valley.

The portentious and threatening storm of Indian fury had broken, with all its terrible ferocity, upon the frontier. Whole settlements were destroyed in a single night and the inhabitants killed and scalped or carried away into captivity where many were tortured to death. Terror and fear chilled the heart of the most courageous as they heard of and saw their friends, neighbors, wives, mothers and children cruelly slaughtered or carried away captives, to places they knew not where. It seemed to them as if the God of the universe had forsaken them and that an end to all of their hopes and splendid prospects had come. They took counsel together, they renewed their courage, and like the men of a generation later, they determined and decided, "we will die if we can not live freemen."

A little later it was ascertained that these Indian bands and scalping parties, so suddenly and so frequently descending with such terrible ferocity upon the defenceless settlers along the Juniata and the Susquehanna came from a place called—The Kittanning on the Ohio, as the Allegheny River was then known; and Colonel Armstrong solicited permission from Lieutenant Governor Morris to lead his provincials against this nest of savages.

Such permission was granted and he was duly authorized by the Governor to undertake the perilous task, and this brings us to one of the most outstanding achievements in all the military experience of this brave and dauntless Pennsylvanian—the one with which his name is primarily and ineffaceably connected—namely—the destruction of the Indian village of Kittanning.
The name—Kittanning—is of Delaware Indian origin and literally interpreted means—at the great or main river. The French named it Atique, and the Seneca Indians called the great river Ohehu or Ho-he-hu, meaning handsome or beautiful, hence the French appellation La Belle Riviere-The Beautiful River. The name—Allegheny—is most probably from Allegewi, the name of a tribe of Indians who inhabited the valley prior to the migration of the Lenni Lenape from the west, and who are generally supposed to have belonged to the mound builder people. Much of the history of this people is enshrouded in impenetrable mystery, but we do know it was a long time after their expulsion that the Lenni Lenape made their first permanent settlement on the shores of the Allegheny River and named the place or rather the region—The Kittanning.

So far as I can discover, the first permanent settlement of the Delaware Indians, west of the Allegheny Mountains, was made at Kittanning, or “The Kittanning,” and this was most probably as early as 1724 or 1725. In October, 1731, Jonah Davenport and James Letort, both Indian traders, in separate affidavits made before Lieutenant Governor Gordon, in substance say—“that four years last spring there were at Kythenning on the Kythenning River, fifty families and one hundred and fifty men, most Delaware.” In January, 1756, George Croghan informed Governor Morris that, through Jo. Hickman—a Delaware Indian whom he had sent to the Allegheny—he had learned that at Kittanning on the Ohio, forty miles above Fort Duquesne, where Shingas and Captain Jacobs resided, there were about one hundred and forty men, chiefly Delawares and Shawanese, and that they had with them there about one hundred English prisoners, big and little, taken from Pennsylvania and Virginia. In July, following the information brought by Croghan to the provincial authorities and others prominent in the councils of the Province, Captain Jacobs, the Kittanning Delaware Chief, with his blood-thirsty warriors, aided and incited by the French, made an attack upon and sacked Fort Granville, on the Juniata, near the present site of Lewistown, Mifflin County, killing, among others, Lieutenant Armstrong—the commander of the fort—a brother of Colonel John Armstrong. Among the prisoners taken and carried to Kittann-
ning were the Girty boys, their mother, and their stepfather—Turner, who very soon after his arrival at Kittanning was burned to death at the stake—a penalty the Indians considered befitting his cowardice in opening to them the gates of the fort.

The immediate effect of this bold attack and destruction of Fort Granville was to arouse and spur the settlers and the provincial authorities to the absolute necessity of vigorous action, as a matter of self defense against the murderous assaults of these Western Indians. Colonel Armstrong, naturally, would feel keenly the untimely death of his brother, and was anxious for orders to advance with his band of provincials into the territory of the enemy before they could prepare and arrange for another raid against the almost defenceless frontier. Having therefore obtained permission and having received orders from Lieutenant Governor Morris, just one month after the sacking of Fort Granville to-wit: on August 30th, 1756, he left Fort Shirley, now Shirleysburg, Huntingdon County, marched to the Beaver Dams, near Frankstown, where he joined his advance forces; having now under his command a total force of about three hundred well-armed men, mostly Scotch-Irish from the Cumberland Valley, he pushed forward along the Indian trail known as the Kittanning Path with such remarkable celerity that, as he says in his report, "in two days we were within fifty miles of the Kittanning." At this place, which must have been near the present Cherry Tree, in Indiana County, it was decided to send forward an officer, one guide, and two privates to reconnoitre the town and secure information about the enemy. He continued, however, to march onward with the main force and the next day he met these scouts returning and learned from them that the roads were clear of the enemy and that they were not discovered. Armstrong, however, adds in his report "from the rest of the intelligence they gave it appeared they had not been nigh enough to the town, either to perceive the true situation of it, the number of the enemy, and what way it might be attacked most advantageously."

When the army reached a point since known as Blanket Hill—about six to eight miles from Kittanning—on the evening of the 7th of September, the horses, baggage and blank-
ets were left in care of Lieutenant Hogg and a few privates, while with the main body of the troops on foot Colonel Armstrong pushed on and on the morning of the 8th, before sunrise, weary and tired, but still undiscovered by the Indians, reached the Allegheny River, a short distance below the Indian town.

The Indians had been enjoying one of their famous dances, which became evident as the sound of the beating of a drum and the war-whoops of the warriors reached the ears of the advancing troops. They halted and remained very quiet for a short time when suddenly an Indian gave a peculiar whistle. Armstrong says in his report, "I asked one—Baker—who was our best assistant, whether it was not a signal to the warriors of our approach. He answered—No—but said it was the manner of a young fellow calling his squaw after he had done his dance." Fires, at different places in the corn-field, were now noticed, which Baker explained were intended to drive away the gnats that would otherwise annoy the sleeping warriors.

Some of the troops by this time, being weary and tired from their long march over the hills, across deep valleys, through an unbroken forest, had fallen asleep. These were promptly aroused at the proper time and informed that the attack was about to be made. Some of the troops were ordered to march along the top of the hill, just east of the town, about one hundred perches, and so much further as would bring them to a position just above the main part of the town, while the larger number were held to make the attack through the cornfield northwardly toward the cabins of the Indians. The attack through the cornfield was begun with much spirit, speed and energy, with special orders to a part of the troops to press forward in order to discover the cabins, it being now daylight.

As the cabins were approached and the Indians realized that a fight was on, Captain Jacobs gave a war-whoop, and many of his dusky warriors shouted—"The white men have come, now we will have scalps enough"—and immediately orders were given to the squaws and children to fly to the woods.

The cornfield was set on fire by the troops and a brisk exchange of shots indicated that the battle was on in earnest.
As bullet after bullet struck the cabins, it very soon became obvious that the strongest effective resistance was coming from the cabin of Chief Jacobs, and by order of Armstrong the adjacent cabins were set on fire in the expectation that the flames would reach or spread to the cabin of the Chief. While Armstrong was thus moving about among his men, giving orders, he received a wound in his shoulder from a large musket ball, and it was then, pointing to his wound and the blood flowing therefrom, that he called for some one of his brave followers to carry forward the torch and ignite the cabins of the Chief. One sterling fellow volunteered and soon to his great satisfaction the fortress of Chief Jacobs was enveloped in flames.

Armstrong, in his report, further says: "Sundry persons were told to tell the Indians to surrender, but one in particular answered and said, he was a man and would not be a prisoner, he was then told he would be burnt, to this he said he did not care for he would kill four or five before he died. As the fire approached and the smoke grew thick one of the Indian fellows, to show his manhood, began to sing. A squaw was heard to cry but was severely rebuked by the man." Finally things became too hot and two Indians and a squaw sprang from the cabin and started to run for the cornfield, but were immediately shot down. Captain Jacobs himself tumbled out of the garret or cock-loft window only to be shot to death by the watchful and alert provincials. Thus ended the career of the bloody Jacobs, who said he could take any fort that would burn, and Colonel Armstrong, while entitled to the glory of victory, must have felt a peculiar satisfaction in being the avenger of his murdered brother.

The body of Chief Jacobs was identified by some of the prisoners by the powder horn and pouch found on his person, which they said he had recently received from a French officer in exchange for Lieutenant Armstrong's boots, which he carried from Fort Granville, where the Lieutenant was killed. They also identified the body of his squaw by a particular "bob" of her hair (and here we learn that bobbing of the hair is not of recent origin, but in this modern day the vagaries of feminine fashion have again made it popular, and due to the many varieties it may again become a means of identification).
Also, the body of a young Indian, called the King's son, was identified, who, Washington Irving in his Life of Washington says was a giant—seven feet tall. The only reference I find to this alleged giant is in a letter from Colonel Adam Stephen, commanding at Fort Cumberland, written in November, 1756, in which he says, "A son of Capt. Jacobs is killed, and a cousin of his about seven feet high—called Young Jacobs, at the destroying of Kittanning." Col. Records 1st series, Vol. VII, p. 331.

Without going further into the account of the notable victory over the Indians (a full report of which is given by Colonel Armstrong and can be found in the Pennsylvania Archives, (1st series) Vol II, pages 767 to 775, let us note some of the effects and results:

First in importance in my mind was the effect upon the French. Heretofore they were confident of their ability, with the aid of the Indians, whom they had induced and seduced to become their allies, to maintain their position and supremacy in the valley of the Ohio and west of the Allegheny Mountains against the English; but, now, they saw—perhaps faintly and somewhat dimly—a rising specter of broken hopes and honors lost forever; which vision, a few years later, lost its spectral appearance and became a painful reality as the lilies of France gave place in the New World to the banners of England, proclaiming Anglo-Saxon supremacy from the Atlantic Ocean to the Mississippi River. For other and further effects of this victory, I quote from Doctor Donehoo's "Pennsylvania—a History," Volume II, beginning on page 782.

"In order to appreciate the effects of Col. Armstrong's success at Kittanning, it must be remembered that this was the first military movement across the mountains since the defeat of General Braddock, the year before. It was really the 3rd military expedition towards the Ohio of an armed British force; the other two, that of Washington in 1754 and of Braddock in 1755 had both been defeats. Col. Armstrong's expedition against Kittanning was the first victorious one of any armed English force in the Ohio Valley. This was the first real success of British arms beyond the mountains and it gave heart to the frontiersmen. It was a small army—yet it had in it the making of some tremen-
dous forces. Col. John Armstrong, Capt. Hugh Mercer, Adam Hoops, James Potter, and others were later to play big parts upon the stage of American History. The total destruction of the village of Kittanning and the death of Captain Jacobs was a most severe blow to the Indians. They had been making raids into the settlements of the white men but this was the first raid of the white men into the villages of the Indians.

Many of the Indians who had lived at Kittanning and in the villages east of Fort Duquesne now put the French fort between themselves and the English, by removing west of the Ohio to Logstown, Sacunk and Kuskuskie.

To state, as do some historians, that Kittanning was never again occupied by the Indians would be unwarranted; some of them returned soon after the destruction of the village, rebuilt their houses and lived there, but the village ceased to be a gathering place for the hostile Delawares during this early period.

The real success of Armstrong's expedition was a moral one. It revealed to the frontiersman, for the first time, that he really could meet the Indian on his own ground and come out of it victorious; and it made the Indian realize that the English "were not women, but men."

The French made use of the victory to inflame the minds of the Indians still further against the English, by lengthy harangues, artfully reminding them of their slain and the destruction of their town, and that the object and intention of the English was to drive them out of the valley and to seize their land; so that in the following year the raids were renewed with great ferocity against the frontiers of Pennsylvania and Virginia.

Colonel Armstrong's vicitroy at Kittanning was received and hailed with delight and great rejoicing in all the settled parts of the Province of Pennsylvania, and, indeed, generally in all the colonies. Even the Quakers, who had most tenaciously advocated pacification of the Indians by other means than armed force, joined in the general rejoicing and the Corporation of the City of Philadelphia showed its high appreciation by voting Col. Armstrong and his command the thanks of the City, presented him and his officers with substantial gifts, and had struck in his honor a silver medal, bearing the inscription, "Kittanning destroyed by Col. Arm-
strong, September 8th, 1756” and on the reverse side—“The
gift of the Corporation of the City of Philadelphia.”

On January 24th, 1757, Col. Armstrong modestly ac-
knowledged the honors conferred upon him and his com-
mand as follow:

“To the Mayor, Recorder, Alderman, and Common Council
of the Corporation of the City of Philadelphia:

Gentlemen:—Your favor of the 5th instant, together
with the medals and other genteel presents made to the
officers of my battalion by the Corporation of the City of
Philadelphia, I had the pleasure to receive by Capt. George
Armstrong. The officers employed in the Kittanning Expe-
dition have been made acquainted with the distinguished
honor you have done them and desire to join with me in
acknowledging it in the most public manner. The kind
acceptance of our past services by the Corporation gives us
the highest pleasure and furnishes a fresh motive for exert-
ing ourselves on every future occasion for the benefit of his
Majesty’s service in general and in defense of the Province
in particular. In behalf of the officers of my battalion I
have the honor to be, Gentlemen, your most obedient and
obliged humble servant.
Carlisle, January 24, 1757.

(SIGNED)  JOHN ARMSTRONG.”

Therefore, it can be affirmed, we think without equivo-
cation, that this victory at Kittanning was, in truth and fact,
an invaluable contribution on the part of Col. Armstrong to
the southwestern part of the Province, if we may include the
territory lying east and south of the Allegheny River, and
indeed to the whole of the said Province of Pennsylvania.

No adequate history of southwestern Pennsylvania
could be written that would aim to state the facts, truly,
without giving place therein to Colonel Armstrong and the
distinguished services he rendered, and this would be alike
true of any history of the State as a whole.

The Forbes Expedition.

Under the wise and prudent administration of William
Pitt, Prime Minister of Great Britain, affairs in the colonies
assumed a much brighter aspect. Order and proficiency
replaced, everywhere, confusion and blundering incompe-
tency. Three expeditions were planned—one against Louis-
burg, one against Ticonderoga and Crown Point, and the third against Fort Duquesne, with orders to the respective commanders to proceed vigorously and aggressively against Kittanning, and also regarding the methods of the frontiersmen in their warfare with their wily Indian foe. This is quite apparent from the fact that nearly all of the commanding officers of the Pennsylvania troops had experience in Indian fighting, and were men of acknowledged skill, ability and bravery.

Forbes was taking no chances such as Braddock took, to his undoing, when he haughtily declined the advice and counsel of such men as these, and others of less renown but of equal experience and bravery.

The first serious question to be settled before the march of the army began was, what road or route should be taken. Washington and the Virginians generally favored and were persistently strong in advocating the Braddock, or Virginia road. To them no other route seemed feasible or possible. Forbes, however, as is manifest from his letters written at this time, entertained the notion that a better and shorter way than by the Braddock road could be found over the Allegheny Mountains, through the heart of the Province of Pennsylvania—then, practically an unbroken wilderness. Colonel Boquet, who was most active, had made some investigation of the proposed route through Pennsylvania and reported to his Commander-in-Chief in favor of that route, and in this he was supported by Sir John Sinclair, the quartermaster general. Among the prominent Pennsylvanians, Colonel Armstrong took a decided stand in favor of the route over the Allegheny Mountains, and his judgment and opinion had great weight with both Forbes and Boquet, insomuch that they were most probably influenced to make a final decision in favor of the Pennsylvania route. The entire army was therefore ordered to move forward over this route, then being opened, along the old Indian trail, now traversed, with some variations, by the famous Lincoln Highway. This route was of great advantage to the Province of Pennsylvania as affording a direct means of communication and transportation from the East to the Ohio, and it proved to be the quickest and best way over which to keep the army supplied with horses, cattle, wagons, and food.
Owing to the protracted and serious illness of General Forbes, the immediate command of the army devolved upon Col. Henry Boquet, the officer in command of the Royal Americans. Washington commanded the Virginia troops and Col. Armstrong was chief in command of the Pennsylvanians. To be more specific, Armstrong was the commanding officer of the 1st Battalion, Col. James Burd of the 2nd, and Capt. Hugh Mercer of the 3rd Battalion. Captain Mercer, afterwards Colonel Mercer, you will recall, was with Armstrong at the destruction of Kittanning, where he had been severely wounded. Later this gallant officer lost his life at the battle of Princeton.

Historians, generally speaking, give to Washington and his Virginians the credit and distinction of leading the advance on this memorable march to Fort Duquesne, but some assign this distinction to Col. Armstrong and his Pennsylvanians. Doctor Donehoo says: “According to the account in the ‘Pennsylvania Gazette’ November 30th (1758) Colonel John Armstrong, who was next in command to Col. Boquet, led the advance with 1,000 men, leaving Loyalhanna on the 13th of November. This seeming contradiction is probably accounted for by the fact that Washington was already in advance—building the road towards Fort Duquesne, and that Col. Armstrong, when this advance was decided upon, was ordered to join Washington, and both with the picked brigade of 2,500 men were to press forward to the French fort.”

However that may be, it shows conclusively the high respect and regard held by the superior officers for the skill, the judgment, and bravery of Col. Armstrong.

On the 18th of November Col. Armstrong was within 17 miles of the French fort, which point he evidently reached in advance of the rest of the army, and on the 24th instant the whole army encamped near Turtle Creek, some ten miles distant from the fort. Here some of the Indians brought the report that the fort was burning and scouts were sent out, who upon returning confirmed the report brought by the Indians.

On the 25th of November the entire army, consisting of between five and six thousand men, pushed forward, only to find the once formidable French stronghold a smoulder-
ing ruin. The French had departed, never to return.

Bancroft says: "That Colonel John Armstrong, senior in command of the Pennsylvania troops, raised the British flag over the walls of the Fort" and adds, "As the banner of England floated over the waters, the place, at the suggestion of General Forbes, was with one voice, called—Pittsburgh."

While that spot where Col. Armstrong planted the English flag ought to be commemorated by a suitable and appropriate marker, yet it was not the first place nor the first time that the English flag was raised in the Valley of the Ohio. Ten years before Conrad Weiser, on his earliest official visit to the Indians, at Logstown, in his Journal says: "September 3rd (1748) set up the Union flag on a long pole. Treated all the company to a dram of rum, and the King's health was drunk by the Indians and white men." And also, Frederick Christian Post, to whom much credit must be given for the bloodless conquest of Fort Duquesne, in his Journal says: "November 24 (1758) (the day before the army reached the fort) we hanged out the English flag in spite of the French." This was at Kuskuskie.

After the conquest Col. Armstrong remained at the fort for some time, for we learn that he was in frequent conferences with Boquet, who was left in the chief command, regarding Indian affairs.

So again we find Col. Armstrong, in the conquest of Fort Duquesne, making another invaluable contribution to the history of southwestern Pennsylvania, which gives him a high and distinguished place in the affections of a patriotic people, who freely and gratefully accord to him the honor he so richly deserves.

The gateway to the west was now opened—never again to be entirely closed—through which flowed a mighty tide of emigration that peopled the land on both sides of the Ohio and beyond.

Here in 1758 great things were accomplished, not only in the making of the Keystone State, but of the Nation. Here at that time, the French lost control of the Ohio forever and Anglo-Saxon supremacy in the New World became an assured fact. It is a little hard to realize that here, where now millions inhabit, where industrial enterprise has reached
Colonel John Armstrong

such magnificent proportions, where the evidence of science, mechanics, religion, education and culture abounds on every hand, indicative of the highest reach of civilization, one hundred and seventy years ago was but a frontier post for the possession and control of which two of the greatest and strongest European nations contended in arms.

Pontiac's War—1763.

Colonel Armstrong was among the first to discern this Indian uprising and to warn the provincial authorities. As early as June 20th, 1763, he and Thomas Wilson addressed a letter to Col. Joseph Shippen at Harris Ferry, now Harrisburg, in which they say: "As a general war with the Indians is now fully evident and their depredations already begun in murder of sundry families, near Bedford, we do on behalf of this town (Carlisle) and of our naked and much exposed frontier apply to you for such proportion of powder and lead as you shall think proper, or the circumstances of other places, equally under your notice, will admit you to give."

In July following he was directed and commissioned by Governor Hamilton to forthwith raise companies of troops in Cumberland County for the defence of the frontier. He proceeded with his usual promptness and succeeded in recruiting a large number of men—many of whom joined the forces commanded by Col. Boquet who marched to the relief of Fort Pitt. Col. Armstrong also exerted himself, with marked success, in equipping and provisioning the troops under command of Col. Boquet.

He also enlisted and equipped a battalion of which he, himself, had command, leading them against the Indians on the North Branch of the Susquehanna, where he destroyed their towns.

At the termination of this war, he again returned to his home at Carlisle, where as a Judge of the Court of Common Pleas for Cumberland County, he resumed his duties, to which he gave faithful attention and most efficient service, except when called away on some public business pertaining to the State or County at large.

For nearly thirteen years he ably presided over the courts of Cumberland County and it is said that, "while that County has had many able and distinguished jurists, Col.
Armstrong was the noblest Roman of them all." He was a warm personal friend of Washington, and when the Revolutionary War broke out he was the first among the brigadier generals chosen and appointed by the Continental Congress—February 29th, 1775—and was assigned to duty in South Carolina where he took command of the forces at Charleston. Later, having resigned as an officer in the Continental service, his State signally honored him and herself by appointing him Brigadier General, in April, 1777, and Major General, June 5th, 1777, of the Pennsylvania troops; concerning which appointment Washington made it a point to write and express his "pleasure at this honorable mark of distinction conferred upon him by the State." He saw much service in the War for Independence and was always held in the highest esteem by his superior officers.

He served his State in Congress during the session of 1779-80 and again in 1787-88. In his honor, Armstrong County proudly bears his name, and this, perhaps is his most enduring monument. Some writer has said: "As Herschel by his genius and astronomical discoveries wrote his name upon a star, so Colonel Armstrong by his military achievements, skill and prowess, wrote, with his sword, his name upon the beautifully and ruggedly varied face of Armstrong County."

General James Wilkinson in his memoirs styles him, "The Hero of Kittanning—one of the most virtuous men who had lived in any age or country." But he was more than a hero and a patriot, he was a Christian. Bancroft says of him: "He was famed as inheriting the courage of the Scotch Covenanters" and he could have truly added, that he practiced and lived their very best virtues.

It is recorded of him that "He was always known to kneel in humble and earnest prayer before going into battle, and never seemed to doubt in the battle's fury, that the work of blood was sanctified to some high purpose." A mind and heart so trustful and believing as to look for the judgments of God in the doings of men, even in the fury of battle and the shedding of blood could not fail to see in all things the providence of God. This characteristic was exemplified in a marked degree in the life of both Washington and Lincoln.
Of all the varied types of men, the Christian type is the truest and best. His is a life of faith and, after all, is it not true that such men as a rule are truly great? Without faith in God, man is just so much bone and flesh, but with faith men can and do build states, nations, churches, colleges, and universities, lifting humanity heavenward and Godward.

It was this quality of heart and soul that led Col. Armstrong in his every act and in all his efforts to build a State and Nation wherein God might be worshipped without let or hindrance and men might have civil liberty. As a patriot he was sincerely genuine; as a Christian he was animated by the purest principles of Christianity, and restrained by the benevolent precepts it inculcates. He was a soldier without fear, a statesman with broad vision, a just judge, a man of pure heart, loving God and his fellow man.

His last days were spent in the quiet of his home town—Carlisle—and there he died on the 9th day of March, 1795, and there he was buried.

His wife, whose maiden name was Rebecca Lyon, a native of Enniskilling, the County Town of Fermanagh County, Ireland, was born May 2nd, 1719, and died at Carlisle, November 16th, 1797.

Colonel Armstrong was a truly great Pennsylvanian. A man “eminently distinguished for Patriotism, Valor and Piety,” of whom we can be justly proud. It was said of Plato, that he daily thanked his gods that he was born a Greek. Judging from the record of his life, can we not conclude that Colonel Armstrong, daily, thanked his God that he was a Pennsylvanian? May we never, by our conduct, stain the glory of our worthy and illustrious dead, but like them, let us highly resolve never to part with our birthright.

“Remember, America gathers
Hence but fruitless wreathes of fame,
If the freedom spirit of our fathers
Glow not in our hearts today.”