BOOK REVIEWS


The story of the French attempt to gain military control of the Upper Ohio is seldom presented in terms of its French or Canadian background. The attempt itself failed; so, in accounts of Pennsylvania’s frontier forts, the affair is viewed in relation to the development of the British colony and later state. In some accounts, indeed, the French are hardly visible, and their six-year military presence in Pennsylvania is manifested mostly through the actions of local and imported Indians under their influence.

In such a presentation the French fort at the site of present Erie, Pennsylvania, may get little attention; it was not visited by George Washington, was not the site of any spectacular event, was never attacked or captured. Its importance was chiefly logistical. It was the first French post established in the Ohio campaign and subsequently the point through which passed most of the troops and supplies for the Ohio posts. It was one of the last posts to be abandoned — not after the loss of Fort Duquesne in 1758 but after the fall of Niagara a year later.

Concentrating on this post and its military function, Dr. Schoenfeld has written an excellent account of the complex and difficult Canadian background of the Ohio venture. No one interested in the history of the time or of the region can read it without gaining a fuller appreciation of the difficulties of a military campaign carried out in a remote region from a colony with a small population and limited resources and separated from its mother country by seaways constrained by geography, climate, and British sea power.

The main text of his booklet (pp. 1-37) gives no special attention to Fort de la Presqu’île but considers it in context with the overall history of the campaign. This is consistent with the full title of the publication and avoids the common mistake of treating such a fort as a local feature and so obscuring its true purpose.

Special attention is given the fort in two appendixes, “A Description of Fort de la Presqu’île” and “Life at Fort de la Presqu’île.”
A one-sentence description of the fort, based on the conclusions arrived at in the first of these might appropriately have been inserted into the main text, where Chapter 5, including "the Construction of Fort de la Presqu'ile," seems to make only two rather casual references to this matter. Although a definitive list of the commanders of this fort does not seem possible, a tentative list, based on the information in the text, would be convenient for reference and could have been accommodated on pages 62-64.

A stronger cautionary word would be in order (p. 82) regarding Travels in New France (a translation of Voyage au Canada . . . par J.C.B.). However interesting, this work is worthless as a historical source. A minor detail, of some interest to readers in this field of history, is the abbreviation 7bre, referred to in note 5, page 80. This is not a misprint as there suggested. The numeral 7 does not refer to the seventh month of the year, but is to be read literally: (septem)bre. The last three months of the year were abbreviated in the same way: 8bre, 9bre, Xbre.

Dr. Schoenfeld's booklet is a welcome addition to the literature on our frontier forts. A second printing should become necessary, and at that time a few typographical errors (for example, Captain Jack for Captain Jacobs, page 31) could easily be corrected.

*Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania*  
William A. Hunter


Settled initially in the 1730s, by the time of the American Revolution Lancaster had become one of the largest inland cities on the continent. The town served as a marketing center for the southeastern portions of the colony and represented an agglomeration of several religious and ethnic communities. All this led to a certain diversity within the town, one that is likely more important to the historian than it was to the eighteenth-century inhabitants. By the 1790s, however, the area had become only a minor urban center, its importance as a western distribution center having dimmed.

Jerome Wood seeks to narrate these changes, with an eye to the town and its people rather than to theoretical concerns. In a way this is unfortunate, for we need more studies of areas like Lancaster to