COLONEL JAMES BURD IN THE CAMPAIGN OF 1760

LILY LEE NIXON

At the beginning of the year 1760 Colonel James Burd of Pennsylvania was at his home in Lancaster studying the military and political situation and planning for the new year. The Seven Years’ War was dragging on in Europe; here in America, one of the lands for which France and England were contending, the war must surely be fought to a definite conclusion. Quebec had fallen to Wolfe, but Murray had great difficulty in holding it, since Amherst had not yet conquered all Canada. Hence Burd asked for and received his old strategic post, Fort Augusta, on the upper Susquehanna. Word soon arrived from Governor Hamilton that the provincial forces were to be reduced to one hundred and fifty men, half of whom Burd was to have at Augusta. The colonel hastened to Carlisle, the military center of the state, and busied himself disbanding the remaining troops of the 1759 campaign and selecting those to be retained in the service.

On February 8, Burd left Carlisle with two companies and arrived that evening at Harris’ Ferry. Floating ice cakes made the Susquehanna so treacherous that he dared not risk taking his men over, yet he and Colonel Hugh Mercer determined to cross that evening. Of the venture, Burd wrote in his journal, “I fell in the river twice and Colonel Mercer once.” Fortunately the home of his hospitable old friend, John Harris,

1 Read at a meeting of the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania on October 31, 1939. For discussions of earlier phases of Burd’s career by the same author, who is now a teacher of history in Peabody High School, see ante, 17:235–246 (December, 1934), 18:109–124 (June, 1935), and Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography, 59:106–133 (April, 1935). Ed.
2 Hamilton to Burd, Philadelphia, January 7, 1760, Shippen Papers, 5:3 (Historical Society of Pennsylvania).
was close by. The warmth of the greetings and the blazing logs heaped high on the open hearth prevented the two colonels suffering ill effects from their dangerous exposure. The conversation must have veered to the native land of these two officers both of whom had left Scotland shortly after Culloden was fought. Mercer could give first-hand information concerning the manly beauty of Bonnie Prince Charlie; Mrs. Harris and her daughters, however, doubtless showed curiosity about his rescuer, Flora McDonald, who later came to this country and saw her husband and son defeated by the compatriots of Burd and Mercer at Moore’s Creek Bridge,4 “The Second Battle of Culloden.” But fortunately for Colonel Mercer, at least, the cheerful group could not foresee the future, and, no doubt, a delightful evening passed all too quickly.

Four days elapsed before Colonel Burd was able to get his troops across the river; even then one man was drowned in the attempt. Now began the long, hazardous tramp up the Susquehanna trail—a journey that Burd had taken many times since his first trip almost four years earlier. Weary pack horses laden with the usual important frontier staples, flour, salt, and rum, plodded behind the trudging soldiers. Arriving on February 15 at Fort Augusta, which had been his intermittent home for the preceding five years, the colonel wrote in his journal that he found “little stores, no tools, and everything much out of order.”5 Because of the monotonous routine of garrison life in a frontier trading post, many succeeding entries in this journal of Burd’s are repetitions of the laconic phrase, “Nothing material.”

When the spring sent renewed life into the towering forests, and the lovely Susquehanna again flowed free in its widening course, orders for another campaign arrived. It would hardly be an exciting one. In Pennsylvania the military operations would doubtless be entirely defensive—to conserve what had already been taken from the French and, what would be difficult under those circumstances, to pacify the Indians. There were to be only two Pennsylvania regiments—one commanded by Colonel Burd and the other by Colonel Mercer. Burd was designated

4 Edward Channing, History of the United States, 3:179n, American Historical Register, April, 1897, pages 97-112.
senior officer of all the provincial forces of Pennsylvania, and after recruiting men for the service he was ordered to escort the new leader, Brigadier General Monckton, who had arrived in Philadelphia on May 6, to Fort Pitt. Rumor had it that Detroit was the final objective.

Burd would have been quite happy had Colonel Joseph Shippen, his faithful friend and brother-in-law, been with him as in former campaigns. But quelling a mutiny at Fort Bedford had disgusted that young officer, and he had left the service for a venture in trade and travel. William Allen, the foremost merchant of Philadelphia, had invited Shippen, his young relative, to accompany his eldest son, John, on a Mediterranean cruise. With them sailed Benjamin West, twenty-one years old, already a portrait painter, and destined to become the historical painter for George III. The young men left during April in the Jenny-Sally, which was loaded with sugar from the West Indies. Leghorn, Italy, was the destination, and five hundred Leghorn hats was one type of merchandise which the young men were to bring home to Philadelphia. It is not unlikely that Burd, who had been a merchant, who had traveled to the West Indies, who knew Picadilly, and had been born near Edinburgh, often wished to exchange the monotony of his life for the companionship of the three gay-hearted young men, the fun-loving John Allen, the poetical Joseph Shippen, and the artistic Benjamin West, as they journeyed to Spain, Italy, and the mother country.

Perhaps such wandering thoughts made it hard for Burd to resist accepting the tempting offer of a position as assistant to Adam Hoopes, the contractor who sold the material to the army. With such a change of occupation in mind Burd again debated taking the Shippen plantation and the large stone house in Shippensburg. But when both his father-in-law and William Allen strongly advised him to remain in the army, Burd, thinking of his family and realizing that the war contractors might soon have little need for assistants, whereas the provincial forces

6 Shippen Papers, vol. 5; Pennsylvania Archives, fifth series, 1:311.
7 Burd to Edward Shippen of Lancaster, Carlisle, June 12, 1760, Shippen Papers, 5:53.
8 Shippen Papers, vol. 5.
would long need a leader, curbed his restlessness and wrote Colonel Bouquet of the Royal Americans that he would leave for Lancaster on March 6.  

Burd’s days in the busy little town of the Red Rose were spent as in so many previous springs—in recruiting and equipping his battalion; his evenings were filled with conferences, bookkeeping, and the entertainment of prominent guests in his delightful home. No doubt he greeted Stanwix who was going east to sail for England and also welcomed Monckton who had been wounded at Quebec but was to take Stanwix’ place. Burd and his new commander set out together for Carlisle. That the two officers were congenial is evidenced by the fact that they dined and spent their evenings together, even before Burd’s battalion left Carlisle on June 13. Colonel Bouquet, who was becoming accustomed to frontier campaigns, had preceded the general to Carlisle and from there had taken four companies of the Royal Americans to Pittsburgh. Monckton arrived in Pittsburgh on June 29, and on Sunday, July 6, Colonel Burd came. The next day Bouquet, with five hundred of the Virginians and Royal Americans, left for Presque Isle. Colonel Hugh Mercer, who had been recalled from Fort Augusta, followed on the ninth with one hundred and fifty Pennsylvanians.

For nearly four months General Monckton and the senior colonel stayed at Fort Pitt. The journal which Burd kept at that point was far different from the Augusta journal of the same year. Every day but one, he wrote in his terse, soldierly fashion about some important occurrence: of the fairly regular express service of James Innes and of John Meech; of the arrival of Captain Patterson with 153 pack horses from Presque Isle; or of some orders from the general to “press all” equine animals—so great was the need of supplies. The one exception was on the fourteenth of August when Burd’s only entry was “nothing extraordinary.” Yet an important Indian conference was in session, and pack horses laden with flour and forage from over the mountains, bateaux of corn from up the Monongahela, and wagons of tools and artillery stores kept

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10 Burd to Bouquet, A.L.S., Fort Augusta, March 1, 1760, British Museum, Add. MSS. 21645, folio 63.

coming every day. Horses and men rested and then started off to the north for Venango and Presque Isle (Erie) or in the opposite direction for Fort Burd. Herds of animals plodded over the trails. Indeed Pittsburgh’s modern Herr’s Island seemed forecasted: “This morning Capt. McKenzie & 50 men marched for Viningo, with 30 bullocks, 30 sheep, 30 hogs and 30 horses.”

Besides his usual work as commander of the first Pennsylvania Regiment, Burd had been appointed assistant deputy quartermaster-general by Monckton. The commission was dated back to May 1, and for this additional duty the colonel was given in sterling seven shillings, sixpence per day. Sir John St. Clair, with his irascible temper, returned to Fort Pitt toward the close of July. Evidently Burd’s patience had succumbed before the onslaught of this superior officer, for the colonel wrote that the general had made peace between the two and that they both lived with Monckton. Perhaps the fact that Sir John had been quite ill made him more amenable to reason. Major Gates, also at Fort Pitt, wrote that if the baronet persevered in drinking moderately he would for some time disappoint his executors.

On a Monday morning as the sun reached its summer solstice, Colonel Burd started out to find how many people, since Forbes’s conquest just twenty months previously, had decided to reside at the junction of the three rivers:

Today numbered the Houses at Pittsburg, and made a Return of the number of People—men, women, & children—that do not belong to the Army.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of houses</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Unfinish’d houses”</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Hutts”</td>
<td>36</td>
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</tbody>
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Number of Men .................................. 88
" " Women .................................... 29
" " Male Children .............................. 14
" " Female ..................................... 18

149

N.B.—The above houses Exclusive of those in the Fort; in the Fort five long barracks and a long casimitt.15

Perhaps during this survey of real estate Burd decided on a choice site for himself; at any rate he built a house on the hill outside the fort before January, 1762, when James Kenny went to it during the flood.16 At that time it was used for a schoolhouse. By the summer of 1763 the house was gone, for in Ecuyer's Orderly Book mention is made of the people needing an armed guard while repairing fences near where Burd's house "stood."17 Burd claimed—no one could yet own—the tract of land at least until the close of 1769.18

The fourteen boys and the eighteen girls all so carefully listed—the Johns and Roberts, the Sallies and Phoebes—would make the ideal group, in size at least, for a classroom. But even by the next year, only twenty pupils were attending so that the schoolmaster assumed religious duties as well as those for which he was hired at sixty pounds yearly.19 Did that first Pittsburgh teacher envisage the heterogeneous masses whose minds would be slightly shaped by the instructor of the future, and, as he struggled to fan the chips into a blaze while the wind and snow swirled through the chinks in the logs, did he foresee the comfortable, modern stone buildings of today? And those children—did they enjoy school days, or did the boys play truant in order to attend the ar-

17 Mary C. Darlington, ed., Fort Pitt and Letters from the Frontier, 157 (Pittsburgh, 1892).
18 William Thompston to Burd, Carlisle, September 15, 1769, in Shippen Papers, 7:17. In 1785 Col. Burd's son, James Burd, Jr., surveyed six tracts of land near Fort Pitt. The next year his eldest brother, Edward, bought four tracts for him, which James held at least until 1790.
rival of some noted Indian chief, or to watch the shipwrights fell the giant trees on Grant's Hill and hew them into shape for the scows and bateaux? As Colonel Burd wrote down the names of those children that lovely June day, it may well be that a certain plan was born in his mind. He may have built his house with the intention of using it, himself, during the summer campaign, and then for the children’s schoolhouse during the winter. Colonel Burd had six children of his own in Lancaster. Family letters often mentioned the studies of the older children. He was a firm believer in education, and although this first census was not taken for school purposes, it is quite likely that a school followed as a result.

The names of these earliest inhabitants of the present busy “Workshop of the World” are intensely interesting. There was William Trent of the old firm, Hockly, Trent and Croghan. He had built the original English fortification for the Ohio Company, which, during his absence in 1754 had been taken and demolished by the French before they built Fort Duquesne. There was Edward Ward whose name is also indelibly connected with the earliest fort. There was John McClure, uncle of Major Ebenezer Denny, Pittsburgh’s first mayor. These two last names are borne today by some of Pittsburgh’s most representative citizens. There was Lazarus Lowery, the Indian trader, for whose scalp the governor of Canada authorized the commandant at Detroit to offer an exceptionally large price, because of Lowery’s detrimental, anti-French, influence with the Indians. And there was John Langdale, who, with Josiah Davenport and Robert Burchan, was commissioned by the government under an act for preventing abuses in the Indian trade. Having come to Fort Pitt in 1760, Langdale, during an enforced absence due to illness, caused Monckton and Burd much trouble when he made several accusations against James Kenny and Josiah Davenport.

Meantime the fortifications which were to constitute Fort Pitt were gradually assuming formidable shape. Captain Harry Gordon, the chief engineer, was busy during the late summer of 1760 building a “bomb

20 From notes of Isaac Craig in Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography, 2:469 (1878).
21 Pennsylvania Archives, first series, 3:735.
proof,” one hundred eighty feet long and twenty-four feet broad. He often had the shipwright, Jehu Eyre, and his men, though hired to build bateaux, working on this “bomb proof.” The Indian conference was due, and one never knew what the outcome might be; therefore the men worked from sunrise to sunset and often on Sundays. Materials for the workers and food supplies arrived daily; yet neither magazine nor commissary was ever too full. Hundreds of visiting Indians made that impossible. In fact, hunting and fishing were not only pastimes but also a most desirable means of replenishing the larder. What fish stories those early Pittsburgers had to tell! On August 2 someone caught a catfish four feet long and ten and one-half inches across the eyes. A few days later, one was caught weighing ninety-four and one-half pounds.

The conference with the western Indians was the climax of the year’s campaign around Fort Pitt. Many Indians arrived on August 5 and guns were fired “for joy,” although the sessions did not begin until the twelfth. By that date many tribes had sent their representatives. The Six Nations sent four chiefs, the Delawares four, the Shawnee two, and the Wyandots two. Besides these and other chiefs, there were 367 warriors, 266 women, and 295 children. The Ottawas and Potawatomies were the only tribes which did not bring along their families. This horde of nearly a thousand Indians with some captive whites encamped on the north side of the Allegheny River. Doubtless the 149 white inhabitants of Pittsburgh appreciated to the fullest extent the value of the fort and its garrison.

The scene at the junction of the three rivers that hot August day must have been one about which artists dream. General Monckton in his scarlet uniform, sword and laced hat, was surrounded by Sir John St. Clair, Colonel Burd, Captain Richard Mather of the Royal Americans, Captain Harry Gordon, the engineer, several other captains, George Croghan, the deputy agent for Indian affairs, and Captain Andrew Montour who acted as interpreter. The many Indian chiefs with their colorful, feather headdress, their splendid bronze bodies adorned with

23 Pennsylvania Archives, first series, 3:744.
curious, tawdry ornaments, were surrounded by their stately, imper-
turbable, warriors. Close by stood the alert soldiers and in the back-
ground the motley crowd of women and children pressed closer. Roam-
ing among that dusky throng were to be found, no doubt, most of those
boys whom Colonel Burd had named in his census.

Monckton opened the conference by reading the speech of welcome
from the commander of all His Majesty's troops in America, Jeffrey
Amherst. The skeptical red men heard, "I do assure all The Indian
Nations, that His Majesty has not sent me to deprive any of you of your
Lands and Property"; Chief Touisgourawa of the Six Nations made the
response and gave a wampum belt. So began the long tedious battle of
wits which lasted several days. King Beaver, Teedyuscung, Sonneque-
hana, and Kethecomey all took part. Finally the principal warrior of the
Delawares spoke words which must have made Colonel Burd and
George Croghan, the two frontiersmen with the most experience in
Indian affairs, feel light of heart. Said he, "You have Often desired to
see some of your Flesh & Blood, we now Open our Hands and deliver
you some of them; don't press us on that Head, God will Direct us, and
you will see them all as we are now Brethren again; let us not enter
into any more Disputes." Nay afterwards seven prisoners were delivered
to General Monckton. According to one account of this important gath-
ering of tribes, twenty-two prisoners were finally returned to their white
brothers.

Progressing slowly but steadily the conference closed on August 18,
but other smaller meetings were necessary before Colonel Burd could
write in his journal, "Finished the treaty with intire pure (peace?) and
satisfaction." Presents of coats, gold and silver laced hats, ruffled shirts,
kettles, and rum were given to the Indians. These diverse gifts cost the
government about two hundred pounds.

The agenda for most Indian conferences were very numerous and
very similar. Volweiler in his book, George Croghan and the Westward

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Purcell, Pennsylvania Archives, first series, 3:745, 749.
Movement, mentions six of them. First, grants of land where the English could erect forts; second, the release of English prisoners; third, intelligence to be gained of what was happening in the wilderness; fourth, the safety of person and property—for instance, much time was taken in dealing with suitable punishment for the ubiquitous horse thief; fifth, provisions must be furnished to the numerous Indians who came for the conference; lastly, the resumption of trade upon which the Indians were becoming more and more dependent.

The 1760 conference, the largest up to this time ever held at Fort Pitt, probably dealt with all these subjects. But the most important decision reached at this conference was the acknowledgment by the various western tribes of the overlordship of the Six Nations. In Richard Peters' answer to a letter from General Monckton relative to this suzerainty, Peters summarized the expected results thus: "The ready manner in which all Tribes of western Indians have acknowledged that the Ohio lands belong to the Six Nations will cut off abundance of trouble and dispute." Carl Van Doren, in his introduction to Indian Treaties Printed by Benjamin Franklin (Philadelphia, 1938), stresses the fact that the chiefs of the Six Nations did strive for a peaceful settlement of disputes, not only with "Brother Onas" but also with later white leaders.

News trickled into the fort slowly but inevitably. In the evenings as the general and his staff sat by the gently flowing Monongahela they discussed the latest dispatches about the war in Europe and on the other American fronts—news of Amherst, of Bouquet, and of Burd's "namesake" gone on his attempt to relieve hapless Fort Louden in Virginia. News came also in the scanty old newspapers and in private letters from loved ones. Queer news—the cider had turned sour; the man's wife having run away with a neighboring miller, everything was put out of her husband's head. Sad news—Sally Burd wrote her husband of the death of their baby, Anne. Glorious news—Montreal was taken and

28 Order of Col. Burd, assistant deputy quartermaster-general, Fort Pitt, September 5, 1760, Albert T. Volweiler, George Croghan and the Westward Movement, 1741-1782, p. 144-149 (Cleveland, 1926).
Amherst was in possession of all Canada! On October 2, that victory was celebrated at Fort Pitt, almost a month after the event occurred, by the firing of guns and the “three dozen sky rockets at night.” As the staff gathered around the card game under the sputtering pine knot, each man saw visions of the “settlements” in the blazing fire. Monckton hurried plans for the end of the campaign. He decided to leave most of the Pennsylvania troops at Fort Pitt and to place Sir John St. Clair in command until Bouquet should return from Presque Isle.

Monday morning, October 27, General Monckton, Colonel Burd, and Major Gates left Fort Pitt for the East. Little did they dream of a solemn event which had happened in England two days earlier—the death of George II. The accession of his grandson, young George III, foreshadowed a vast change in the lives of these three men and for the country for which they were fighting; but at this time they thought only of riding toward the settlements and the old established order. They spent a night each at Bushy Run, Ligonier, Stoney Creek, Bedford, Juniata Ferry, Fort Loudon, Carlisle, and “Six Blocks at the Bare” (between the Susquehanna and Lancaster), arriving at Lancaster at eleven o’clock in the morning of November 4. At noon Burd “dined” his fellow travelers at his home; later he and Mr. Shippen conveyed them over Conestoga Creek and saw them start on their way to Philadelphia. The colonel returned home to await further orders.

Once again Burd was casting about for a more advantageous position. Now the war seemed practically finished. The question seemed to be: to remain in the service or to leave. Burd must have applied for advancement in the quartermaster department, for he asked Bouquet for a “certificate” or recommendation. Bouquet, always somewhat of an enigma in his relationship to Burd, sent a rather ambiguous reply. The result seems to have been nothing, and on December 5, Burd again received from Governor Hamilton the command at Fort Augusta. At

31 St. Clair to Bouquet, Fort Pitt, November 13, 1760, British Museum, Add. MSS. 21639.
33 Bouquet to Burd, Presque Isle, September 30, 1760, in Shippen Papers, 5:97.
34 Governor Hamilton to Burd, December 5, 1760, in Shippen Papers, 5:113.
that, he was perhaps fortunate. Provincial forces were reduced. Colonel Hugh Mercer, two months later, wrote from Fredericksburg, Virginia: "All prospect from the Pennsylvania service failing I determined to start the practice of Physick here." With the Christmas season nearing, Colonel Burd bade farewell to his wife and little flock and again rode off for the Susquehanna trail.

35 Mercer to Bouquet, Fredericksburg, February 12, 1761, British Museum, Add. MSS. 21646, folio 47.