

THE EARLY SETTLEMENT OF INDIANA COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA¹

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IN DISCUSSING the settlement and development of Indiana County it is necessary to consider the early history of western Pennsylvania, especially of Westmoreland County and to some extent of Lycoming County, since Indiana County was derived from them. Considerable activity and land development had occurred within the present borders of the county before it was organized as a separate unit in 1803. While permanent settlements in the first half of the eighteenth century were few and small, there are records of many early temporary settlements and of many traders among the Indians who came into or passed through the county on their way to and from the West. Even earlier, however, most of the Delaware and Shawnee Indians had crossed the Blue Mountains and settled along the branches of the Susquehanna River, and about 1724 the greater part of them had crossed the Allegheny Mountains and settled on the Allegheny River, many of them at Kittanning. This migration had a far-reaching influence on the development of the new continent and especially of the Allegheny Valley; after the Indians came the traders, white pioneers who prepared the way not only for the commercial development of the province, but also for the French and Indian War, for the contest between the French and the English for the territory, and for the claims of Pennsylvania against Virginia for this land—a series of events culminating in the Revolutionary War and the formation of the new republic.

As has been pointed out by Dr. George P. Donehoo, Pennsylvania

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was the gateway in the eighteenth century to the Ohio Valley and the West.² The first lines of travel in this region were Indian paths, of which there were three main ones across Pennsylvania to the Allegheny Valley. The Shamokin Path, the northernmost and the oldest of the three, passed along the West Branch of the Susquehanna, up the Bald Eagle Creek Valley, along the north side of Marsh Creek in Clearfield County, over Indian Grove Hill near Snow Shoe, across Moshannon Creek, struck the West Branch again at Chinklacamoose,³ the present town of Clearfield, passed up the Susquehanna for a few miles, then up Anderson's Creek, crossed the divide between that stream and the Mahoning Creek, and followed down the latter to the Allegheny River. A trail known as the Peholand Trail, connecting this route with the Kittanning Path, ran from "The Forks," a few miles west of Cherry Tree, across the Little Mahoning Creek near Smicksburg to the junction of the creeks. The Shamokin Path then followed down the Allegheny to Kittanning and Shannopin's Town.⁴

It was over this trail that the greater part of the Delaware tribe passed about 1724 in the Indian migration from Shamokin, the present Sunbury, to the Allegheny River and the settlement of Kittanning. It was over this trail also that Christian Frederick Post traveled on his return from a peace mission to the Ohio Indians in September, 1758, and it was this route that was followed in 1772 by Bishop Ettwein with his two hundred Christianized Delaware Indians of the Moravian mission. Ettwein described his trip as full of difficulties, such as many fordings of the streams, precipitous hills, and annoyances by Ponkis (sand flies) at a place called Ponks-uteney, now Punxsutawney; and he gave a detailed account of his trip down Mahoning Creek through Jefferson, Indiana,

² C. Hale Sipe, *The Indian Chiefs of Pennsylvania*, 7 (Butler, Pa., 1927).

³ Chinklacamoose was apparently only a temporary Delaware village erected during the Delaware migration to the Allegheny. It was there in 1755 but not there during Post's visit in 1758, and Colonel Henry Bouquet reported to General John Forbes in 1758 that the town was "a chimera, there being no one there." Charles A. Hanna, *The Wilderness Trail*, 1: 216, 217 (New York and London, 1911).

⁴ A description of this trail, as well as of the Peholand Trail, which passed from the south to the north of Indiana County, is in *History of Indiana County, Penn'a*, 249 (Newark, Ohio, 1880). Excellent descriptions of the various Indian trails in Pennsylvania are in Hanna, *Wilderness Trail*, 1: 182-289.

and Armstrong counties and down the Allegheny River. It was over this road too that many of the white captives of the Delawares were taken to Kittanning, although the part of the Shamokin Path to the Allegheny was followed more by the Indians than by the traders and was little used by either after 1745. Conrad Weiser, the interpreter and envoy of the province to the Indians, in a letter to Governor James Hamilton of April, 1749, said that this trail was rough, wooded, and yielded poor hunting, and in a conference with the Six Nations at Albany on July 3, 1754, he made the following statement: "The road to the Ohio is no new road; it is an old and frequented road; the Shawnese and Delawares removed thither above thirty years ago from Pennsylvania, ever since which that road has been travelled by our Traders at their invitation, and always with safety, until within these few years, that the French sent armies there."⁵

The middle route of travel from the East through Indiana County was the Kittanning or Frankstown Path, also called the Allegheny Path and the Main Path. While this path was not so old as the one through Clearfield and Punxsutawney, it was more important and became the principal route, as the Pennsylvania traders used it extensively to cross the mountains. It led along the north side of the Juniata River to Mifflintown and Lewistown, through Black Log to Standing Stone (Huntingdon) and Frankstown (near Hollidaysburg), across the Alleghenies via Burgoon's Run Gap, through Cambria County west of Asheville and through Carrol, Elder, and Susquehanna townships, to Cherry Tree, Indiana County. From there the trail led toward the town of Indiana, then toward Shelocta, near where it divided, the northern branch going on to Kittanning (U.S. Route 422), and the southern branch going to the Kiskiminetas River. The route of the path through Indiana County is given in detail in reports of trips to Logstown by Conrad Weiser in 1748 and by John Harris in 1753. Harris spoke of the head of the Susquehanna, probably meaning the head of canoe navigation near Cherry Tree. The trail apparently passed between Beringer and Cookport, near where it forked; one branch passed northwestward across the Mahoning Creek to Venango, and the other branch passed southward through the

⁵ Hanna, *Wilderness Trail*, 1: 182, 183, 214-216.

site of the old Caldwell farm, where Colonel Armstrong's army encamped the night of September 5, 1756, on its way to Kittanning. This was probably the place, frequently mentioned, where the Indians "plucked" the hair of their prisoners before going on to the Kiskiminetas. The path then led on close to the present sites of Diamondsville and Greenville and to Peter Shaver's Sleeping Place, about half a mile above the mouth of the present Ramsey's Run. From there the trail passed by "Shaffer's" or "Shaver's" (later called McElhaney's) Spring, within the present town of Indiana, thence northwestward to land surveyed in 1785 for William Armstrong, described as on Crooked Creek and as including "the crossings of the Kiskaminates and Kittanning paths." Crooked Creek may have been the "Eighteen Mile Run" mentioned by Harris and the traders. A mile or two south of Shelocta was the forks or parting of the roads; from there one path led over the present site of Shelocta, passing an old Indian field, thence near the forks of Plum Creek and Crooked Creek, on to the south of Blanket Hill in Armstrong County, and thence to Kittanning. The Indian field near Shelocta was the site of an earlier Indian town called Tohogases Cabbins (at the mouth of Plum Creek, according to Nicholas Scull's map of 1770), which was described in George Campbell's application for a tract of land on Plum Creek, dated April 3, 1769, as "Jaems Litart's Town, an Indian." This was one of James Le Tort's early trading stations, established in the Allegheny region between 1730 and 1740.⁶

The southern branch of the Kittanning Path led from the forks, along the ridge between South Bend and West Lebanon to "Ten Mile Creek," a place probably identical with the "Round Hole" mentioned by Weiser on his return from Logstown, and near a place called Boiling Spring, now Spring Church, on state Route 56. The Kiskiminetas Trail crossed the river of that name at Kiskiminetas Old Town, opposite the mouth of Carnahan's Run, and also at Warren's Sleeping Place (now Apollo). Kiskiminetas Old Town was a name applied to one of several Indian villages mentioned by Le Tort and Jonas Davenport in a report to

⁶ The material in this paragraph is based on the account in *History of Indiana County*, 132, 249 (1880). The road here described is not to be confused with the Frankstown road surveyed in 1787 to connect navigable waters of the Frankstown branch of the Juniata with the Conemaugh.

Governor Patrick Gordon on October 29, 1731. Another Indian village was Black Legs Town at the mouth of Black Legs Creek, near Saltsburg. The trail continued on across country to Chartier's Old Town on the Allegheny, the present site of Tarentum, and thence to Shannopin's Town and Logstown.⁷

For many years the Kittanning Path was the chief route of travel to the Allegheny from the East. It was the route selected by Colonel Armstrong on his march against the Delaware Indians at Kittanning in 1756. Apparently he was not given complete and correct information by his scout, for he suffered greater losses than seemed necessary. But his was the first successful attempt to assail the Indians in their own town and it was a severe blow to them. There were several members of this expedition who received military experience in preparation for the Revolutionary War. Among them was Captain Hugh Mercer, later one of Washington's most capable generals. By the results of this expedition Colonel Armstrong was partially recompensed for the death of his brother, Lieutenant Edward Armstrong, at the hands of the Shawnee under Captain Jacobs when they raided Fort Granville in July, 1756, and carried off their prisoners over the trail to Kittanning.⁸

The third route across the mountains was the Raystown Path. It later became the most traveled and the most important in the settlement of Indiana County. This trail left the Frankstown Path at Black Log, ran through Huntingdon County near Three Springs, through Fulton County past Breezewood, through Bedford County to Raystown (Bedford), passed east of Schellsburg to Buckstown and just east of Stoyestown to Loyalhanning (Ligonier), and on to the parting of the roads, where one branch went to Shannopin's Town, the other to Kiskiminetas Old Town. From the forks the course westward is uncertain but followed in general the course of the Forbes Road.⁹

In the eighteenth century many traders used these three main paths on their way to the "Allegheny," as the region of the Kiskiminetas, Conemaugh, and Allegheny valleys was designated. Conrad Weiser is fre-

⁷ Hanna, *Wilderness Trail*, 1: 247-270.

⁸ Armstrong's report of the expedition is in *History of Indiana County*, 80-83 (1880).

⁹ A description of the course of the Forbes Road is in C. Hale Sipe, *Fort Ligonier and Its Times*, 39 (Harrisburg, 1932).

quently referred to as one of the very first white men on the soil of Indiana County. In 1748 he was sent by the governor, with George Croghan as guide and William Franklin as a member of the party, on a mission to Logstown to learn as much as possible about the Indians in that locality and to use his friendly relations with them in behalf of the province. But there is evidence to show that before this time traders had passed over one of the trails. Arnout Viele and other Dutch travelers in exploring the land between the Susquehanna and the Ohio about 1693 may well have touched the territory that is now Indiana County. Other traders in the vicinity were Edmund Cartlidge, Jonas Davenport, Henry Bailey, and James Le Tort as early as 1727; Peter Chartier, a half-breed, from 1730 to 1734; and George Miranda from 1736 to 1740. Among later traders, travelers, missionaries, interpreters, and noted chiefs were Andrew Montour, son of the noted half-breed Madame Montour, who rendered valuable service to the government; Killbuck, the Delaware, a firm friend of the Americans in the Revolution; White Eyes, a Delaware captain, who escorted the Moravian, John Heckewelder, to Pittsburgh in 1777; New Comer, who was a close friend of George Croghan and of the Moravian bishop, David Zeisberger, and who was instrumental in bringing about the Treaty of Fort Stanwix of 1768; Cornstalk, a Shawnee chief, who apologized to the Pennsylvania commissioners at Lancaster on July 21, 1748, for having been in Peter Chartier's band of deserters to the French in 1744; Logan, a Mingo chief, a friend of the whites until his family was deceitfully murdered in 1774; Captain Bull, who in 1763 led a band of 135 Delawares from the Ohio Valley into the Wyoming Valley, where they committed many atrocities; the great Guyasuta; and the friendly old Wipey, a neighbor of George Findley in southern Indiana County, whose murder in 1774 provoked a protest to John Penn by General Arthur St. Clair. All these passed over one of the three trails and in some way left their influence.¹⁰

Following in the path of the traders came the early settlers. Because of frequent Indian ravages and incursions, settlements were made near the

¹⁰ Hanna, *Wilderness Trail*, 1:192-222, 247-289; Reuben G. Thwaites, ed., *Early Western Travels, 1748-1846*, vol. 1, *passim* (Cleveland, 1904); Sipe, *Indian Chiefs*, *passim*; *New York Colonial Documents*, 9:377.

routes of travel. In some cases land was "taken by the tomahawk," and land grants for military service were common, but it was not until the opening of the land office in 1769 that there was extensive development. In southern Indiana County, Indian ravages were made so frequently that many small forts, blockhouses, and fortified homes were built as refuges for the settlers. Among these protected places were Fort Moorhead, west of Indiana, built at the Moorhead brothers' settlement in 1774 and rebuilt in 1781; Inyard's Blockhouse, in what is now West Wheatfield Township, probably built in 1774; Robinson's Blockhouse, in the present Conemaugh Township, built in 1781; and Thompson's Blockhouse, built in 1790. There were also Peelor's Blockhouse, in Armstrong Township near the old Kittanning Path; Elder's Blockhouse, in Young Township; McCartney's Blockhouse, in Buffington Township; Allison's Fort, on Two Lick Creek near Homer City; and "Old McConaughy's Fort," built during the Revolutionary War on Two Lick Creek at the mouth of Cherry Run. In addition to these Colonel Archibald Lochry, on orders from Colonel Daniel Brodhead at Pittsburgh, stationed militia in 1780 on a "Commanding Ground" at the forks of Black Legs Creek near Saltsburg. Rangers were stationed there until the end of the Revolution. Forts Palmer, Wallace, and Gilson, just south of the Conemaugh in Westmoreland County, were also used as refuges from the Indian raids. In spite of these defenses ravages continued down to about 1794, and William Findley says that during the whole period of the Revolutionary War and for some time after the county was cruelly wasted by perpetual savage depredations.¹¹

It has been pointed out that Indiana County originally formed a part of Westmoreland and Lycoming counties. Before its formation in 1803 all that portion south of the so-called "purchase line" was included under Wheatfield Township, Westmoreland County, from which Armstrong Township was formed in 1785. This area was acquired by the Treaty of Fort Stanwix between the Six Nations and the proprietors of Penn-

¹¹ Pennsylvania Indian Forts Commission, *Frontier Forts of Pennsylvania, passim* (Harrisburg, 1896); *Pennsylvania Archives*, first series, 12: 215; *History of Indiana County*, 146-152 (1880). There are twenty-seven small forts listed on the county map in *History of Indiana County*, 7 (1880).

sylvania on November 5, 1768. By this agreement Pennsylvania acquired all the land within the province extending from the New York line on the Susquehanna, down that river and up its west branch to Cherry Tree, Indiana County, on a straight line called the "purchase line" from Cherry Tree to Kittanning, and down the Allegheny and Ohio. For ten thousand pounds the province acquired all the present counties of southwestern Pennsylvania, including parts of Beaver, Allegheny, Armstrong, Indiana, Clearfield, and several other counties. The second Fort Stanwix treaty, held in October, 1784, between the Six Nations and the thirteen colonies, transferred by purchase that part of Pennsylvania northwest of the purchase line of the treaty of 1768. This included the northern part of the present Indiana County, which remained a part of Lycoming County until 1803. Although the second treaty at Fort Stanwix extinguished the claim of the Six Nations to western Pennsylvania, the Wyandot, Delawares, and other western tribes claimed the territory; the state commissioners therefore met these Indians at Fort McIntosh in Beaver County on January 21, 1785, where the land was bought from them for two thousand dollars. Five thousand dollars had been paid the Six Nations for the same territory the year before.¹²

Although the Penns lost their title to the original grant from the Crown by the Divesting Act of November 27, 1779, titles to land granted by the Penns before July 4, 1776, were declared valid. On April 3, 1769, the land office was opened to settlers. Robert Morris, financier of the Revolution, purchased as many as ninety thousand acres in western Pennsylvania in the name of men who had served in the Continental army. Many of the prominent figures in colonial history, such as the Penns, Washington, Franklin, and most of the colonial governors, were engaged in land and merchandise trading operations at about this time, and their activities were no small factor in establishing the British claims to the Ohio country and in uniting and expanding the colonies.

When the land office was well established the Forbes Road became the great portal of entry to the new lands being developed along the Conemaugh and in the Kiskiminetas Valley. Gradually the settlers filtered

¹² Sipe, *Indian Chiefs*, 323, 461.

along the northern branches of these streams, reaching the northern part of Indiana County only after several years. Among the early permanent settlements of the county may be mentioned that at the forks of the Conemaugh and Black Lick, where in 1765 George Findley built his cabin. He soon had as neighbors William Clark, William Bracken, Matthew Dill, and the friendly Indian, Wipey, who was later murdered by the whites. The Moorheads and James Kelly settled near the present Indiana in 1772. On Crooked Creek in the seventies settled James Armstrong, Andrew Sharp, who was killed by the Indians in 1794, the Anthonys, Peelors, Altmans, Colemans, Mabons, Neils, Reeds, St. Clairs, Suttons, and other families whose names are still prominent in the county. It is quite possible that many other early settlements were made in the southern part of the county, since several applications for land grants were recorded in 1769. Such applications were made by Joseph Elder, deputy surveyor, for land near the Two Licks; by Susannah Knox for property on Blacklick Creek adjoining that of Samuel and Joseph Dickson; by Jeremiah Warden, Jr., George McConnell, and George Brown, also for land on Blacklick Creek; by George Campbell, attorney, for land on Plum Creek; and by Hugh and Thomas Wilson for property on Blacklegs Creek. The northern part of the county, called the "Mahoning country," was settled later than that below the purchase line, but at a very early date quite a few families, such as the Bradys, Thompsons, Jamesons, and McCalls, had been granted land.¹³

In addition to land grants to individuals, many large tracts were bought up and sold by companies and speculators. In 1798 Robert Morris sold over three million acres in western New York and Pennsylvania to the Holland Land Company, an organization that included eleven wealthy Amsterdam merchants. In 1792 this same company bought several large tracts in what are now Indiana and Armstrong counties, and there are many families in the region who still hold farms purchased from this land company. It is interesting to note that in 1805 the present site of Indiana was located by the three trustees appointed by the governor to select the county seat—William Jack, James Parr, and John Pomroy—

¹³ *History of Indiana County*, 132 (1880).

largely in consideration of a gift of 250 acres of land donated by George Clymer of Philadelphia, a signer of the Declaration of Independence and a large landholder in the region.¹⁴

Indiana County was created by an act of the legislature passed on March 30, 1803; the portion south of the purchase line of 1768 was further divided and in turn subdivided into several townships. Mahoning Township comprised all that portion of the county north of the purchase line; it was formed from Lycoming County in 1803, and from it were constructed the present eight townships. White Township was formed in 1843 from those three miles of each township nearest to Indiana. The towns settled earliest were: Saltsburg, in 1769 (laid out in 1816); Newport in Blacklick Township, from 1787 to 1790; Armagh, in 1792; and Indiana, in 1795 by Conrad Rice. The first term of court in the new county was in December, 1806, with John Young officiating as the president judge.

It is of interest to consider the characteristics of the early traders and settlers of Indiana County. The traders who had made temporary habitats or located trading posts along the chief routes of travel were of varied nationalities and of equally varied personalities. Their influence on subsequent developments was largely commercial and of little importance in an educational or religious way. They did serve to transmit certain information between the provincial government at Philadelphia and outposts in the Allegheny Valley, and they did keep constantly in the minds of the Indians the assumed authority of the English and the French over the territory. This was accomplished in spite of the fact that many were mercenary and selfish and frequently involved the government in difficulties by carrying rum to the Indians, trading without license, and robbing and even murdering friendly Indians. Their chief contribution, however, was in pioneering ways for the first permanent settlers.

The early settlers in Indiana County were largely English-speaking, with the so-called Scotch-Irish predominating and with a few English and Welsh scattered among them. The Scotch-Irish came largely directly from the north of Ireland, but also to a certain extent from the Cum-

¹⁴ Joshua T. Stewart, comp., *History of Indiana County, passim* (Chicago, 1913); *History of Indiana County*, 257 (1880).

berland Valley. Many settlements were given Irish names such as Armagh, Derry, and Donegal, to say nothing of numerous less prominent places such as the northeastern part of Wheatfield Township, which was called Ireland. Many of these Scotch-Irish came in from Ulster in the waves of migration from 1710 to 1770 and from the eastern part of the state in 1769, when the land office was opened. Many entered the Conemaugh Valley and settled north of it, the most exposed portion of the western Pennsylvania frontier at the outbreak of the Revolution. As the Scotch-Irish predominated in numbers, they controlled very largely the civil and political events for several generations in the region. Largely of the Presbyterian faith, they brought with them the Bible, spelling book, Latin grammar, and catechism books, and commonly opened schools in connection with their churches. The Presbyterian church, in addition to numerous private schools, has sponsored many of the early larger schools in the county, such as the Indiana Academy, Eldersridge Academy, Jacksonville Academy, Blairsville Ladies' Seminary, Greenville Academy, and Saltsburg Academy. But it must not be assumed that the Scotch-Irish influence was exclusive. The so-called Pennsylvania Germans were preëminent in farming pursuits, and the influence of these settlers from the valleys of Blair, Huntingdon, Cumberland, Berks, and Chester counties on agriculture is still evident in the county.

These pioneer settlers of Indiana County were possessed of a determination to extend English civilization into a land harassed by savages, and under many difficulties they forged their way and provided homes, churches, and schools for their families. Space does not permit of a discussion of their subsequent history nor of the later history of the county. Enough has been told, however, to indicate that the part Indiana County has played in the development of western Pennsylvania, although not spectacular, has been substantial.