FORT PITT AND THE
REVOLUTION ON THE WESTERN FRONTIER

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PART TWO

At the conclusion of the first article of this series, a view was offered of the resolves drawn up by the Virginia officers of Lord Dunmore’s army at Fort Gower, in Ohio, a truly remarkable document. Nowhere else is the concern so clearly demonstrated, that “all of the colonies saw themselves threatened” by the same repressive measures suffered by the inhabitants of Boston, as in these resolutions issued from the depths of the Ohio wilderness, expressing unity of purpose with their New England brothers. The terse summation of the situation at that time by John Adams, that “the revolution was complete in the minds of the people . . . before . . . the 19th of April, 1775,” 1 voices his belief that people’s minds were conditioned by many events and repressive acts of the British government, none of which was of itself worth fighting a war.

The author takes comfort from the expression of fact by the eminent Harvard historian, Allen French, that “the evidence . . . lies in the thousands of documents covering the first year of the struggle,” and that “the motive to America [was] in fighting for what it called its freedom.” 2 I have handled hundreds of letters and other documents of that period wherein the writers refer to this freedom often by the collective terms “liberties,” or “ancient liberties.” Through 150 years

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2 Allen French, The First Year of the American Revolution (Boston and New York, 1934), 718.
of colonial existence nearly three thousand miles from "home," self-government and self-sustenance had become a way of life; and it was believed that the English constitution supported this assumption.

One must remember that for centuries every English serf had the right to be heard in the court of his feudal lord. In 1215, the Magna Charta, forced upon King John, guaranteed to every individual subject the right to be tried by a jury of his peers. The Glorious Revolution of 1688 brought to the throne William and Mary, who affirmed the Declaration of Right, which was enacted into law in 1689 as the Bill of Rights. This confirmed to the people their "ancient rights and liberties"; only Parliament could suspend the execution of the laws or levy taxes through duly elected representatives, the right of individuals to bear arms, freedom of speech to subjects, free elections, or the right to bail, except in cases of capital offenses. This enactment confirmed in written formulation these "ancient rights" that were deeply imbedded in the English constitution.

Unlike the Constitution of the United States, the English constitution is not a written instrument, but rather an accumulation of the great body of English common law, plus the statute laws. It has no legal status; "unconstitutionality" does not mean "illegality," but "contrary to political usage." 

Returning to our former mention of the famous Lord Camden and Charles Yorke legal opinion, we read, "... English subjects, who carry with them your Majesties [Majesty's] laws wherever they form colonies, and receive your Majesties protection, by virtue of your royal charters." Consequently, the English colonists did carry the whole body of English laws with them to America and implanted them so that they became the basis of, and incorporated in, the system of jurisprudence of the United States and dependencies. A partial exception may be considered to be the survival of the Code Justinian that was the basis of Spanish jurisprudence in the states with Spanish traditions, but this has largely been superseded by statute laws on the system of the United States and by our federal laws. Old decisions under the Spanish law, especially in cases involving land, will always surface.

The great legal light, George Mason of Virginia, member of Continental Congress, who transplanted the English Bill of Rights (essen-


5 William Quinby de Funiak, Principles of Community Property (Chicago, 1943), 1: 51-52, 102-104.
tially) and implanted it in the Constitution of the United States, wrote a concise summation of the situation: “We claim nothing but the liberty and privileges of Englishmen, in the same degree as if we had still remained among our brethren in Great Britain.” The complaints of English economic restrictions and of the king’s land policies were just complaints. The thrust of all of the recorded letters and communications are expressions of support for the persecuted Bostonians and the recognition of the colonists’ rights to equality as Englishmen.

On the morning of May 21, 1775 (three or four o’clock), Lord Dunmore caused the powder to be removed from the magazine in Williamsburg to a ship of the British navy. Three colonists, a few days earlier, had been wounded, two severely, by a musket fired by a trap. All this infuriated the people of the town and surrounding counties. Colonel Patrick Henry marched the Hanover County militia but stopped en route to Williamsburg when Dunmore promised to pay for the powder. Dunmore and family, however, fled to the man-of-war Fowey at Yorktown on June 8. On June 5, before his flight, the governor had informed the House of Burgesses that he had ordered the Virginia troops to evacuate the frontier posts, Fort Blair (at the mouth of the Kanawha, present Point Pleasant), Fort Fincastle (present Wheeling), and Fort Dunmore (Pittsburgh). This was his last order before leaving the colony.

The news of the fight, April 19, at Lexington and Concord, reached Philadelphia (the first dispatch) on the twenty-fourth, and (the second dispatch) at noon, on Wednesday the twenty-sixth. The reports probably would have reached Pittsburgh about five days later, or about midday of May 1.

Interesting information concerning the probable bearer to Fort Pitt of the momentous news of the outbreak of hostilities has come into the possession of the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania. This man was a tradesman, a tanner of deerskins, and the attendant art of breeches maker, whose talent was much in demand at Fort Pitt. His name was Casper Reel, and his ledger (account book) kept during the years 1774-1775 and 1780-1782 was a veritable “who’s who” at Pittsburgh in Revolutionary times. We are told that Reel made occasional journeys to the eastern part of the country and that, on his return from one of these trips, he was the messenger of the

6 K. M. Rowland, The Life and Correspondence of George Mason (New York, 1892), 1: 387; also quoted in John C. Miller, Origins of the American Revolution (Boston, 1943), 168.

fateful intelligence. Some pages from his daybook are reproduced herewith.  

The epic story of Casper Reel's reportorial service hinges upon the credibility of the historian of the family, Mr. John J. Reel, great-great-grandson of the original Casper. John Reel, in a very fine piece of historical research, has cited and reproduced signed records from the War Department, Office of the Adjutant General, also Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, Deeds (which I have verified from the records in the Bureau of Land Records), church and family records, including family bible records and the small bible carried by Casper through the Revolution with evidence of a bullet hole, and standard county histories. Most important of all was a diary kept by Casper through his fearful experiences with St. Clair's army, where he survived the rigors of disease and enemies' bullets through the Canadian campaign, the battle of Hubbardton, the Ticonderoga defeat, later enlistments which carried him into other battles including Brandywine, and then another enlistment at Fort Pitt. With the diary John Reel was very familiar, used it in his narration, and verified it by Casper's service records. The heartbreaking circumstance is that he arrived at his sister's house in Bellevue one day, just in time to see a large bonfire and the cherished diary being consumed.

I knew John J. Reel personally before his death in 1965. He was a fine and conscientious individual, a high type of gentleman. He wrote beautifully and with the care of men possessed of much higher educational advantages than he. He was a scholar of rare talents; all of his other facts ring true and have been verified. He was past eighty years of age at his death and past seventy-two when he compiled his "History of Casper Reel." I am passing this narrative on for what it is worth, even though it must necessarily be viewed in the realm of "oral history."

By whatever agency the dire tidings of the "shots fired, heard round the world," at Lexington Common and Concord Bridge, reached Pittsburgh, in the West Augusta District of Augusta County, Virginia, an emergency meeting of all inhabitants of the surrounding country that could be rounded up was convened at Fort Dunmore (Fort Pitt), on Tuesday, May 16, 1775. Indiscriminately, members of the Pennsylvania and Virginia factions mingled and united in sentiments of support for their beleaguered brethren in Boston and alarm

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8 Casper Reel Ledger, HSWP Archives.
9 John J. Reel, "History of Casper Reel" (unpublished manuscript, 1957), HSWP Library.
for the threatened common danger to "American rights and liberties." A cursory glance at the names of the members of the Standing Committee and the Committee of Correspondence will indicate that, instead of presenting their swords and bayonets at the breasts of opposing party partisans, they were now invoking aid in "the name of God, of every thing you hold sacred or valuable, for the sake of your wives, children, and unborn generations." Connolly's name is absent.

For the benefit of those readers who do not possess a library of rare documents for ready reference, we here reprint this treasured Fort Pitt (or Fort Dunmore) document, timely in this bicentennial year.

**Augusta County (Virginia) Committee**

At a meeting of the inhabitants of that part of Augusta County that lies on the west side of the Laurel Hill, at Pittsburgh, the 16th day of May, 1775, the following gentlemen were chosen a Committee for the said District, viz: George Croghan, John Campbell, Edward Ward, Thomas Smallman, John Cannon, John McCullaugh, William Gee, George Valandingham, John Gibson, Dorsey Penticost, Edward Cook, William Crawford, Devereux Smith, John Anderson, David Rodgers, Jacob Vanmetre, Henry Enoch, James Ennis, George Wilson, William Vance, David Shepherd, William Elliot, Richmond Willis, Samuel Sample, John Ormsbey, Richard McMaher, John Nevill, and John Sweringer.

The foregoing gentlemen met in committee, and resolved that John Campbell, John Ormsbey, Edward Ward, Thomas Smallman, Samuel Sample, John Anderson, and Devereux Smith, or any four of them, be a Standing Committee, and shall have full power to meet at such times as they shall judge necessary, and in case of any emergency, to call the Committee of this District together, and shall be vested with the same power and authority as the other Standing Committees and Committees of Correspondence are in the other Counties within this Colony.

*Resolved unanimously,* That the cordial and most grateful thanks of this Committee are a tribute due to John Harvie, Esquire, our worthy Representative in the late Colonial Convention held at Richmond, for his faithful discharge of that important trust reposed in him; and to John Nevill, Esquire, our other worthy Delegate, whom nothing but sickness prevented from representing us in that respectable Assembly.
Resolved unanimously, That this Committee have the highest sense of the spirited behaviour of their brethren in New-England, and do most cordially approve of their opposing the invaders of American rights and privileges to the utmost extreme, and that each member of this Committee, respectively, will animate and encourage their neighbourhood to follow the brave example.

The imminent danger that threatens America in general, from Ministerial and Parliamentary denunciations of our ruin, and is now carrying into execution by open acts of unprovoked hostilities in our sister Colony of Massachusetts, as well as the danger to be apprehended to this Colony in particular from a domestick enemy, said to be prompted by the wicked minions of power to execute our ruin, added to the menaces of an Indian war, likewise said to be in contemplation, thereby thinking to engage our attention, and divert it from that still more interesting object of liberty and freedom, that deeply, and with so much justice, hath called forth the attention of all America; for the prevention of all, or any of those impending evils, it is

Resolved, That the recommendation of the Richmond Convention, of the 20th of last March, relative to the embodying, arming, and disciplining the Militia, be immediately carried into execution with the greatest diligence in this County, by the officers appointed for that end; and that the recommendation of the said Convention to the several Committees of this Colony, to collect from their constituents, in such manner as shall be most agreeable to them, so much money as shall be sufficient to purchase half a pound of gunpowder, and one pound of lead, flints, and cartridge paper, for every tithable person in their County, be likewise carried into execution.

This Committee, therefore, out of the deepest sense of the expediency of this measure, most earnestly entreat that every member of this Committee do collect from each tithable person in their several districts the sum of Two Shillings and Six-Pence, which we deem no more than sufficient for the above purpose, and give proper receipts to all such as pay the same into their hands; and the sum so collected to be paid into the hands of Mr. John Campbell, who is to give proper security to this Committee, or their successors, for the due and faithful application of the money so deposited with him for the above purpose, by or with the advice of this Committee, or their successors; and this Committee, as your representatives, and who are most ardently labouring for your preservation, call on you, our constituents, our friends, brethren, and fellow-sufferers, in the name of God, of every thing you
hold sacred or valuable, for the sake of your wives, children, and unborn generations, that you will, every one of you, in your several stations, to the utmost of your power, assist in levying such sum, by not only paying yourselves, but by assisting those who are not at present in a condition to do so. We heartily lament the case of all such as have not this small sum at command in this day of necessity; to all such we recommend to tender security to such as Providence has enabled to lend them so much; and this Committee do pledge their faith and fortunes to you, their constituents, that we shall, without fee or reward, use our best endeavours to procure, with the money so collected, the ammunition our present exigencies have made so exceedingly necessary.

As this Committee has reason to believe there is a quantity of Ammunition destined for this place for the purpose of Government, and as this country, on the west side of the Laurel Hill, is greatly distressed for want of ammunition, and deprived of the means of procuring it, by reason of its situation, as easy as the lower Counties of this Colony, they do earnestly request the Committees of Frederick, Augusta, and Hampshire, that they will not suffer the ammunition to pass through their Counties for the purposes of Government, but will secure it for the use of this destitute country, and immediately inform this Committee of their having done so.

Resolved, That this Committee do approve of the Resolution of the Committee of the other part of this County, relative to the cultivating a friendship with the Indians; and if any person shall be so depraved as to take the life of any Indian that may come to us in a friendly manner, we will, as one man, use our utmost endeavours to bring such offender to condign punishment.

Ordered, That the Standing Committee be directed to secure such Arms and Ammunition as are not employed in actual service, or private property, and that they get the same repaired, and deliver them to such Captains of Independent Companies as may make application for the same, and taking such Captain's receipt for the arms so delivered.

Resolved, That the sum of fifteen Pounds, current money, be raised by subscription, and that the same be transmitted to Robert Carter Nicholas, Esq., for the use of the Deputies sent from this Colony to the General Congress. Which sum of money was immediately paid by the Committee then present.10

On the same day as the meeting at Fort Dunmore, only thirty-two miles to the eastward, at Hannas Town was gathered another

group of concerned citizens for the same express purposes as the former, their resolves couched in more concise language. At Hannas Town the male inhabitants formed an association, as was being enacted in all of the colonies. They were being drilled and exercised, so that St. Clair wrote to Governor Penn that "we have nothing but musters and committees all over the country." 11 Having for the first time an organized force, the Pennsylvanians felt strong enough to strike back at the Virginians and, on the night of June 22, marched to Pittsburgh and carried off Connolly to Ligonier. The committee at Pittsburgh, headed by George Croghan, wrote such a strong and threatening letter that Connolly was released. His force having been disbanded by Dunmore's last orders, Connolly soon departed. He found means to board Dunmore's vessel and spent several weeks with the governor, plotting measures to raise a force and to return to capture Pittsburgh for the king. 12

The Westmoreland County resolutions deserve to be printed, as much for their own merit as for comparison with the West Augusta District resolutions.

**Meeting of the Inhabitants of Westmoreland, Pennsylvania**

At a general meeting of the inhabitants of the County of Westmoreland, held at Hanna's Town the 16th day of May, 1775, for taking into consideration the very alarming situation of this Country, occasioned by the dispute with Great Britain:

Resolved unanimously, That the Parliament of Great Britain, by several late Acts, have declared the inhabitants of the Massachusetts-Bay to be in rebellion, and the Ministry, by endeavouring to enforce those Acts, have attempted to reduce the said inhabitants to a more wretched state of slavery than ever before existed in any state or country. Not content with violating their constitutional and chartered privileges, they would strip them of the rights of humanity, exposing lives to the wanton and unpunishable sport of a licentious soldiery, and depriving them of the very means of subsistence.

Resolved unanimously, That there is no reason to doubt but the same system of tyranny and oppression will (should it meet with success in the Massachusetts-Bay) be extended to every other part of

11 Smith, St. Clair Papers, 1: 355.
12 Wainwright, Croghan, 295.
Casper Reel's ledger (account book)
America: it is therefore become the indispensable duty of every American, of every man who has any publick virtue or love for his Country, or any bowels for posterity, by every means which God has put in his power, to resist and oppose the execution of it; that for us we will be ready to oppose it with our lives and fortunes. And the better to enable us to accomplish it, we will immediately form ourselves into a military body, to consist of Companies to be made up out of the several Townships under the following Association, which is declared to be the Association of Westmoreland County:

Possessed with the most unshaken loyalty and fidelity to His Majesty, King George the Third, whom we acknowledge to be our lawful and rightful King, and who we wish may long be the beloved Sovereign of a free and happy people throughout the whole British Empire; we declare to the world, that we do not mean by this Association to deviate from that loyalty which we hold it our bounden duty to observe; but, animated with the love of liberty, it is no less our duty to maintain and defend our just rights (which, with sorrow, we have seen of late wantonly violated in many instances by a wicked Ministry and a corrupted Parliament) and transmit them entire to our posterity, for which purpose we do agree and associate together:

1st. To arm and form ourselves into a Regiment or Regiments, and choose officers to command us in such proportion as shall be thought necessary.

2d. We will, with alacrity, endeavour to make ourselves masters of the manual exercise, and such evolutions as may be necessary to enable us to act in a body with concert; and to that end we will meet at such times and places as shall be appointed either for the Companies or the Regiment, by the officers commanding each when chosen.

3d. That should our Country be invaded by a foreign enemy, or should Troops be sent from Great Britain to enforce the late arbitrary Acts of its Parliament, we will cheerfully submit to military discipline, and to the utmost of our power resist and oppose them, or either of them, and will coincide with any plan that may be formed for the defence of America in general, or Pennsylvania in particular.

4th. That we do not wish or desire any innovation, but only that things may be restored to, and go on in the same way as before the era of the Stamp Act, when Boston grew great, and America was happy. As a proof of this disposition, we will quietly submit to the laws by which we have been accustomed to be governed before that period, and will, in our several or associate capacities, be ready when called on to assist the civil magistrate in carrying the same into execution.
5th. That when the British Parliament shall have repealed their late obnoxious Statutes, and shall recede from their claim to tax us, and make laws for us in every instance, or when some general plan of union and reconciliation has been formed and accepted by America, this our Association shall be dissolved; but till then it shall remain in full force; and to the observation of it, we bind ourselves by every thing dear and sacred amongst men.

No licensed murder! no famine introduced by law!

Resolved, That on Wednesday, the twenty-fourth instant, the Township meet to accede to the said Association, and choose their officers.\(^{13}\)

Meantime, the war was progressing. The Battle of Bunker Hill had been fought on June 17, with high casualties on both sides, and positions of both contestants had become crystallized. Whereas all of the addresses and letters from the colonists had been expressed in conciliatory terms and loyalty to the king, they now took a hard stance. Heretofore all expected the fighting to be soon over; now both sides seem to have squared away for an all-out war.

In the summer of 1775, the internecine (intercolonial) fighting between Pennsylvania and her neighbors continued, as has already been noticed. It is interesting to speculate that, had it not been for the Revolution, Pennsylvania would, in all probability, have been partitioned like Poland, the division of which the world had just witnessed three years before.

The sequence of events moved rapidly. On May 25, St. Clair foresaw the possible end of Virginia’s rule at Fort Pitt (Fort Dunmore) by a measure often overlooked in chronicles of the times, and he inquired of Governor Penn, “If the Fort should be evacuated next month, pray, sir, would it be proper to endeavor to get possession of it, or to raze it?” \(^{14}\) His reasoning was, “... by the prorogation of his [Dunmore’s] Assembly, the invasion law, under which it seems the garrison of the fort was kept up, will expire: I think the ninth of next month [June] is the period, and I am informed Conolly is prepared to decamp.” \(^{15}\) He finally departed on July 25.\(^{16}\)

The matter of the Indian hostages held for performance of treaty

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\(^{15}\) Ibid., 354.

\(^{16}\) Ibid., 362.
obligations contracted with Lord Dunmore at the end of Dunmore’s War, in Ohio in 1774, had never been settled, and Indian chiefs were still in captivity when Dunmore deserted his post. Connolly had invited the Indians to a conference at Pittsburgh, and now he had departed. The Virginia House of Burgesses, at its last session, still under the crown designated 15 George III, June 14, 1775, received “a petition of several persons in that part of the county of Augusta, which is on the west side of the Allegheny Mountain, . . . setting forth that the petitioners had grievously suffered by the devastations of the Indians in the last war . . . that Lord Dunmore, after the expedition against the Indians, promised to meet them at Pittsburgh in the spring, and conclude a peace, and then restore the hostages delivered to him, and discharge the captives; that the Indians had been uneasy for some time because the treaty had been deferred; that the Delawares particularly were very much dissatisfied, and repented that they had not joined the Shawanese in the war, since they found the white people were not to be depended on . . . .

“Resolved, That Thomas Walker, James Wood, Andrew Lewis, John Walker, and Adam Stephen, Esquires, be appointed Commissioners to ratify the Treaty of Peace between this Colony and the Indians . . . .

“Ordered, That it be an instruction to the gentlemen to prepare and bring in the said Bill . . . to empower the said Commissioners to join with such other Commissioners as may be appointed by the Assembly of Pennsylvania, in such manner as shall be judged most proper for conciliating the friendship of the Indians, and perpetuating the peace now subsisting between the said Indians and the Colonies.” 17

Fort Pitt having been left ungarrisoned for nearly three months, and the alarm of the people daily increasing, the Virginia Convention, at its first session (beginning July 17, at Richmond), on August 7, 1775, took action:

“Resolved. That John Neavill be directed to march with his Company of one hundred men, and take possession of Fort Pitt, and that the said Company be in the pay of this Colony from the time of its marching.

“Ordered, That Edward Sniggers be employed to furnish Provisions for the Forces under John Neavill, directed to march and take possession of Fort Pitt.” 18

18 Ibid., 3: 365, 376.
By September 11, Captain Neavill's (Neville's) company had marched from Winchester, Virginia, and occupied Fort Pitt and its environs. Neville had been one of the signers of the West Augusta Resolves at Fort Dunmore, had been an officer in both Braddock's and Dunmore's expeditions and had participated in the land grants to officers of both of these ventures. He would gain more tracts of land after he became a brigadier general in the Revolution. This action on the part of the Virginians, however well intentioned, served to alarm the Pennsylvania faction for fear of renewed intercolonial aggression and nearly defeated the conciliatory effect of the letter which had been sent by the leaders of Continental Congress to the inhabitants of the western frontiers.

The commissioners of Continental Congress, hoping to consult with representatives of the Indians, had arrived at Fort Pitt for that purpose and feared that the appearance of so large an armed force would offend and frighten away the expected conference. Efforts to prevent the troop movement and occupation of the fort by Neville's force were unsuccessful. In fact, he had his orders from the only authority he knew, and he executed them promptly. The danger was narrowly averted, but the reality of it will presently appear.

On the very last day of its final session, June 24, 1775, the Virginia House of Burgesses passed a resolution appointing George Washington, Thomas Walker, James Wood, Andrew Lewis, John Walker, and Adam Stephen to be commissioners to treat with the Indians at Fort Pitt. Nine days prior to this resolution, Washington had been unanimously elected, by Continental Congress, the commander in chief of all of the forces of the United Colonies then in service and action in Massachusetts, or to be raised under the authority of Continental Congress. The appointment by the Virginia Burgesses was obviously a favorite-son gesture, since the appointment by Congress was undoubtedly known in Virginia before that time; and Pittsburgh was denied a visit from the most celebrated man in the colonies. The alarm of the Burgesses arose from Dunmore's defection without having kept his promise to conclude a treaty with Chief

19 Smith, St. Clair Papers, 1: 361.
22 Smith, St. Clair Papers, 1: 361.
Cornstalk and other Indians to free the hostages, also the departure of Connolly after having called the meeting.

Members of the second Continental Congress (convened May 10, in Philadelphia) were gravely concerned lest the British agents should induce them to take up arms and hoped to keep the Indians neutral. Congress, on July 12, created three Indian departments, with Benjamin Franklin, Patrick Henry, and James Wilson commissioners for the central department, with headquarters at Pittsburgh. They, in turn, chose Richard Butler as their agent, he being the most prominent trader at Fort Pitt and within the trading area to the westward. This young scion of the house of the Dukes of Ormond and the Lords of Dumboyne (Irish peerage) entered actively upon his new duties, knowing full well the complexities, confusion, and entanglements of the situation. Of course, the whole field of division of responsibilities was yet disorganized; and it is little short of miraculous that Congress had so decisively exercised its functions with authority derived from conceded powers hastily granted by a heterogeneous set of colonies. Congress — and Butler — well knew that British agents from Detroit were busily peddling gifts, arms, lies, and prejudices to all of the tribesmen who would receive them. These facts were amply confirmed by experience when Butler made a tour of the Indian towns, as we shall see.

Richard Butler was a resident of Carlisle and immediate vicinity, the eldest of five “fighting Butlers,” toasted by Washington with his officers—more correctly six, for their father, Thomas Butler, marched with a militia ranging company against Indian invasions. Richard and his brother, William, were in the Indian trade at Fort Pitt. Bearing a captain’s commission from previous service in the Pennsylvania Regiment, Richard was forced to lose his seniority, or rank, in the line of officers by accepting the Indian agency; but he knew that, by so doing, he could perform invaluable service to his country. The former Indian agent under the British crown, George Croghan, was remaining idle at his Croghan Hall estate, four miles above Fort Pitt, on the Allegheny River (at the present McCandless Street). The Indians well remembered his munificence, fair dealing, and justice to their cause. Where his loyalty lay and the Indians’ attitude toward him un-
doubtedly would control the vital factor in the defensive posture of the entire frontier. Butler and the commissioners must have been mindful that Croghan's daughter and heir was the wife of an officer on active duty with the Royal American Regiment of the British army, whose father commanded a battalion of that British unit, and who was soon to command all of the forces in the southern provinces. These circumstances did cast deep suspicions upon Croghan and caused apprehensions of the effects of his influence, which must have caused Butler some anxious moments.

A brief preview of Butler's later attainments will furnish a clue to his character and potential importance. Reentering the army the next year, he would emerge from the war a brigadier general with one of the most enviable records in Washington's entire army. His brothers, especially William who became a colonel, acquired notability; Lafayette wrote, "When I wished a thing well done, I ordered a Butler to do it." Colonel Richard Butler was one of General Anthony Wayne's key men, commanding a wing of Wayne's attacking army at Stony Point, and was a hero at Yorktown. Together, Wayne, with Colonels Richard Butler and Walter Stewart, were three of the most colorful and valorous leaders of the American army of the Revolution. Afterwards, he was Pittsburgh's most acclaimed hero, until his untimely death at St. Clair's defeat, in Ohio.

During the summer of 1775, Fort Pitt was indeed teeming with activity, what with commercial venturers and agents, with Virginia troops, supply packtrains — wagons were now seldom used, since the king's troops were gone and the roads were in a ruinous state of disrepair. Commissioners flocked to the place, those of Congress, of Virginia, of Pennsylvania, and of Augusta County, each deputation with its own separate cause and interest to subserve.

In the first place, Connolly, before his departure, had met with a select coterie of chiefs and had instructed them to invite all of the chiefs of the Ohio region to meet at Fort Pitt in September for a full consideration of the hostages held over by Dunmore and to conclude a permanent peace for Virginia. This, of course, was the primary aim of the Virginia commissioners. On July 18, James Wood, one of their number, started, with Simon Girty as interpreter, to visit the important Indian towns of Ohio for the purpose of inviting the sachems

30 PMHB 7: 1-10.
31 Thwaites and Kellogg, Revolution on the Upper Ohio, 36.
and chiefs to a treaty with the Virginians at Fort Pitt in September.32

The purpose of the commissioners of Continental Congress was of far broader and deeper concern, since their interest embraced that of all of the United Colonies and was charged with great urgency to insure the neutrality of the Indians in the contest with the mother country. Richard Butler got under way on a tour of the Indian country nine days33 after Wood had returned to Fort Pitt, and had almost immediately departed to his home in Winchester, Virginia, to report to the Virginia Convention, then meeting in Richmond.34 Wood's journal of his tour may appear to be better written (he did not observe the use of periods and other punctuation, either, but it is a good travel diary). Butler's journal may not, at first glance, appear to be as literate, but it preserves a deeper insight into the Indians' thinking, attitudes, motives, and character. As an experienced trader, he possessed a deeper insight into Indian psychology.

1775

COL RICHARD BUTLER'S JOURNAL

Left Pittsburgh ye 22d of August 1775——
on the tour of the Delawares Yendots—Mingoes & Shawnies——

23 W[ednesday] Started at 6 OClock met Mr Davison from the Sha.9 [Shawano] Towns with A letter, & A proclamation Enclosed of Gen.1 Carlton3 for Raising the Quebeck Millitia, which I Opened & read & thought fit to push on: Stoped at the Logstown & Dined Saw Old Newcome[r] who Seemed pleased At the Invitation to the Indian tribes; found one Drunk Indian Lying on the road; More at big beaver Creek Camp.d At the big run 2 M from beaver Cr*

32 Ibid., 43.
34 Thwaites and Kellogg, Revolution on the Upper Ohio, 66

* John Davidson is the only person of the name mentioned in the old records, although he must have been very old. Washington mentions him, in 1753, at Logstown as an Indian interpreter. There he is given credit for having furnished information on the Ohio (Allegheny) "from the Forks upward." General Sir Guy Carleton (1724-1808), afterward Lord Dorchester, was Governor-General and Commander in Chief in Canada. Newcomer was a very old Delaware chief, probably having been born before 1700. He was already an important chief when he signed the Treaty of Conestoga, in 1718. He succeeded "King" Beaver as principal chief, in 1772. His town was on the site of present Newcomerstown, O., and he died at Fort Pitt in 1776, while attending a council. He was grandfather of Killbuck.
24: Thursday] Started at 6 OClock Met Some Squas & Old Killbuck Who told me the Principal men of the Delawares was to be that Day At the New Town Or Cushohockking which Induced me to go that Road least they might be Scattered before I would See the Head men together, As the other way is Counted the longest Camp'd Near yellow C.'s fine evening———

27 Sunday Started at 6 OClock went to the 10 Mile Camp & dined thence to the 2 Mile run; One horse gave out this Day Near Brush Camp Which Obliged Rob't M'Cully to Stay behind All Night he Came up Next Morning at 8 OClock———

28 Mo; Started at 9 OClock & Came to Cushochkking & Delivered Our Speech At 5 OClock we Received An Answer As p'r the Speech Date 28th Ags't & in it A Message to the windots—the Delawares sends one Man with us to Asure the Windots of their Intentions & to leave A String of wampom with y'm [them] Tho's Nicholson Inform'd me that he Read Or in their Way Interpreted A Speech from the Five Nations & Mr' Johnston Inviting them to a treaty y't [that] is to be held at De'Troit but did not Mention the Time; As they Are to get Another Message When Mr' Johnston*** is Ready to Meet them but he bids them Sit Still & Do No harm to Any Body till they hear from him Again or See him———

It can readily be understood that there was much confusion in the Indians' minds regarding the white men's affairs and responsibilities. With Dunmore the conqueror gone, Connolly his emissary also gone, and especially Croghan, truly the "wilderness diplomat," displaced and

† Killbuck (Gelelemend) was long a friend of white civilization. He was given the island at the junction of the Allegheny and Ohio rivers opposite to Fort Pitt, known as Smoke or Smoky Island, afterwards Killbuck Island. Cushohockking (now Coshocton, Ohio) was originally a Wiandot town containing about 100 families. The West Fork of Little Beaver Creek was called Yellow Creek by all travelers.

** Robert McCully was a man of the proper type and background to have accompanied young Captain Butler on his perilous mission to the Ohio Indian towns. The two young men came from Cumberland County and both later were to be residents of Alleghehny County. On July 8, 1763, Robert McCully entered upon a two-year enlistment in Colonel James Burd's Battalion of the Pennsylvania Regiment, and seems to have served the whole time at Fort Augusta, at the forks of the Susquehanna (modern Sunbury, Pa.).

‡ Thomas Nicholson was a brother of Joseph, who was one of Washington's guides and interpreter during his 1770 trip down the Ohio.

*** This was Col. Guy Johnson who had succeeded his uncle, Sir William Johnson, as Superintendent of Indian Affairs upon the latter's death, July 11, 1774.
Col. Richard Butler
discredited, faced by new people all — except Butler, long among them to trade but never charged with governmental authority — the Indians' state of mind can be imagined. They had often dealt at the council fires of the "long knives" (the Virginians), but now they were asked to meet at the "great council fire" which, they were told, was to be greater than all of the thirteen council fires. Still, there was Virginia to be dealt with separately. James Wood laid stress upon the situation, writing to the president of the Virginia Convention: "From every discovery I was able to make the Indians are forming a General Confederacy against the Colony having been led to believe that we are a people Quite different and distinct from the other Colonies." 35

The perils of Butler's situation were not minimized by the fact that Croghan had always gone to meet the Indians bearing lavish gifts. Butler now went empty-handed. The British, at Detroit, were currying the favor of the chiefs with presents and promises. Two dissident Frenchmen, now loyal British subjects, were circulating among the Ohio towns. Butler was going, among the other strongholds of the Delawares, Shawnees, and Mingoes, to Pluggy's Town, that most notorious nest of treachery and murders. He was accompanied on the journey by an old comrade of his early service days at Fort Augusta, Robert McCully, and Thomas Nicholson, Washington's former guide and interpreter. 36

A few passages from the very literal journal kept by Richard Butler during this difficult time will convey some of the important implications of this unusual document. Since Wood and Connolly had already issued an invitation for the sachems to assemble at Fort Pitt about the middle of September, it was reasonable that Butler should propose the same time, when the business of all parties could be conducted simultaneously. Butler returned to Fort Pitt on September 20 accompanied by Guyasuta (spelled by Butler Kiasota, by others Kiasutha, Kiashuta, Guyashuta, and as many ways as there were auditors of the spoken name). 37 The chief became very drunk at the Grenadier Squaw's Town, in consequence of which Butler's return was delayed for over a week. Guyasuta became quite ill, fell from his horse several times, and was considerably injured. 38

35 Ibid.
37 Hanna, Wilderness Trail, index, "C," 399, "G," 413, "K," 424; the letters are interchangeable in Iroquoian words.
12th Tu. . . . in the Meantime Kiasota went to the Granadiers* & got Very Drunk & with Much Ado Got him I got him Away in Coming About A mile he got two falls off[†] his horse which has hurt him Very much

13 We: Started Early Kiasota So bad he Cant ride got only to the Standing Stone About 25 Miles Rained All Day———

14 Th: Still like for rain Started At 8 OClock rained till about 10 OClock the Old man very bad All Day we came to the big lick, About 25 M Campd At Sunset Rain All Night in Showers

15th Fr. Started At 7 OClock Still raining; Kiasota Still Very ill Came to the old Delaware Town on Licking Cr: at 10 OClock thence to Old waghtomace at 6 OClock thence to the beech bank at Dusk Campd All Night the Old Man Still poorly———

16th Sa: Started At 6 OClock Kiasota Still bad Arrived at Cushochking About 10 OClock; There was White Eyes . . . . †

Butler wrote the journal just as it came from the lips of the interpreter or translator, in the rambling style of Indian speeches. It preserves the picturesque, allegorical imagery and metaphor that was characteristic of all Indian oratory. We today marvel at the natural eloquence of those untutored children of the forest. Of course, we must pay respect — as seldom has been done — to the interpreter-translator whose English vocabulary is no less remarkable. These were usually rough traders in the Indian country who had acquired a knowledge of Indian languages and dialects; yet they often employed English words seldom found except in classical literature and often reflecting etymological distinctions. Here, Butler has preserved speeches of some of the greatest Indian orators, such as the inimitable Chiefs Cornstalk and White Eyes.19

The arrival of Cornstalk with his Shawnee delegation on September 26, 1775, was signalized by the roll and beating of drums, the flying of the colors, and the firing of a salute by a volley of musketry.

* "The Grenadiers" refers to the Grenadier Squaw's Town, located four miles south of present Circleville, Pickaway County, on Scippo Creek just above the mouth of Congo Creek.

† White Eyes, Delaware chief, was one of the great Indian statesmen. He envisioned the time when his tribe should become civilized, live in peaceable trade relations with their white neighbors, and pursue agriculture.

On the thirtieth, the Mingoes were received, and not until October 7, did the Delawares arrive. On that day, the chiefs of the Shawnees, Ottawas, Wiandots, Six Nations, Delawares, and Mingoes (of the Six Nations) assembled and were informed that the thirteen council fires were now united into one big council fire, the United Colonies. On the ninth, long speeches were made about burying deeply and covering the bones of the warriors killed in the battle of Point Pleasant (September 10, 1774) and planting a tree of peace over their graves.40

The long speeches of the sachems and responses are very interesting from the point of eloquence and high sounding expressions of good faith and "pure hearts." Through all this profession of sincerity shone through a shadow of mistrust and wariness. Even while the conference was in progress, came news of the crossing of the Ohio and the burning of the buildings and most of the stockade of Fort Blair, at the mouth of the Kanawha by the "foolish young men" of the Shawnees. There were apprehensions among the Indians that retaliation by the whites would follow, also that white scouts and hunters would cross to the Indian side of the Ohio and that incidents would occur.41 Neither side could guarantee that uncontrollable elements of their people would not invade the others' domains. Incidentally, it was Cornstalk who first reported the misdeeds of his own tribesmen as a proof of his good faith, although he minimized the importance of the act.

Ultimately, it was resolved that the Indians would give up and restore all of the captives and horses remaining in their towns that belonged to the white people. Two of the latter should accompany each team of Indians to visit every town and to enforce the terms of agreement.42 At best, an uneasy peace subsisted for two years, with repeated rumors of renewed Indian wars and sporadic forays inspired by the British at Detroit. The Delawares, however, held steadfastly to their agreements, even undergoing persecution from other tribes.

One of the most unusual occurrences in the whole sequence of the proceedings was the speech of Chief White Eyes on October 12, in which he declared, "...that the Friendship which has been made between us in the presence of God Almighty may be Lasting and Strong and as we know the Bounds of the Lands Claimed by our Brothers Extends as far as the Mouth of the Cherokee River* I for

40 Thwaites and Kellogg, Revolution on the Upper Ohio, 74-75, 83.
41 Ibid., 93, 111, 117.
42 Ibid., 114-25.
* Italics are the author's.
my part will be Strong and Prevent my young Men from hunting there . . . .”

Most surprising is the fact that, as formerly noticed, at the Fort Stanwix Treaty, in 1768, the Six Nations had ceded all of the lands lying on the south side of the Ohio River as far as the Cherokee (Tennessee) River to the Virginians, but that the Board of Trade, Lord Hillsborough presiding, had forbidden acceptance of any land below the Big Kanawha. Yet, seven years later, Chief White Eyes was here continuing to honor the cession and declaring it still in effect.

Nearly all of the Indians' responses to addresses by the representatives of Continental Congress and of the “brothers of the bigknife” [Virginians] told of warnings received from the British commanders at Detroit that it was the plan of the Virginians to draw the chiefs at a distance from their homes and friends and then to kill them (as they expressed it, “to cut them off”). Even Cornstalk’s “young men” were alarmed by such stories and warnings brought to them by the Wiandots and Tawas from the British and would not accompany him to the treaty.

All expressed gratitude that those warnings had proved false, and none voiced his feelings more fully or so eloquently as the son of Pontiac, the late leader of the confederation of tribes that had perpetrated that terrible conflict known in history as Pontiac's War. The words of Sheganaba are especially illustrative of the stresses under which all of the Ohio Indians labored. It is especially significant as expressive of the mind of a gentleman of the nobility among men of good will of whatever race, nationality, or religion. His speech deserves a place by the side of that of Logan. The following is recorded in the pages of the American Archives:

*Fathers*: From the information I had of the commandant of Detroit, With distrust I accepted your invitation, and measured my way to this council-fire with trembling feet. Your reception of me convinces me of his falsehood, and the groundlessness of my fears. Truth and he have long been enemies. My father, and many of my chiefs, have lately tasted of death. The remembrance of that misfortune almost unmans me, and fills my eyes with tears. Your kind condolence has lightened

43 Ibid., 109.
my heart of its heavy burden, and shall be transmitted to my latest posterity.—(A string)

Fathers: I rejoice to hear what I this day have heard, and do assure you it shall be faithfully delivered to my nation. Should you want to speak to me in future, I shall joyfully attend, and thank you for the present invitation. The particular favor showed me, and the gun you have given me, for the kindness I showed your brother, (young Field,) claims my warmest acknowledgements. I am conscious I did but my duty. He who barely does his duty, merits no praise. If any of your people hereafter visit mine, whether through courtesy or business, or both motives, or if unwillingly compelled by the strong hand of the victor, they shall find the entertainment your brother found. You informed me, if my people visits yours, they shall meet with an hospitable welcome. My fears are done away. I have not one doubt remaining. I will recommend it to my young men to visit and get acquainted with yours.

Fathers: What has passed this day is too deeply engraved on my heart for time itself ever to erase. I foretell that the sunny rays of this day's peace shall warm and protect our children's children from the storms of misfortune. To confirm it, I present you my right hand — that hand which never yet was given but the heart consented, which never shed human blood in peace, nor ever spared an enemy in war — and I assure you of my friendship with a tongue which has never mocked at truth since I was at age to know falsehood was a crime.—(A belt)  

White Eyes, the Delaware chief, spoke with the voice of a true Christian. This was only one of many instances when he stood unashamedly before an audience of callous and hardened warriors and expressed his belief in humanity and peaceful pursuits.

Brothers listen to me while I speak to our brothers the English [American] Brothers. As we have now renewed and Confirmed the friendship between us if you Suspect that there is anything in my heart but what is good and Sincere, I beg you wou'd tell me of it; as I wou'd wish that no evil thing that's done by my People shou'd be kept Secret, and that every one may know that I wou'd not desire anything bad shou'd be Unknown and as you have Informed us that

if any of your People shou'd do us any Injury you wou'd Punish them. I also now for my part promise that if any of my foolish Young Men shou'd do any harm to your People that we will punish them as they deserve without delay as I wou'd wish to Comply with the dictates of the Christian Religion and Commands of our Savior whose hands were Nailed to the Cross and sides Pierced for our Sins as far as I am Capable in my Present Dark State.47

From the time of the arrival of the first Indian delegation, the Shawnees on September 26, until the last session of the treaty deliberations, three weeks and three days had elapsed. With the departure of the Indians from Fort Pitt, the burden of the responsibility may have been relieved concerning food and scarce supplies, but the environment of the fort was by no means quieted. There was organization to be effected among the military body which had just moved in a short time prior to the arrival of the Indians. With the apprehensions that the British agents had taken pains to arouse, it is little short of marvelous that the Indians were not frightened away by the appearance of military force. Never was the quality of wise leadership among the old chiefs better displayed than at this juncture. They presaged that the American colonial leaders ought to have a special message for them, as they had been informed by Richard Butler, that would be productive of mutual benefits.

Considered from the British point of view, the reports which Major Henry Hamilton, at Detroit, passed on to his commander in chief, Sir Guy Carleton, the chiefs were deceived and tricked by the Americans. Nevertheless, it should be noticed that Guy Johnson, who had succeeded his uncle, Sir William Johnson (died July 11, 1774) as superintendent of Indian affairs under the crown, advocated that the Indians stay neutral during the contest between the colonies and the mother country. Near the end of July 1775, however, Lord Dartmouth, then secretary of state for the colonies, wrote Johnson: “The unnatural rebellion now raging, calls for every effort to suppress it, and the intelligence His Maj’y has received of the Rebells having excited the Indians to take a part, and of their having actually engaged a body of them in arms to support their rebellion, justifies the resolution His Maj’y has taken of requiring the assistance of his faithful adherents the six Nations. It is therefore His Maj’y’s pleasure that you do lose no time in taking such steps as may induce them to take up..."

47 Thwaites and Kellogg, Revolution on the Upper Ohio, 109-10.
the hatchet against his Majesty's rebellious subjects in America . . . ." 48

The Indians could not escape embroilment for long. The treaty had been held with the tribes inhabiting the country now Ohio. From a rather unexpected direction came the first instance of involvement with that problem. Washington, writing to General Philip Schuyler from Cambridge, Massachusetts, on August 15, 1775, mentioned: "Several Indians of the Tribe of St. Francis came in here yesterday and confirm the former Accounts of the good Dispositions of the Indian Nations, and Canadians in the Interests of America." A note to the same quotes the Pennsylvania Gazette, of August 30: "Yesterday Sen-night [a week] arrived at the camp in Cambridge, Swashan, the Chief, with four other Indians of the St. Francis tribe . . . came hither to offer their service in the cause of American liberty, have been kindly received, and are now entered the service. Swashan says he will bring one half his tribe and has engaged 4 or 5 other tribes if they should be wanted." 49

Meantime, Captain Neville had had little time for organizing his command at Fort Pitt, where the returned captives and property had been ordered to be deposited under his care. His orders also comprehended his oversight of preparation of the defense of Fort Henry (the former Fort Fincastle) at Wheeling and Fort Randolph at the mouth of the Big Kanawha at Point Pleasant 50 (the location of the former Fort Blair, which we have just heard was destroyed by the "young men" of the Shawnees).

Neville was, within the space of a few months, absent from Fort Pitt most of his time, at the other posts and involved with the various county lieutenants of Virginia counties in recruiting and supply problems.

His grandson related that he remained only three months before his promotion as major, 51 but correspondence and reports show that he returned frequently to Fort Pitt. On September 29, 1776, the Virginia council ordered 1,000 pounds of gunpowder, 2,000 flints, and 1,000 pounds of lead forwarded to Fort Pitt; 52 and, on May 27, Congress ordered 800 pounds of powder to the same destination. 53

51 Craig, Olden Time, 1: 446.
All of the forts were in great need of reinforcements. Fort Pitt, especially, was in urgent need of having its garrison doubled, in order to defend its extensive walls, bastions, and redoubts. Regular troops were necessary, under the direction of Congress, not of the militia officers of the counties. In the late summer and autumn of 1776, therefore, the Twelfth Virginia Regiment was recruited in the area now Western Pennsylvania, western Virginia, and West Virginia, with James Wood its colonel, and John Neville its lieutenant colonel, both commissions dated November 12, 1776. The regiment was raised specifically for frontier duty and expressly restricted from transferral out of the frontier area, which later was to cause embarrassment for Washington. Neville was thenceforward on regimental duty.

The Virginia Council, with Governor Patrick Henry presiding, on February 12, 1777, ordered 200 troops to be levied to garrison Fort Pitt and Fort Randolph, designating Captain Robert Campbell to command at Fort Pitt. Campbell's orders were to recruit his company of 100 men by April 1 and to remain in command of Fort Pitt until he should be relieved by a like number of regular Continental troops. This he did and remained until the arrival of Brigadier General Hand, on June 1, 1777.

[To be continued]

54 Francis B. Heitman, Historical Register of Officers of the Continental Army During the War of the American Revolution (Washington, 1914), 60, 412.
55 Fitzpatrick, Writings of Washington, 10: 520.
56 McIlwaine, Journals of the Council of Va., 1: 338.