GEORGE BURGES AND THE ERIE TRIANGLE

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In 1795, a young surveyor named George Burges was employed by Andrew Ellicott, one of the commissioners delegated to lay out the towns of Erie, Waterford, Franklin, and Warren, in the Erie "Triangle." The only reference to Burges that has come down through the pages of history is a note in a fragmentary journal kept by Ellicott, who recorded that at Lebanon en route to Pittsburgh, the stage driver had left behind his saddle-bags, whereupon Burges was dispatched to search for the lost baggage which he found at Reading.1 Burges, however, is destined to a more prominent position in the pages of Pennsylvania history; for on that important survey of 1795, he kept a day-by-day account of this adventure. Recently the journal of George Burges was found among the heirlooms of a descendant, Mrs. Marydeana Duckworth of Mount Pleasant, Michigan. In this journal, Burges has preserved a complete and graphic account of this historic event.

Burges in this adventure was entering the employ of Andrew Ellicott who was perhaps the outstanding surveyor in the United States at that time. Ellicott had been employed by the state of Virginia in 1784 to assist in establishing the boundary between Virginia and Pennsylvania, the completion of the line previously established by Mason and Dixon.2 On this survey Ellicott became intimately acquainted with David Rittenhouse, of Philadelphia, thus laying the foundation for one of his dearest friendships. Both Rittenhouse and Ellicott were competent astronomers, a skill necessary for surveys of this type. The survey of this line extended into the following year and was finally completed on August 23, 1785.3

Immediately upon the completion of this survey Ellicott was commissioned by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania along with David Rittenhouse and Andrew Porter to run the line from the Ohio River to the northwest corner of the state.4 After running the line some forty

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2 Ibid., 27.
3 Ibid., 46.
4 Ibid., 32.

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or fifty miles north of the Ohio, the commissioners were compelled by
the coming of wintry weather to postpone this survey until the follow-
ing year.\(^5\) Instead of returning to that commission in 1786, Ellicott
represented Pennsylvania in marking the line between that state and
the State of New York.\(^6\)

The New York-Pennsylvania survey continued throughout the
next year and finally took the surveying party to Lake Erie on October
12, 1787, at a point between Le Boeuf and Presque Isle, "... about
5 miles north of the former and 6 miles south of the latter," Ellicott
reported to his friend Rittenhouse.\(^7\) A month earlier Ellicott had seen
Lake Erie for the first time. He and eleven companions took a canoe,
paddled up the Conewango River into Lake Chautauqua, and from
there walked to Lake Erie. In a letter to his wife, Ellicott wrote:

Lake Erie makes a grand appearance, and lashes the surrounding shores with
Billows as large as those formed in the vast Atlantic—the sight of the Human
Eye is bounded by the convex Waters and lost over the deep,—Could I but
convey to you the pleasing sensations I had in this excursion, I should think
my time better spent than when employed in Observing the heavenly Bodies,—
Paint in your imagination a mighty River pouring her Waters into the Gulph of
Florida, suppose this River traced up to a small Stream,—this stream I pur-
sued to its source which is Lake Chautauque, then from this Lake distant only
7 Miles, conceive a body of fresh Water many hundreds of Miles in circumfer-
ce, and this Lake connected with others, by water communications into the
very middle of North America,—put these circumstances together, and view
the advantages which must naturally fall to the share of Posterity, and join with
me in admiring the works of a great and superintending Power—\(^8\)

He closed this letter to his wife with the expression of a conviction
that the United States from the very nature of the country must be-
come rich and powerful.

Obviously Ellicott possessed sufficient vision to recognize the
ultimate importance of the inland water system. In 1790, when he was
at Presque Isle once more, he wrote to a friend, describing the land in
the Triangle, "from its peculiar situation an important object to
the State."\(^9\)

In 1788, Ellicott continued to be employed by Pennsylvania, in
surveying certain islands in the rivers Allegheny and Ohio within
the state.

The Triangle had a magnetic hold upon Ellicott, however; for in
1789 he was commissioned by the United States to run the western
boundary of New York State, principally to determine whether the

\(^{5}\) Ibid., 49.
\(^{6}\) Ibid., 58.
\(^{7}\) Ibid., 67.
\(^{8}\) Ibid., 65-66.
\(^{9}\) Ibid., 78.
splendid natural harbor of Presque Isle lay within the State of New York or belonged to the national government. New York’s charter defined its western boundary “as extending from the south shore of Lake Erie to the forty-second degree of latitude, on a line drawn from the western extremity of Lake Ontario.” \(^\text{10}\) In order to determine the western boundary then, it was necessary to determine the true western extremity of Lake Ontario. Since this required astronomical observations which had to be made in Canada, Ellicott sought permission to enter Canada for that purpose but was denied entry by the British commandant at Niagara. Finally Lord Dorchester granted permission for Ellicott and his party to make the required observations. The ultimate result of their findings was the establishment of a boundary which passed twenty miles east of Presque Isle, leaving a triangular shaped piece of land which belonged to no state.\(^\text{11}\)

The final survey of the Triangle was not completed until October of 1790. In the course of their work, the surveyors had some encounters with Indians who, according to Ellicott, “did not appear to be well disposed toward the execution of our business, but after a treaty, and receiving some small presents, accompanied with rum and tobacco, permitted us to go on.” \(^\text{12}\) This was a foreshadowing of future Indian reaction when the surveyors moved toward Presque Isle later.

The value of the splendid natural harbor of Presque Isle to the future of Pennsylvania was not an Ellicott discovery, nor was it a recent discovery in 1789. The French had earlier recognized its value and had built a fort there; and General William Irvine, who had been sent to the northwest corner of Pennsylvania to secure a report on the quality of lands there, was impressed with the fact that Pennsylvania had no harbor on Lake Erie. He made efforts to interest citizens in the necessity for acquiring the natural harbor of Presque Isle, if possible.\(^\text{13}\) The many conflicting claims of the various states to western lands following the Revolution and the ultimate solutions are too lengthy and involved to be considered here. Suffice it to say that the states concerned relinquished their claims to the Triangle; and in 1792 Penn-

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\(^{10}\) History of Erie County, Pennsylvania (Chicago: Warner Beers & Co., 1884), 195.

\(^{11}\) Mathews, 72-75.

\(^{12}\) Ibid., 78.


Gen. Irvine was given 2,000 acres in the Triangle for his services in the Revolutionary War. During the 1795 survey, he selected the land he wanted.
sylvania concluded the purchase of the 202,187 acres from the Federal government at seventy-five cents an acre.\textsuperscript{14}

In 1791, Andrew Ellicott was named by Thomas Jefferson to work with Major Pierre Charles L'Enfant, the French engineer, who had been engaged to lay out on the Potomac the new capital city of the nation. For the next two years until the spring of 1793, Ellicott worked on this survey, a task which became more difficult when L'Enfant resigned after disagreeing with the commissioners in charge.\textsuperscript{15} In November and December of 1792, he did take time out to run a line in New York State and settle a dispute for his friend Robert Morris. He completed the Washington work in May of 1793 in time to accept a commission from Pennsylvania to lay out a road from Reading to Presque Isle, and to lay out a town at Presque Isle.\textsuperscript{16}

Named commissioners along with Ellicott were General William Irvine and John Wilkins, Jr. The unsettled state of affairs with the Indian tribes in the Northwest made it unwise to proceed with the survey at Presque Isle. General Irvine, who was well acquainted with the area and the Indian problem, having served as commandant at Pittsburgh, wrote to Ellicott from his home in Carlisle, "As the Governor cannot afford any military protection to the Commissioners, I am persuaded it would neither be safe, nor reputable for the state or the United States, that the attempt should be made and frustrated — on the contrary that it might be attended with very bad consequences — as far therefore as respects myself I will not engage at all in this business if it is intended or expected that the Allegheny should be crossed, before there is a certainty of peace."\textsuperscript{17}

Irvine assured Ellicott that he wished to see the business of the survey completed as soon as possible. Since the Presque Isle project was out of the question for the time, Irvine suggested that they might begin the survey of the road from Reading or some other point east of the Alleghenies.\textsuperscript{18}

The situation was somewhat altered in 1794 when the Pennsylvania legislature passed an act for the defense of the frontiers. Governor Mifflin notified Ellicott and Irvine that he was authorized to form a detachment of artillery and infantry to carry into effect the act previously passed by the legislature for the laying-out of a town at Presque

\textsuperscript{14} History of Erie County, 96.
\textsuperscript{15} Mathews, 92.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 105.
\textsuperscript{17} Gen. William Irvine to Andrew Ellicott, Carlisle, July 16, 1793, in Irvine papers, The Historical Society of Pennsylvania.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid.
Isle. Captain Ebenezer Denny was assigned the command and was directed to take up his post at Fort Le Boeuf. Albert Gallatin this year was named commissioner with Ellicott and Irvine, a function that Gallatin seems to have performed in name only.

Immediately preparations were begun for the expedition. John Wilkins and Captain Denny were handling affairs at Pittsburgh. Wilkins urged the commissioners to get all of their equipment and supplies there as quickly as possible so that they might take advantage of the spring high waters for transporting the materials by river. Captain Denny encountered some difficulty recruiting men for the military detachment, since the authorization had come so late. Young men who might have joined them had already taken employment for the summer.

Andrew Ellicott arrived at Pittsburgh late in May. A letter from him to General Irvine disclosed anxiety over the Indian unrest:

I arrived at this place on tuesday morning last, and have since been endeavoring to obtain such information as may be relied on respecting the disposition of the Indians; but the accounts are so vague, and in some cases so contradictory, that nothing less than a spirit of divination could enable a person to draw any certain conclusions from them. One company of surveyors from a strong presumption of danger quitted the woods on wednesday last and returned to this place.

Apparent concern over Indian unrest was aggravated by the failure to raise the required number of volunteers for the military detachment. On May 23 a letter was dispatched to General Irvine notifying him that a draft of the militia would be necessary and that one company should be drawn from each of the counties of Westmoreland, Allegheny, and Washington. The order for a draft of 1,000 militia in these counties was issued by Governor Mifflin but was almost as soon rescinded when the Presque Isle survey was suspended at the request of the President of the United States. In May, General Knox, Secretary of War under President Washington, wrote to Governor Mifflin, stating that "affairs are critically circumstanced between the United States and the Six Nations," and said that it was the opinion

19 Governor Thomas Mifflin to William Irvine and Andrew Ellicott, Philadelphia, March 1, 1794, in Irvine papers.
20 John Wilkins, Jr. to Andrew Ellicott, William Irvine, and Albert Gallatin, Pittsburgh, March 27, 1794, in Irvine papers.
21 Captain Ebenezer Denny to Andrew Ellicott, William Irvine and Albert Gallatin, Pittsburgh, March 28, 1794, in Irvine papers.
22 Andrew Ellicott to Gen. William Irvine, Pittsburgh, May 23, 1794, in Irvine papers.
23 Andrew Ellicott, John Wilkins, Jr., Ebenezer Denny to Gen. William Irvine, Pittsburgh, May 23, 1794, in Irvine papers.
of the President that the laying-out of the town at Presque Isle should be suspended. At the same time, on May 24, 1794, letters were dispatched to the commissioners notifying them of the suspension and enclosing a copy of the letter of the Secretary of War written at the request of the President.

Captain Ebenezer Denny was ordered on June 7 to move his detachment to Fort Le Boeuf, where he should wait for further instructions. He was authorized to build block houses or any other necessary works, but was cautioned to avoid hostilities and to be on the alert to escape surprise. At the same time the commissioners were instructed to remain in the western counties so that they would be ready on a short notice to resume the Presque Isle survey.

Ellicott went up to Fort Le Boeuf to join his company. A letter to Governor Mifflin on June 29 explained that Fort Franklin had been strengthened as a defense for the settlers in that area and that the troops were presently employed in making Le Boeuf more tangible. He and General Wilkins had written to Cornplanter requesting that he visit them so that they might explain to him the nature of their business.

A council of the Six Nations was held at Buffalo Creek on June 18 at which Cornplanter spoke, protesting the encroachment of settlers upon their land and deploiring the murder of a Delaware Indian at Venango earlier that spring. Addressing General Israel Chapin, the United States Indian agent, Cornplanter urged Chapin to go to Presque Isle and drive the intruders from the Indian lands. Chapin responded that he would go to Presque Isle but that he wanted the Indians to understand that all that he could do was advise the intruders. "It is not in my power to drive them off," he responded.

Soon after his arrival at Le Boeuf, Ellicott wrote to General Irvine:

Since we arrived at this place we have been waited upon by a large deputation from the six nations, attended by Gen. Chapin, One of the U.S. superintendents of Indian affairs, and William Johnson, a British subject, likewise interested in Indian concern. The message was delivered by Gen. Chapin in writing, requesting our removal, and that of all the settlers north of an arbitrary line which the Indians had marked upon a map. Capt. Denny and myself replied to this extraordinary request, and absolutely refused to comply unless directed by our great men below. The Indians in consequence of the suspension of our business at

26 Ibid., 788.
27 Mathews, 115.
Presqu'Isle begin to feel themselves of importance, which will daily add new difficulties to the accomplishment of that object, but if the Executive of the United States had not interfered it would have been effected without difficulty.29

There seems to have been some difference of opinion as to how the Indian affairs should be settled. Governor Mifflin, as well as Andrew Ellicott, felt that a firm hand would accomplish greater good in dealing with the Indians. He wrote to Thomas Jefferson, urging him to protect the frontier, saying "a firm hand will better make the Indians behave than a seeming deference." 30 General Irvine agreed and wrote from Pittsburgh, "People here are astonished at the course of the General Government. I could have taken 500 — some mounted, some riflemen, of such as would have effectually awed the savages and British." 31 A long exchange of letters between Governor Mifflin and the Secretary of War emphasized the Governor's position that the suspension was really unnecessary.32

A conference with the Six Nations for September 15 had been arranged by the United States Indian superintendents. The Governor notified Ellicott and Irvine of this conference and requested that one or both of them attend the conference as observers. "If the issue is favourable to our object at Presqu'Isle, you will immediately proceed to execute the duties of your Commission; but if the Indians should continue to menace opposition, you will wait for further communication from me," the Governor wrote on July 22.33

Some indication of his eagerness and determination to have the survey completed is shown in his concluding request in this letter: "It will afford me some satisfaction to be informed what in your Judgement is the latest period of the present year, which will admit of prosecuting the Surveys at Presqu'Isle." 34

Much of the Indian dissatisfaction was said to have originated from their claims that they had not been adequately paid for the Presque Isle area. While negotiations were still pending between

29 Andrew Ellicott to Gen. William Irvine, Fort Le Boeuf, June 29, 1794, in Irvine papers.
30 Mathews, 112.
31 History of Erie County, Pennsylvania, 204.
34 Ibid., 813.
Pennsylvania and the United States for the purchase of the Triangle, Pennsylvania concluded a treaty with the Six Nations by which they purchased the area for the sum of two thousand dollars paid to them by Richard Butler and John Gibson, Commissioners for the state. The purchase was made on January 9, 1789, at the Treaty of Fort Harmar. Later some Indians protested the sale of the land, saying that they were not represented at the council when the land was ceded to Pennsylvania. To quiet them, Pennsylvania made a second treaty on February 3, 1791, at which an additional eight hundred dollars was paid and a grant of 1500 acres was made to Cornplanter. The United States had also paid twelve hundred dollars to extinguish the title to the Triangle.35

The British were also blamed for inciting the Indians. Joseph Brant, the Mohawk chief, living in Canada and loyal to the Crown was still working for a separate Indian country. The William Johnson who appeared at Le Boeuf with General Chapin and the Indian delegation represented Brant, a factor which subsequently caused a serious disruption at the treaty council later in the fall.36 Other observers reported that the British made frequent stops at Presque Isle to see whether any settlement had been made.37

Disastrous defeats in which the forces of St. Clair and Harmar were routed in the Northwest also contributed somewhat to the arrogance of the Indians. One resident of the Six Nations country recalled that following the defeats the Indians became extremely rude, frequently entering homes without leave and taking food from the tables.38

Andrew Ellicott remained at Le Boeuf throughout the summer. In a letter to his wife on August 1, he wrote, "We live here like a parcel of Monks, or Hermits, and have not a woman of any complexion among us — our linen is dirty, our faces, and hands brown, and to complete the picture, our beards are generally long."39

They were not entirely idle, however; for Ellicott was able to report to Governor Mifflin on September 1, 1794, that the plan for the town of Waterford had been completed.40 In another letter to the Governor a month later he reported that the men were somewhat dissatisfied with their confinement. Many of the men had expressed a

36 Stone, 215.
37 History of Erie County, Pennsylvania, 204.
38 Stone, 220.
39 Mathews, 116.
40 Ibid., 116.
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desire to see the lake; but they had been confined to the fort much as
though they were blockaded.

"You need be under no apprehension of this post being sur-
prized," he wrote. "The Vigilance of Capt. Denny will be found su-
perior to any attempt of that kind." 41

He told the Governor that if any encouragement had been offered
to settlers there would have been thirty houses erected in the new
town that summer. Without encouragement and in spite of the risk,
one house had been started and four hundred logs were ready for
building on lots which had already been applied for.42

The final settlement of the dispute between the Six Nations and
the United States was not resolved until November when a general
council between the Indians and the United States was held at
Canandaigua, New York. Timothy Pickering represented the United
States as commissioner when the conference opened on October 18.
Pickering sought to placate the Indians by announcing that he would
hold a council of condolence "to wipe away the tears from the eyes of
the Delawares, who had lost a young brother, murdered by a white
man at Venango, a few months before." 43 The conference finally
terminated on November 11, 1794, too late in the season for any work
to be done at Presque Isle.

Although the Triangle was but a single piece of the business con-
sidered at these lengthy negotiations, it was an important one. The
treaty finally signed by the Indians and Pickering placed the boundary
of the Seneca nation "...along Lake Erie to the north-east corner of
a triangular piece of land which the United States conveyed to the
state of Pennsylvania, as by the President's patent, dated the third day
of March, 1792, then due south to the northern boundary of that
state..." 44

In a subsequent letter to Captain Brant, the Mohawk chief, who
had not been present at the council, Pickering sought to explain the
settlement regarding the Triangle. He said that he had given up the
claim of the United States to a large tract of land which was made
available to the Seneca nation. "The tract now relinquished probably

41 Ibid., 118. An account of the 1794 expedition is preserved in Denny's journal
of that year which was published in The Record of the Court at Upland,
in Pennsylvania, 1676 to 1681, and A Military Journal, kept by Major E.
Denny, 1781 to 1795, Philadelphia, J. B. Lippincott & Co., for The
Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 1860.
42 Mathews, 117.
44 Charles J. Kappler, compiler, Indian Affairs, Laws and Treaties (Washing-
contains four times as much land as that triangle, and was peculiarly important to the Seneca nation, as several hundred of their nation were dwelling on it."  

On October 1, 1794, Andrew Ellicott had despaired of getting to Presque Isle that season. To his wife he wrote:

We are yet stationed at this place, but will shortly have to leave it and return home,—not by the command of Capt. Cornplanter, Wood-Bug, Dogs-about-the-fire, hot-Bread, hot-Ashes, Big-Boil-of a Kettle, Broken-Twig, Standing-Stone, flying-Cloud, Bears-Oil, Mud-eater, Big-fish-carrier, Old-Turkey, The-Tarrepin, Snake, He-cant-find-it, the stringer of ***ts, Twenty-Canoes, or any other two-leged King of this country; but by the command of a much more powerful Monarch, who is now making a most violent attack upon my fingers, and toes; that is Capt. or King Frost.

Life at the fort had not been exciting. They amused themselves by playing checkers. For nearly three months they had not been out of sight of the fort and during that time not an Indian had been seen within twenty miles of the fort, "which," Ellicott added, "is the only reason we have to suppose them not friendly."

During this summer on August 20, another event occurred which was to exercise a controlling influence over the Indians, General Anthony Wayne's victory over the Miamis and their allies at the Battle of Fallen Timbers. News of the victory did not reach the Six Nations until they were met in council at Canandaigua in October when a Tuscarora runner brought the news from the British at Niagara.

On April 17, 1795, Andrew Ellicott wrote to his fellow commissioner General Irvine to notify him that the Presque Isle bill had again been through both houses of the legislature and now included three towns in addition to Le Boeuf. He had already engaged surveyors and was counting on young Callender Irvine to be one of the party.

A letter of instructions from Governor Mifflin was sent to both Ellicott and Irvine on April 28. In it he told them that a detachment of thirty-two men, including officers, had been directed to meet at Pittsburgh on or before the first of June. The detachment was to serve as a military escort to the party and would be subject to the orders of commissioners who could employ them as laborers, if they allowed them extra rations.

45 Stone, 476.  
46 Mathews, 118.  
47 Ibid., 119.  
48 Stone, 219.  
49 Andrew Ellicott to Gen. William Irvine, Philadelphia, April 17, 1795, in Irvine papers.  
50 Governor Thomas Mifflin to Gen. William Irvine and Andrew Ellicott, April 28, 1795, in Irvine papers.
The Governor pointed out in laying out Presque Isle they should co-operate with the United States army engineers who would be erecting a fort there.

George Burges joined the group on May 19, stayed that night at Andrew Ellicott's home, and departed for Pittsburgh the next day. Burges began to record his observations and experiences from the start. On the inside fly-leaf of the diary he wrote:

The following notes I wrote while upon the Journey and in the service of the State of Pennsylvania in assisting to lay out the towns of Erie, Franklyn, Warren, and Waterford: they were intended for my own satisfaction on a future day, as an aid to my Memory in recollecting the Occurrences, of that time as well as the situation of the country we pass through; and were generally Written in the Evening after the Business of the Day was perform'd.  

In Ellicott's party were George Burges, William Simpson, Enoch Lewis, Jesse Evans, Adam Hoops, Joseph Smith, and Andrew Ellicott, Jr. In Pittsburgh Gen. Irvine and his son Callender would join them. Most of the surveyors seem to have been young men with the exception of Major Adam Hoops, a Revolutionary War veteran, who had been associated with Ellicott on earlier surveys.

Enoch Lewis was a Quaker youth who met Ellicott by chance in the Philadelphia Library. They became engaged in a conversation about mathematics which impressed Ellicott enough to hire the youth. Ellicott warned Lewis that he should think the offer over before accepting since there would be many hardships to the long journey, risks of sickness and exposure, and possible danger from Indians.

The company arrived in Pittsburgh on May 30 without any greater mishap than the forgotten saddle-bags which Burges had to return to find.

The surveying company rested on May 31. "This Day we put our Horses to pasture and spent the Day in viewing the Town and forts, which is a very pleasant place but many of the Inhabitants a very corrupt people," Burges observed. Ellicott in his journal observed that Pittsburgh's position on the great river thoroughfares was a considerable advantage for trade.

52 Mathews, 89.
54 Burges, 4.
55 Mathews, 110.
On June 1, they moved their baggage over the Allegheny River and pitched their tents on the banks of the "pleasant Ohio." The next day they whiled away the time by taking the breadth of the Allegheny at its junction with the Monongahela which they found to be 67 rods. After enduring a dreadful rain storm and lying in their tents while they shot at marks, they finally set out on June 6 to measure the Indian path from Pittsburgh to Fort Franklin. They started late and succeeded in measuring but two miles. Next day they covered seven miles through what Burges described as "an entire wilderness uninhabited by any human being." On the 8th of June they covered nine miles. On June 9 they met a company of men who informed them that the Indians had recently killed two men; and that evening they were overtaken by another party that told them that there had recently been five war Indians near this place. On the next day as they were pitching their tents, a company of surveyors passed by and reported that they were quitting the woods because of the hostile Indians. The Indian fright began to be felt.56

Burges's entry in his journal that evening was apprehensive:

And now as the night approaches everything seems to wear an awful appearance. Our fire shining brightly before our tent doors makes the Woods appear unusually black, while nothing is to be seen but our guard crossing before our tents with his rifle shouldered and everything silent but our horses bells at a distance, and the whipperwill loudly tuning his notes within a few rod of our camp.57

Next morning was a welcome sight to Burges, "having spent a great part of the night with very serious thought." They had some difficulty in finding their horses and were not ready to depart until nine o'clock. In hunting for the horses, the men thought that they had heard somebody scamper off into the woods, probably Indians. On June 12, they encamped by the side of Slippery Rock Creek. Just as it got dark two men were sent to bring the horses closer to camp; but they got lost and in spite of the firing of guns and a search, they did not return. Burges recorded, ". . . our conclusions were that they were certainly kill'd or taken captive by the Indians, and that they would next attack our camp, which was not a very pleasing reflection to go to sleep upon." Double guards were posted and every man was ready for the attack which never came.58

Although Ellicott and several of his party, including Burges, were Friends, Enoch Lewis was the only member of the Society in the

56 Burges, 4-5.
57 Ibid., 6.
58 Ibid., 7.
party who adhered to the dress and speech of the sect. He later told that when the rumor of an attack prevailed, he took his blanket and went into the woods beyond the line of the sentinels to sleep so that he would not be involved in any bloodshed. His religious beliefs would not permit him to use firearms even in self-defense and he did not wish others to defend him if he could not do it himself.59

The Indian attack did not come; and if one were to judge by the entries in Burges's journal to this point, one would conclude that their imaginations were creating savages. The lost men returned at daybreak with the horses. Lack of provisions and the many signs of Indians about the place prompted the company to quit measuring the road and head directly for Fort Franklin. If they had not made this decision at this time they surely would have done so before another day elapsed.

We this day past the place, where last fall two men had been kill'd by the Indians who had lain behind an old tree top and fired upon them as they travelled the path, we saw where one of them was covered whose name was William Powers, but had been so slightly buried that the wild beasts had scratched his body out of the ground, but some person had again thrown a number of stones and limbs over his bones. There was the picture of a man drawn upon a tree where he was shot which we suppose to have been done by the Indians as a triumph of their victory.60

When they arrived at Fort Franklin on June 15, they were reassured that their suspicions had not been groundless; for the friendly Indians there informed them that four or five hostile Indians had been watching them but deemed them too strong to attack.61

They remained at Franklin, laying out the town at that place, until the 26th. On June 23, George Burges wrote in his journal:

We have now fix'd a place for the market with many of the main streets but yet there are no castles nor brick houses but on the contrary but five or six little dirty log huts surrounded by a great wilderness of seventy or eighty miles with Indians hooping and halloing and begging for whisky, this is indeed very unlike Philadelphia, but perhaps in process of time the howling desert may be turn'd into pleasant fields and shining bricks decorate this spot of ground which now appears so unlike a city of commerce. Which should providence grant to be the case; may pride and avarice keep far distant and not make it appear more savage than its present state.62

On the next day three Indians came into the camp and bantered the men into accepting a challenge to shoot at a mark. The riflemen found that the Indians were quite as good as they were at marksmanship. "The Indians laughed very heartily and went away," Burges wrote.63

59 Lewis, 28.
60 Burges, 7-8.
61 Ibid., 9.
62 Ibid., 10.
63 Ibid., 11.
The surveyors left Franklin on June 27, leaving William Simpson and Enoch Lewis there to complete the job. They headed for Fort Le Boeuf accompanied now by an Indian whom the commissioners had engaged as a hunter. They camped about fifteen miles from Franklin and next morning they had another Indian scare. Burges wrote:

This morning at the break of day we were alarm'd by the sentinel firing his gun, the soldiers were immediately call'd to arms by the lieutenant, and we who had no arms fell to dressing ourselves with the greatest expedition possible, but in the hurry I could not find my trousers. In the meantime our Indian gather'd up his gun and tomahawk and laid himself down behind a log in order to make his defence, but upon further examination it was thought to be only a wolf or some other wild beast, which was traveling the path and did not care to answer the sentinel when he call'd. The sentinel, imagining it to be an Indian who intended to scalp him without making a noise, resolv'd to disappoint him and fired, which soon made the wolf scamper off.64

The party set out and at ten o'clock passed through the village of Cussawoga, a village on French Creek consisting of about a dozen houses situated about twenty-five miles from Franklin. As the group passed through the village, a cannon was fired as a salute to the commissioners. Next day they made it to Fort Le Boeuf after a difficult day’s journey over a soft road where it was necessary to lift the pack-horses out of the mire from time to time. Burges noted that the soil was loose and black and very heavily timbered with hemlock and pine in places, “and in other places an intermixture of almost every kind of wood so thick that the sun cannot shine upon the ground.” As they approached the fort, three cannons were fired as a welcome to the commissioners. Ensign McCutcheon was there in charge of a garrison of about sixteen men.65

Ellicott, who had spent the preceding summer at this place, wrote to his wife that there were three decent families settled there who could supply them with milk and butter. As soon as their boats should arrive there, they would leave for Presque Isle. The Indians, Ellicott assured his wife, were very friendly. Apparently fascinated by the Indian names, he informed his wife that they had with them an Indian who belonged to the nobility, “a nephew to King Guia Shutthongn and step-son to Chitteaughdunk.” 66

After they had arrived at Le Boeuf, they noticed that one of their soldiers who had stopped by the way to rest was not with them. Next morning, the soldier still missing, a party of men were sent to look for him but returned without finding him. On the following day, the

64 Ibid., 11-12.
65 Ibid., 12-13.
66 Mathews, 120.
first of July, a party again went in search of the soldier but returned unsuccessful, so the soldier was given up as lost. On the evening of July 8, a party of men came into Fort Le Boeuf bringing with them the lost soldier —

... truly an object of compassion, having wandered in the wilderness nine days with nothing to eat but a quarter of a pound of bread, except the berries and herbs which he could find in the woods. He seem'd overjoy'd at his arrival at the garrison, reporting that in the time he had been lost, he saw nine Indians who took his gun from him, and that one of them lifted his tomahawk to kill him but was prevented by the others.

At Le Boeuf Burges witnessed the punishment meted out to a soldier who had misbehaved:

[He] underwent the punishment of having a very long stiff beard taken off with a dull rasor without soap or water. After this he was stript and one of his hands ty'd to a post as high as he could reach and the other ty'd fast to his leg, and in this condition had 8 kettles full of cold water pour'd upon the top of his head to wash him down, after which he was unty'd and set at liberty.

In the wilderness the Fourth of July was observed. Fifteen cannons were discharged at intervals of three minutes. "Many of the soldiers got drunk, and our Indian finding it a day of merriment took the liberty also of getting very drunk," Burges noted.

On the fifth of July the party set out for Presque Isle leaving George Burges and Jesse Evans at Le Boeuf to complete the survey of the town at this place. The departing company left with the firing of a six-pounder.

Burges and Evans remained at Le Boeuf until July 20 when they left to join the surveying party at Presque Isle. In his diary Burges notes the surveying done each day and adds little items that either interested or annoyed him. One day "the gnats and musquetoes [were] almost intolerable, keeping us in constant employ to scrub our faces, which would smart as though hot ashes was constantly thrown in our faces, and by looking toward the sun they appear'd like a fog." On another day they worked on Water Street, where they saw "the stumps of trees as thick nearly as a mans body, that had been eaten down by the beavers."  

The job finally completed on the 19th, they set out on foot to cover the fifteen miles to Lake Erie. The next day Burges and Evans
had the opportunity to view the lake which Burges noted was “indeed very beautiful. As far as the eye can reach nothing to be seen but water, which is very clear and a fine sandy bottom in the time of high winds, the waves are very large, dashing against the shore with great violence.” 73

On July 22, the company was joined by a detachment of troops from the United States Army. Ellicott wrote that the addition rendered their situation both secure and agreeable.

“We have hoisted the Union Flag, and fire a morning, and evening gun,” he wrote to his wife. He added that there was constant communication between Presque Isle and the British side of the lake. He said that his acquaintance on that side had written some friendly letters and appeared to wish to be on good terms with the Americans.74

Burges failed to note the arrival of the American detachment in his diary. On that day he was busily engaged in making the necessary calculations for dividing the marsh along the lake, part of which was to be the property of the United States garrison.75

However, on the 28th of July, Burges did note that Stephen de Rochefontaine, the engineer for the United States, arrived to direct the erection of a fort. “He is a corpulent French man,” Burges observed, “speaks tolerable English, and to appearance is a good natured man.” 76

The arrival of de Rochefontaine meant a day off for the surveyors, since the French engineer and the commissioners spent the 29th reconnoitering the ground for the proposed fort. On the following day Burges recorded:

We laid out the ground for the fort which is to be 100 yards square, & is situated an hundred perches from the spot where the old French fort stood, down the lake from the old fort on a high bank, commanding the entrance of Presque Isle Harbour, from whence there is a beautiful prospect of the lake as far as the eye can see, between the fort and lake there is a marsh of about fifty perches in breadth into which there runs a fine creek. The town is to be laid out on the bank of the harbour above the old fort.77

On the last day of July the actual laying-out of the town of Erie started when the surveyors “began to measure the avenue cut through the woods for the main street.” A few days later they were back at work laying off thirty acres of land belonging to the fort which was “in the form of a regular half polygon, of 6 sides.” When they finished laying out the land belonging to the United States, they found that it

73 Ibid., 18.
74 Mathews, 123.
75 Burges, 18.
76 Ibid., 20.
77 Ibid., 20-21.
consisted of sixty acres, thirty on the high land and thirty in the marsh between the harbour and the fort.\textsuperscript{78}

The laying-out of the streets of Erie continued throughout August until September 21, when the task was completed. The routine of measuring, fighting off insects, and enduring exposure to the elements was broken from time to time by the arrival of whites who had succeeded in escaping from Indian captivity. Burges in his diary emphasizes the effect which General Wayne's victory had over the Indians. On August 9, Burges wrote down the story of one of these escaped captives:

Some time past there arriv'd at this place a man who had been taken captive by the Indians, from a surveyors camp near Cussawoga this spring. He gave the following account of his captivity: That he was alone at the camp, (the surveyors being out at work), and as he was employ'd in cutting a log for the fire, a white man came behind him and caught hold of his arms, and upon looking back, he saw five Indians come out of the bushes, upon which he gave himself up for a prisoner. They then began to pack up the tent and provisions in order for carrying them off, but after examining him how many men belonged to the party, and he answering them twelve, they hurried off as quick as possible, destroying what they could not readily carry with them, he accompanying them as a prisoner. They likewise had with them the scalps of Finley and McCormick, two men that they had just kill'd near that place. After two days traveling, they reached Lake Erie, some distance above Presque Isle, and proceeded up the lake. The next day they came to an Indian town, and when approaching it, they rais'd the yell of victory, our prisoner then expecting to be put to death or undergo some of their usual treatment to prisoners, but the inhabitants of the town shew'd no signs of extravagant exultation upon the occasion, and but barely answered their yell. They then proceeded to another town at some distance where they likewise rais'd their horrid yell, but were not answered, the inhabitants of the town looking at them with amazement, and were very shy of them. They then proceeded to Detroit, where they gave him frequent opportunities of escaping from them, and at last entirely neglected him, but finding he did not make his escape, they became uneasy about him and had frequent counsels what might be best to do with him. Some were for taking him to General Wayne, others for taking him to where they had found him, alledging that they would not have taken scalps nor prisoners but that they had been out all the winter a hunting and were not acquainted with the peace that had taken place. In the meantime the British commander inform'd him that he might depart, and gave him a passport to Niagara from whence he came to this place and proceeded on homewards. He likewise gave an account that in one of the Indian towns he saw two Indians who inform'd him that they had kill'd two white men this spring near Presque Isle but did not scalp them, and shew'd him a bank note of five dollars that they had taken from them, which they offered to him for eleven pence, but he was plundered and therefore unable to purchase it. The two white men that were kill'd were Rutledge and his son from Carlisle.\textsuperscript{79}

On August 13, the routine was again broken by the arrival of another escaped captive, this time a boy:

Arriv'd at this place a couple of men, bringing with them a boy that they had stolen from the Indians near Detroit. The account he gave of himself was; that his name was Huntsicker, & that his parents, two of his brothers and

\textsuperscript{78} Ibid., 21.

\textsuperscript{79} Ibid., 23-25.
himself, were taken prisoners from their dwelling which was at Duncans Creek on the Monongahela, about three years past by a company of Delaware Indians and that some time after they were taken, he found that his father & mother and one of his brothers were kill'd as he saw the Indians have their scalps which he knew by the hair, that after a length of time the Delaware Indians, traded him away to the Wyandots for a horse, saddle & bridle, and that he was with them in the last battle against General Wayne, when the Indians were routed. The Wyandots he says are very anxious for peace but the Shawanese and some others are not so peaceably inclin'd. He reports that the name of General Wayne strikes a terror to the Indians and that many of them were afraid to go to the late treaty, on account of a report prevalent amongst them that Wayne had prepar'd a number of hand cuffs and intended to put them all in irons as soon as they arriv'd. He reported that the Indians were displeas'd with the British commanders of Detroit & Niagara who they said told them to fight the inhabitants of the United States and promised to help them but would not perform their promise, and they would not believe them again. He reported that at the time he escap'd from the Wyandots there were upwards of twenty white people with them in the same condition that he was; his brother that was not kill'd he says lives at Detroit but the Indians would never allow him to go there to see him. He says the Indians are very often drunk and sometimes kill each other in their drunken frolicks. The commissioners at this place furnished him with provisions to take him home, where he says he expects to find a grandfather and several uncles. Hard must have been his servitude to live three tedious years with the murderer of his nearest connexions, but joyful the event to be again restor'd to his civilized friends. 80

Three weeks earlier a woman who had been a prisoner of the Indians for thirteen years had found her way to Presque Isle and was being returned to her people “near Morgan's Town.” 81 Not only were there Indian captives coming into camp, but there was also on the last day of August a party of four deserters from the British garrison at Detroit who arrived at the camp. They brought with them four swivels, a fusee, and a musket. From Presque Isle they were conducted to Pittsburgh under guard. 82

From time to time the surveyors uncovered Indian graves, discovered relics about the old fort, or went fishing. Burges was less fortunate in his fishing than others. Ellicott wrote to his wife that his son and General Irvine’s son had made up a party for fishing and that in less than two hours they had brought back about two hundred fish, weighing from one to six pounds. 83

Settlers had already begun to arrive at Presque Isle. George Burges noted in his diary that on their last day there they planted four stones at the corners of the town, the one at the north being placed “in the middle of Cob Reeds potatoo patch.” 84 Earlier in the summer one Deacon Hinds Chamberlain from LeRoy, New York, on a land-

80 Ibid., 25-27.
81 Mathews, 123.
82 Burges, 30-31.
83 Mathews, 123.
84 Burges, 33-34.
looking expedition in the area had stopped at Presque Isle before the arrival of the surveying party. All that Chamberlain found were some old brick buildings built by the French, wells, and block houses, all in a state of decay. About ten acres of land were cleared. He and his companions went on to Le Boeuf, where they encountered a group of men cutting out a road to Presque Isle. When Chamberlain and his friends returned to Presque Isle, they found that Colonel Seth Reed and his family had arrived there. They stopped to help Reed set up some huts for shelter.\textsuperscript{85}

With the arrival of settlers, problems soon presented themselves. In a letter on September 7 to Captain Buchanan from Ellicott and Irvine, the commissioners notified the captain that because of disorder and debauchery among the soldiers, regulations controlling the sale of liquor must be enforced. William Reed was singled out as one who had not “conducted himself either agreeable to his own promise or conformable to what might be expected from any person professing decency.” The captain was instructed to notify Reed that he was to be considered a sutler and was to be governed by such regulations as the commandant of the Federal troops or state troops might find necessary to make until such time as the civil authority of the state should be established there.\textsuperscript{86}

On September 22, the company packed their baggage and journeyed to Fort Le Boeuf, where they found the garrison in a weak condition, all but six of the men too ill for duty. They left Le Boeuf on the following day and traveled until the 30th through trackless wilderness to the site of the proposed town of Warren, where they worked at laying out that town until October 13.\textsuperscript{87}

The Indians visited them often while they were working here and “seemed pleased with the notion of having a town built so near them as they say it will be handy for them to fetch their furs and get whiskey.” Daily the Indians brought into their camp potatoes, beans, squashes, pumpkins, and fowl to trade for bacon, salt, soap, or money.\textsuperscript{88}

After being delayed by rain for two days, they set out by rafts down the Allegheny River. Rain again stopped their journey for two days. Finally on October 19, they arrived at the town of Franklin, where they spent two days completing the work which had been started

\textsuperscript{85} John Miller, \textit{A Twentieth Century History of Erie County, Pennsylvania} (New York: Lewis Publishing Co., 1909), I, 73.
\textsuperscript{86} Gen. William Irvine and Andrew Ellicott to Capt. Buchanan, Erie, Sept. 7, 1795, in Irvine papers.
\textsuperscript{87} Burges, 34.
\textsuperscript{88} Ibid., 37.
there in June. From Franklin to Pittsburgh by river was a distance of 105 miles, covered by the party in a little more than two days. Their arrival in Pittsburgh was on October 23.89

George Burges remained in Pittsburgh for a week; observed that the 27th of October was "the beginning of the fair at this place, which at such times appears to be a great place for frolicking"; purchased a horse at the fair; and set out in company with three other surveyors on October 31 for home, arriving there on November 8.90

The Burges journal is well-written, legible, and fairly complete. Perhaps its greatest value lies in its day-by-day recording of the events of the survey, a factor which corrects errors and conjectures which have appeared in local histories of the area.

It is an added chapter in the history of the Triangle, a phase of Pennsylvania history which involved land conflicts with other states, national politics, and Indian affairs. For the Indian particularly, the Triangle might be called a graphic design of their fate. The Triangle was one of the major influences that triggered their last threats against the Whites, threats that were eliminated in their last major council with the United States. From that point on their affairs were a dénouement which slid down the tangent of the triangle.

For Ellicott, the Triangle was a prelude to greater achievements. He was at Pittsburgh again in the fall of 1796; but this time Pittsburgh was a jumping off place for another direction, down the Ohio to Natchez for the survey of the Florida boundary, running the line between the United States and the Spanish possessions, a task that was to occupy his time until 1800.