



Speculators and *Squatters*



The Frontier Beginnings of Moon Township

By Robert A. Jockers D.D.S.

Perhaps the most significant factor in the settlement of Western Pennsylvania was an intangible energy known as the “Westward Movement.” The intertwined desires for economic, political, and religious freedoms created a powerful sociological force that stimulated the formation of new and ever-changing frontiers. Despite the dynamics of this force, the settlement of “Old Moon Township” – for this article meaning contemporary Moon Township and Coraopolis Borough – was neither an orderly nor a continuous process. Due in part to the area’s remote location on the English frontier, settlement was delayed. Political and legal controversy clouded the ownership of its land. Transient squatters and land speculators impeded its growth, and hostile Indian incursions during the American Revolution brought about its demise.

Of course, these lands were being contested in the 1770s. Both Pennsylvania and Virginia claimed the area, which was also falling under ever-changing county jurisdictions. It is the purpose of this study to document the settlement of “Old Moon Township,” which began in the spring of 1773 and remained viable through the winter of 1781. It is the first comprehensive attempt to

identify the original settlers, where they came from, and specifically when and where they settled. In doing so it was necessary to detail the complexity of the settlement process, as well as the political, economic, and social environment that existed during that time frame.

In spite of the fact that Moon Township was not incorporated as a governmental entity within Allegheny County, Pa., until 1788, numerous events of historical significance occurred during the initial settlement period and in the years prior to its incorporation. “Old Moon Township” included the settlement of the 66 original land grants that comprise today’s Moon Township and the four that make up Coraopolis. This is a specific case study but is also a primer on the research of regional settlement patterns.

THE “WESTWARD MOVEMENT”

As English settlement of the Atlantic coast expanded, Native Americans were forced to abandon their lands and move west. English traders followed, arriving in the Ohio Valley sometime between 1735 and 1740. A little more than a decade later, the vanguard of a squatter movement began to appear. The first

English-speaking settlement west of the Appalachian Mountains was established in the Monongahela Valley in 1751.¹ Nominal ownership of southwestern Pennsylvania at that time belonged to the Iroquois Confederacy as recognized by the Treaty of Easton (1758), the Royal Proclamation (1763), and the Treaty of Fort Stanwix (1768). Settlers moving into the Monongahela country were therefore seated without legal sanction and thus were squatting. In the ensuing years, the squatter migration continued despite having to temporarily abandon their frontier holdings during the French and Indian War (1754-1758) and the Pontiac Uprising (1763-1764). By 1765, the squatter movement had established a number of small frontier settlements and was well ensconced in the Monongahela Valley.

In *Monongahela of Old*, James Veech states, "The documentary history of 1765, '66, '67 ... speaks of no other settlements in western Pennsylvania ... than those within or immediately bordering upon the Monongahela, upon Cheat, upon the Yough, the Turkeyfoot, and Redstone."²

Realizing the hopelessness of securing the evacuation of these various settlements, the Pennsylvania commissioners and the Iroquois chiefs finally agreed that land secession by the Indians was the only logical alternative. On November 5, 1768, the Treaty of Fort Stanwix transferred a large area called the "New Purchase" from the Iroquois Confederacy to the Proprietary government of Pennsylvania.

When the Pennsylvania land office opened on April 3, 1769, it was inundated with applications for warrants of survey within the "New Purchase." Despite all the applications filed, only three were located in "Old Moon Township." The paucity of applications there was affected by a number of extenuating circumstances.

First, "Old Moon Township" was still a nondescript, uninhabited wilderness on the south shore of the Ohio River. The Treaty of Fort Stanwix had established the Ohio as a segment of the dividing line between the "New Purchase" on the south or English side and the Indian frontier on the north. The Iroquois Confederacy – as nominal owners of southwestern Pennsylvania through previous conquests – had invited the Delaware and Shawnee tribes to live there. During the Fort Stanwix conference, however, neither tribe was invited to attend in spite of the fact that their villages and hunting grounds were being given away without

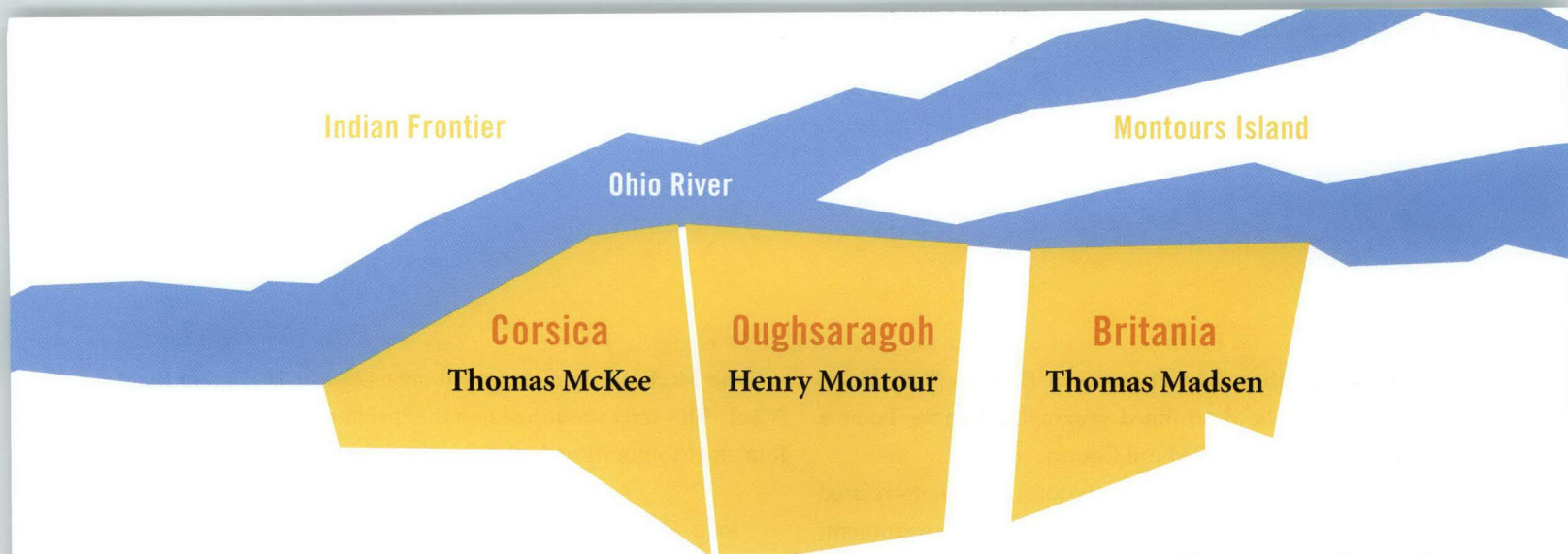
their consent. This deliberate oversight angered the Delaware and Shawnee; renegade bands began to attack nearby settlements, rendering the south shore of the upper Ohio extremely dangerous. As a result, pioneer settlers were reluctant to seat themselves so close to the Indian frontier.

Second, the settlement process in southwestern Pennsylvania was adversely affected by a political dispute between the colonies. The conflict had arisen many years before over the ambiguous language in each charter describing their common boundary. In 1769, Pennsylvania claimed jurisdiction of the Ohio Valley as part of Cumberland County with its seat of justice at Carlisle. Virginia claimed jurisdiction of the same area as a part of Augusta County with its seat at Staunton. This ongoing dispute caused many settlers, for whom the ownership of land was the primary objective, concern that title to the lands they had cleared and settled might never be perfected.

Lastly, the settlement process had been further complicated by the land policy of each colony. Pennsylvania's land policy evolved from the 1730s "Law of Improvement" and the 1750s "Pre-Emptive Law." The land was divided into three classes: Proprietary (reserved for the Penn family), Estate (reserved for the English nobility), and Common. Obtaining Pennsylvania title to common lands, which were sold in 100- to 400-acre tracts, was a long and cumbersome process. The settler was first required to apply to the local land office in writing. That *application* was then forwarded to the surveyor-general's office, which then sent a *warrant of survey* to the local deputy surveyor. After the *survey* was completed, it was returned and placed on record in the surveyor-general's office. Following the applicant's payment of the required purchase price for the land, a *patent* was issued and title was perfected.

In contrast, Virginia's land policy was not as restrictive. Upon application, the "Headright System" allowed a settler 400 acres of unoccupied land free if he were to build a cabin or raise a crop of grain, however small. After the survey was completed, the Virginia land commissioners merely issued a Virginia Certificate which awaited caveat in the land office for a period of six months. If none was offered, a patent was issued and title was perfected.

A thorough examination of the earliest land records – specifically the applications, warrants, surveys, and patents relating



Warrentee map of three land grants.
Page 19: A surviving log home in
Moon Township.

Photo by the author.

to the 70 original land grants which comprised “Old Moon Township” – revealed that in the spring of 1769, only three applications had been filed. These tracts were parcels of bottomland located between steep hills along the south shore of the Ohio River in what is today the borough of Coraopolis.

The earliest of the grants, a 335-acre tract, was a gift from the Proprietary government to Henry (Andrew) Montour for his services rendered as an Indian interpreter:

Pennsylvania New Purchase Application # 145

“Henry Montour applies to the office for 300 acres of land upon the south side of the Ohio including his improvement & opposite to the Long Island about nine miles below Fort Pitt.”³

According to English law, each parcel of land required a title, and so at the time of granting, Montour named his tract “Oughsaragoh.” On April 3, 1769, a warrant, “*an order to survey and a permit to claim a tract of vacant land*,”⁴ was issued for the “Oughsaragoh” tract. Deputy surveyor James Hendricks made the survey and returned it to the surveyor-general’s office. A survey was a delineation of a tract of land and “*was not to encroach upon any area under settlement, improvement, or prior survey unless it was for the benefit of those already residing on the tract*.”⁵ Any improvements made on the tract were noted by the surveyor and became an integral part of the final survey. In spite of an improvement having been noted on Montour’s application, the deputy surveyor’s work strongly suggests that due to the absence of any noted modification on the survey, such as a cleared field or the existence of a structure, none had been made.

The second grant, titled “Corsica,” was a 335-acre tract warranted by Thomas McKee, and the third grant, “Britania,” also 335 acres, was warranted by Thomas Madsen. Both of these men were land speculators.

The earliest land records therefore established initial evidence that subsequent to the completion of these surveys there had been no prior improvement or settlement in Moon Township.

The following year, 1770, George Washington undertook a journey of land exploration down the Ohio River. His journal states:

October 20th; from Fort Pitt we sent our horses and boys back to Captain Crawford’s, with orders to meet us there again on the 14th day of November. Colonel Croghan, Lt. Hamilton, and Mr. Magee set out with us. At two we dined at Mr. Magee’s and encamped ten miles below, and four above Logstown. We passed several large islands, which appeared to be very good, as the bottoms also did on each side of the river alternately; hills on one side being opposite to the bottoms on the other, which seem generally to be about three or four hundred yards wide, and so vice versa.⁶

Despite his discerning examination of the lands bordering the Ohio River, Washington made no reference as to any improvement or settlement in the area between McKee’s place on Chartiers Creek and Logstown (Baden) on the Ohio.

By 1771, migration had slowed. The old political controversy regarding the Pennsylvania-Virginia boundary once again surfaced. In an attempt to extend its jurisdiction westward, the Proprietary government of Pennsylvania, on March 9, established

Bedford County with its seat of justice at Bedford. "Old Moon Township," a yet to be determined geographical entity, became a portion of Pitt Township, Bedford County.

In 1772, with peace on the frontier, the local inhabitants refused to support the army at Fort Pitt. The British government, frustrated with their reluctance and general apathy, decided it would no longer provide for the safety of these ungrateful frontiersmen and abandoned the fort. The status of "Old Moon Township" remained unchanged.

During the winter of 1773, the boundary dispute accelerated. In February, the Proprietary government of Pennsylvania, wishing to extend its jurisdiction and solidify its claim in the Ohio Valley, established Westmoreland County with its seat of justice at Hannastown. In the process, "Old Moon Township," still a nonentity, now became a legal and political part of Pitt Township, Westmoreland County.

Virginia was not to sit idly by and watch its claim being usurped. One must remember that she had actively sought control of the Ohio Valley since the 1744 Treaty of Lancaster. Her sons had formed the Ohio Company, a historically important group involved in the exploration and early settlement of southwestern Pennsylvania. It was the Virginia forces that built ill-fated Fort Prince George at the junction of the Allegheny and Monongahela rivers, and Washington who was sent to recover its loss. It was here that the French and Indian War began. Lord Dunmore assured the "Cavaliers" – Virginia settlers – that Virginia would not relinquish the territory without a fight.

THE PIONEERS

The settlement of "Old Moon Township" began in spring 1773. During the course of the year, six land grants were seated. Because both colonial land offices were closed, the grants could not be surveyed and so a regressive technique referred to as "tomahawk claiming" was utilized. This was a process of deadening trees that marked the outlying boundaries of the settler's claim.

Frontier settlement was by its nature a diverse and complex process. There was no order in its composition. Of the six land grants, only three were seated by permanent settlers.

John Meek, a Virginian, settled on a 423-acre land grant titled "Coal." This tract was located on the "heights" between the Thorn Run and Montour Run Valleys:

Virginia Certificate # 540

John Meek produced a Certificate from the Commons for adjusting & settling claims to land in The Counties Yohogania, Mononglia, & Ohio for four hundred acres land in this County on Montour's Run to include his settlement made in the year 1773.⁷

Robert Loudon, a Virginian, seated on a 401-acre land grant titled "Briarfield." This tract was located on the "heights" adjacent to the John Meek grant.⁸

John Vail, a Pennsylvanian, seated on a 219-acre land grant titled "Radner." This tract was located on a ridge between the

Narrows Run and Thorn Run Valleys. Here is the text of his Pennsylvania Warrant:

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

Whereas *John Vail* of the county of

_____ [sic] hath

requested to take up *Two Hundred* acres of land including his

Improvement joining a late survey made on a ridge between Narrows Run and Thorn Run in the County of *Washington*. PROVIDED the same land is not within the last purchase made of the Indians, for which he agrees to pay immediately into the office of the Receiver General for the use of the state, at the Rate of Ten Pounds per Hundred Acres, in Gold, Silver, Paper Money of this state, or Certificates agreeable to an act of assembly, passed the first day of April, 1784. Interest to commence from the *first day of March 1773* _____ [sic] THESE are therefore to authorize and require you to survey or to be surveyed unto the said *John Vail* at the place aforesaid according to the Method of Townships appointed, The said quantity of acres, if not already surveyed or appropriated, and to make Return thereof into the Secretary's Office in order for conformation, for which this shall be your Warrant.

IN WITNESS, whereof his *Excellency John Dickenson Esq.* President of the Supreme Executive Council, hath hereunto let his hand, and caused the less Seal of the said Commonwealth to be *affixed*, the Thirteenth Day of *August* in the year 1785.⁹

These grants further illustrate, on a local basis, the political boundary conflict that existed between Pennsylvania and Virginia. Both Meek and Loudon, being Virginians, settled on legal authority of a Virginia Certificate, while Vail, a Pennsylvanian, settled in the same area but on authority of a Pennsylvania warrant.

The remaining three grants were warranted by land speculators and seated by squatters. The first of the grants, a 303-acre tract titled "Bergen," was warranted by land speculator John Wentzell and seated by Michael Thorn, a squatter from Virginia. The presence of a squatter is often difficult to identify and substantiate. Thorn's presence was recognized by three factors. First, through the examination of the adjacent land warrant of John Morgan¹⁰ in which Thorn's improvement is recorded. Second, through the records of the Yohogania County Court,¹¹ wherein Michael Thorn and his immediate neighbor, Joshua Meek, are identified on the same entry as having taken the oath of Captain in the Militia, May 27, 1777. Finally, the stream that flows through the center of the tract on which he seated has been known historically as Thorn Run.

The second tract, a 190-acre grant titled "Elk," was warranted by Philip Records¹² and seated by an anonymous squatter. The squatter left for unknown reasons in 1776, at which time the grant was leased to Aaron Cherry for a 25-year period. Twelve years later, after Cherry had improved the tract, Records had the Washington County Court¹³ eject his tenant as he now wanted to reside on the improved grant. This tract was located on the "heights" above McClaren's Run.

The third tract, a 191-acre grant titled "Heidelberg," was warranted by land speculator John Ward¹⁴ and seated by an anonymous squatter. This tract was located on the "heights" above Narrows Run.

Inherent in the diversity of the settlement process was its transient social structure. The settler who secured his grant

by building his home and establishing his farm was in the minority. More often than not, settlement began with a squatter who created a small clearing and built a crude shelter for his family. This type of individual was for unknown reasons opposed to social order. As the population increased, he moved on, leaving the land to the second-class settler (squatter). This man was more socially inclined and made improvements to the cabin and expanded his clearing for both cultivation and pasture. However, as both law and government began to evolve, he found them too restrictive and moved on, leaving the land to the third class or permanent settler.

While settlement was beginning on the "heights," the earliest recorded grants along the Ohio remained uninhabited. On August 7, 1773, John Parrish, a Quaker, in company with John Lacy was returning from the Shawnee Indian villages in the Ohio Country. His journal states, "got to John Gibsons, swam their horses over ye Ohio opposite Logstown. 8th, rested all day. 9th, passed along the English shore to Captain McKee's, it raining hard and they much wet, treated kindly and stayed all night".¹⁵ His return journey along the south or English shore took Parrish directly through the three earliest grants of "Corsica," "Oughsaragoh," and "Britania" on Montours Bottom (Coraopolis). The weather had been bad, yet he mentions no shelter or settlement until he reaches McKee's place on Chartiers Creek.

In January 1774, the boundary dispute reached a climax. Lord Dunmore bestowed the rank of Commandant on John Connolly, a Virginia sympathizer, authorizing him to raise a militia and take command of Fort Pitt. The abandoned fort was renamed Fort Dunmore. Alarmed that Virginia was usurping its jurisdiction, Pennsylvania issued an arrest warrant for Connolly. The arrest of Virginia's officials brought about counter-arrests of Pennsylvania's officials. These actions motivated Governor Penn to send a delegation to Williamsburg to establish common ground by which the boundary dispute might be justly settled. The delegation failed.

To intensify an already volatile political situation, hostilities with the Indians erupted on the frontier. This conflict, known as Dunmore's War, had created panic among the settlers between the Wheeling and Washington settlements. The Indian uprising forced many of those settlers to move to more secure areas east of the Monongahela.

MOON TOWNSHIP Initial Settlement, 1773 – 1781

1773

- 1 – John Meek, Settler, Virginia Certificate, 423 Acres
- 2 – Robert Loudon, Settler, Virginia Certificate, 401 Acres
- 3 – John Vaile, Settler, Pennsylvania Warrant, 219 Acres
- 4 – Michael Thorn, Squatter
- 5 – Anonymous Squatter a. Aaron Cherry, 1776
- 6 – Anonymous Squatter

1774

- 7 – Joshua Meek, Settler, Virginia Certificate, 416 Acres
- 8 – Benjamin McCormick, Settler, Virginia Certificate, 398 Acres

1775

- 9 – Robert Vance, Settler, Squatters Rights, 335 Acres
- 10 – John Stephenson, Settler, Pennsylvania Warrant, 396 Acres

1776

- 11 – Anonymous Squatter
- 12 – Basel Innman, Squatter
- 13 – Benjamin Harrison, Squatter

1777

- F – Vances Fort

1778

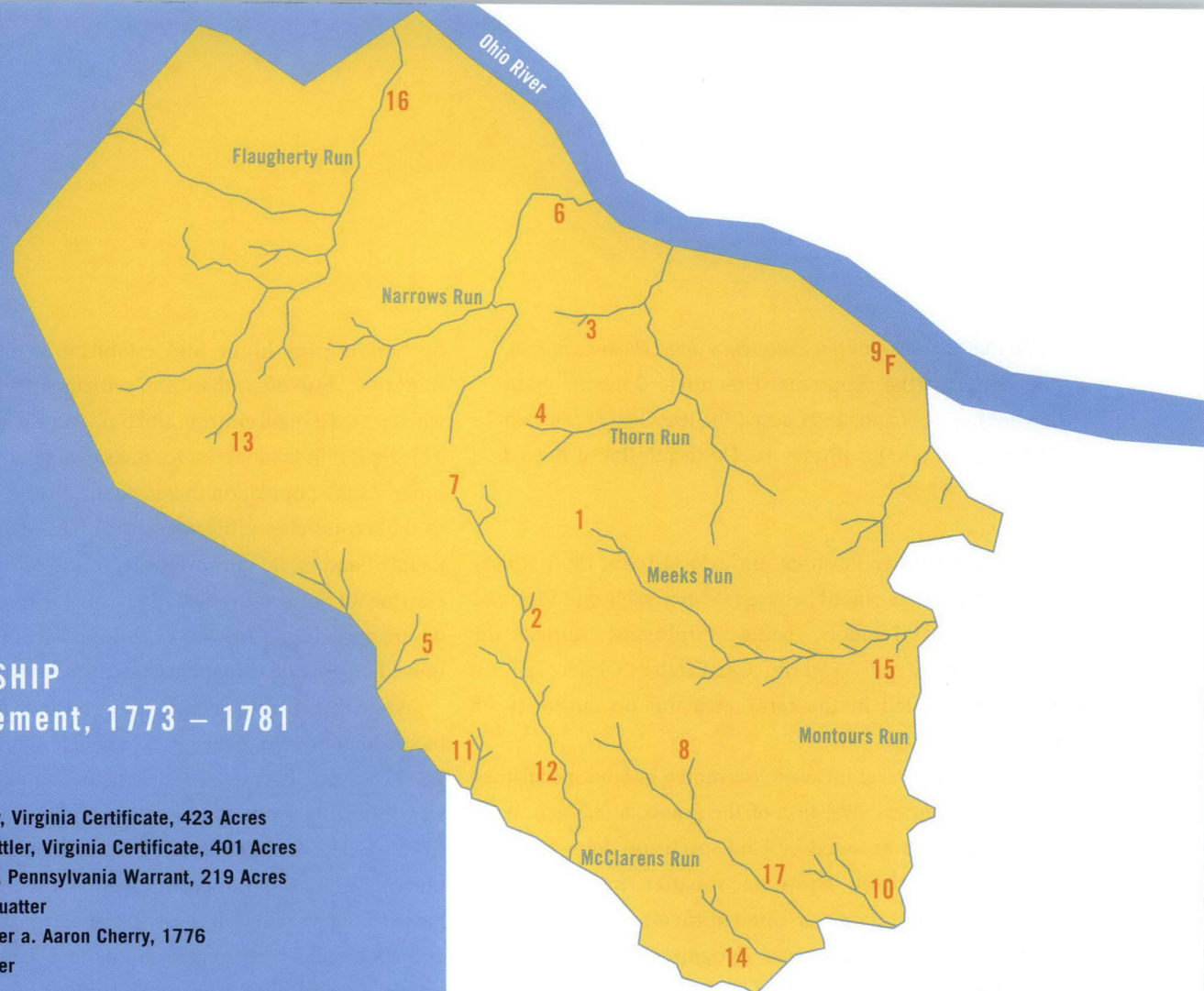
- 14 – Joseph Scott, Settler, Pennsylvania Warrant, 400 Acres
- 15 – David Smith, Settler, Virginia Court Records

1779

- 16 – Flaugherty, Squatter

1780

- 17 – William Warden, Settler, Pennsylvania Warrant, 390 Acres



Despite the instability on the frontier, two additional settlements were made in “Old Moon Township” during 1774.

Joshua Meek, a Virginian, seated on a 416-acre land grant titled “Garden.” This tract was located on the “heights” between the Narrows Run and Thorn Run Valleys, adjacent to the John Meek grant.¹⁶

Benjamin McCormick, from Maryland, seated on a 398-acre land grant titled “Bucks Forrest.” This tract was located on the “heights” above the Montour Valley adjacent to the Robert Loudon grant.¹⁷

As Dunmore’s War ended in October with the Treaty of Camp Charlotte, a renewed struggle ensued between the colonies for control of the Ohio Valley. Lord Dunmore adjourned the Augusta County court at Staunton and moved it to Pittsburgh. In the process, the District of West Augusta was created, thereby giving Virginia greater legal and political influence on the frontier. “Old Moon Township,” still geographically undefined, now became a legal and political entity of Virginia.¹⁸

In spite of the raging boundary controversy and the startling

news from Lexington and Concord, settlement on the frontier continued. Yet, the earliest warranted grants in the township, specifically those along the Ohio, had remained unsettled. The “Oughsaragoh” grant had been awarded to Henry (Andrew) Montour by the Proprietary government and remained in his possession until his death. At that time it was assigned to his sons and they further assigned the tract to George Croghan, an associate of their father who sold it to three land speculators in late 1773. It wasn’t until the summer of 1775, however, that Robert Vance, a Virginian previously residing in Westmoreland County, became the first to settle on the “Oughsaragoh” tract. The continuance of title appears to be broken as there is no record of transfer from the speculators to Vance. Yet, his settlement was documented by a deposition that he made on December 6, 1807, which stated, “He (Vance) hath for the past fifty years been well acquainted with the tract of land in question (a tract opposite Logstown on the Ohio), having lived upwards of thirty two years of the latter part of that time in the same neighborhood.”¹⁹

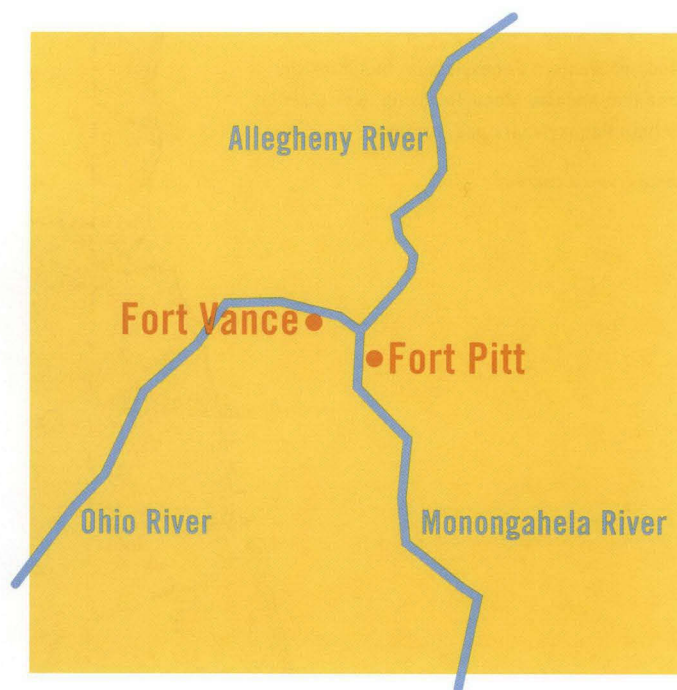
As there is no evidence that a transfer of title took place, it is assumed that Vance’s settlement on “Oughsaragoh” was one made on the basis of pre-emptive or “squatters rights.”

In the past, there has been some confusion and misinformation regarding Vance’s settlement and the construction of a stockade fort on Montour’s Bottom. Popular belief regarded both to have occurred as early as 1759. This supposition appears to be invalid in view of the following evidence.

In the months following the French retreat from Fort Duquesne, the English forces anticipated a counter-attack. The Bouquet Papers²⁰ contain a number of intelligence reports that specifically describe the activity and movement on the upper Ohio during the last days of 1758 and throughout 1759. None of the reports revealed the presence of a settlement or fortification during this dangerous period.

In September 1761, James Kenny, a Quaker, along with John Bartrom, a botanist, traveled northwest on the Ohio River from Pittsburgh to Beaver inspecting the land and the surrounding vegetation. Despite careful observation for detail, Kenny’s journal²¹ makes no mention of any settlement or fort along the upper Ohio.

The Bouquet Orderly Book²² detailing the movement of the



Map of the geographical relation between Fort Vance and Fort Pitt.

Bouquet expedition into the Ohio Country in 1764 revealed that the troops made their third encampment on the north shore of the Ohio near the lower end of Neville (Long or Montour’s) Island directly opposite the presumed location of Vance’s Fort. Once again there is no mention of any structure existing on the site.

The Land Application²³ of the “Oughsaragoh” tract indicates that the initial ownership of the tract was established through a Proprietary grant to Henry Montour in 1769. Neither the warrant nor survey indicates a previous improvement or settlement.

Neither Washington’s Journal of 1770, nor Parrish’s Journal of 1773 – despite their carefully recorded observations – indicate the presence of a settlement or a fort on the site.

Robert Vance was residing in 1768 on Jacobs Creek, Huntington Township, Westmoreland County. In 1772, the year in which Montour died, Vance was residing with his father, David, in Hempfield Township, Westmoreland County. His Westmoreland County deed of 1768 and tax assessment of 1772,²⁴ in which both resident and nonresident landowners are identified, provide proof of Vance’s residence.

Finally, Vance’s deposition establishes his presence on the “Oughsaragoh” tract in 1775 and not before.

In an intelligence report to General Hand, the commander at Fort Pitt, the following unsigned memorandum identified the posts along the upper Ohio and gave a brief description of each.

Much of Western Pennsylvania, including the area that became Moon Township, was claimed by both Pennsylvania and Virginia.

HSWP Library & Archives collection



Pittsburgh June 3, 1777

"Memorandum for General Hand of the different posts from Wheeling to the Great Kanhaway".

At Montours Bottom: "a small guard of men consisting of nine at a stockade built by the adjacent inhabitants".²⁵

Thus, it appears that Vance's Fort was built in late 1776 or early '77 on Montour's Bottom as a site of refuge during the early days of the American Revolution.

The second settlement made in 1775 was that of John Stephenson, a Virginian, who seated on a 396-acre tract titled "Stephenson's Grove." This tract was located on the "heights" above the Montour Valley. The Virginia Certificate is missing; however, the adjacent land applications and warrants identify him and his date of settlement.²⁶

Despite the American Revolution being waged in the east, the boundary controversy between Pennsylvania and Virginia continued. In 1776, Virginia created within the West Augusta District the counties of Yohogania, Monongahelia, and Ohio, thereby exerting even greater political and legal jurisdiction in the Monongahela and Ohio Valleys. "Old Moon Township" remained a geographical non-entity but was now a political and legal part of Yohogania County, Virginia.

In the spring of that year, three additional land grants were warranted by land speculators and seated by squatters.

The first tract, a 103-acre land grant titled "Garden," (the second grant in the township with that title), was warranted by Richard Aten²⁷ and seated by an anonymous squatter. This grant was located on the "heights" above McClaren's Run.

The second tract was a 303-acre land grant titled "Derry," warranted by land speculator Margaret Clendennen and seated by a squatter identified as Basil Innman through an adjacent land warrant.²⁸ This tract was located on the "heights" above McClaren's Run adjacent to the Aten grant.

The third tract, a 254-acre land grant titled "Lexington," was warranted by land speculator Soloman Froman²⁹ and seated by a squatter identified as Benjamin Harrison via the Froman application. This tract was located on the "heights" at the headwaters of Flaugherty Run, adjacent to the Joshua Meek grant.

By 1777, Indian hostilities throughout the western frontier had increased dramatically. There is fragmentary evidence that of the 17 original settlements in the township, a number of families began to abandon their log cabin homes and return to safer, more densely settled areas. Those who remained began the process of defending themselves. Early in 1777, the "adjacent inhabitants" built a stockade known as Fort Vance. John and Joshua Meek along with Michael Thorn joined the local militia, and Robert Vance, the 13th Virginia Regiment. There were no additional settlements that year.

Despite the increase in hostilities, two new settlements were made the following year.

Joseph Scott, a Pennsylvanian, seated on a 400-acre land grant titled "Lambkin." This tract was located on the "heights" above the Montour Valley.³⁰

David Smith, a squatter, seated himself on a 188-acre land grant titled "Eagles Resort." This tract was located in the Montour Run Valley and warranted by land speculator John Miranda.³¹

In 1779, only one settlement was made.

Samuel Scott, a land speculator, warranted a 400-acre land grant titled "Fortune," which was seated by a squatter known only as Flaugherty. The run passing through the length of this grant has been historically known as Flaugherty Run.³²

The last settlement made during the initial phase was that by William Warden, a Pennsylvanian, who in 1780, seated on a 390-acre land grant titled "Wardens Heights" on the hill above the Montour Run Valley, adjacent to the Joseph Scott grant.³³

In spite of the fact that both Pennsylvania and Virginia found themselves deeply involved in the struggle for independence, attempts to settle the boundary controversy continued. The Baltimore Agreement extended the Mason-Dixon Line and was finally ratified by the Pennsylvania Legislature in 1779, and by the Virginia Burgess in 1780. Pennsylvania moved quickly to establish its jurisdiction by creating Washington County in March of 1781. "Old Moon Township," remained a geographical nonentity but was thereafter politically and legally a portion of Robinson Township, Washington County.



During the summer of 1781, after three years of increasing Indian attacks, the frontier had reached a high state of alarm. Conditions were deteriorating very rapidly as the main thrust of the Revolution had taken many of the young men from the area, and resources, such as guns and ammunition with which the settler could defend himself, were nonexistent. Fear had become so prevalent that by the winter of that year all of the remaining settlers had abandoned their homesteads and moved to safer, more densely settled areas in neighboring counties, thus bringing to a close the initial settlement period.

April 5, 1782

To the Honorable General Irvine, Commandant on the Western Waters:

"Your humble petitioners showing forth our situation since the year 1777, that we have lived in a state of anarchy. We were in great hopes that your honor would have supported us that we could have lived at our own homes; but, lately learning that our station is evacuated, we expect nothing else but that the Indians will be immediately amongst us...".

Wm. Littell, Joshua Meek, John Robb, James Littell, James Baggs, John Hull, Thomas Moon, John McDonald, John Reed, Wm. Anderson

"N.B. We have appointed Joshua Meek and John McDonald to lay our petition before your Honor".³⁴

In conclusion, the vanguard on the frontier had suffered the hardships and dangers of life in the wilderness. They had built humble log cabin homes and gradually cleared the land in order to establish farms that would sustain their families. Now, faced with the possible loss of their lives, they relinquished their homes and farms and the years of struggle and sacrifice spent to create them. ☼

- ¹ Public Archives of Pennsylvania, Samuel Hazard, ed., first series, Vol. II (1852-1856) p. 62.
- ² James Veech, *Monongahela of Old or Historical Sketches of Southwestern Pennsylvania to the year 1800*, third edition (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company, 1975) p. 85.
- ³ Henry Montour, New Purchase Application, April 3, 1769, Application #145, Division of Archives and Manuscripts, Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, Harrisburg.
- ⁴ Knud Hermansen, *Pennsylvania Warrants, Original Surveys and Patents*, Thesis for Master of Arts, Pennsylvania State University, November 1982, p. 11.
- ⁵ *Ibid.* p. 29.
- ⁶ Jared Sparks, ed., *Writings of George Washington* (Boston, 1813) p. 516.
- ⁷ John Meek, Virginia Certificate #540, Yohogania County Land Records, West Virginia University Library, Morgantown, W.V.
- ⁸ Robert Loudon, Virginia Certificate #476, Yohogania County Land Records.
- ⁹ John Vail, Warrant, Washington County, April 24, 1785, Warrant Register "V," Division of Archives and Manuscripts, Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, Harrisburg.
- ¹⁰ John Morgan, Warrant, Washington County, April 30, 1785, Warrant Register "M," Division of Archives and Manuscripts.
- ¹¹ Boyd Crumrine, *Virginia Court Records in Southwestern Pennsylvania 1775-1780* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company, 1974) p. 86.
- ¹² Philip Records, Warrant, Washington County, August 30, 1785, Warrant Register "R," Division of Archives and Manuscripts.
- ¹³ Aaron Cherry, Ejectment Court Record #106, January 1786, Washington County Prothonotary's Office, Washington, Pa.
- ¹⁴ John Ward, Warrant, Washington County, April 24, 1785, Warrant Register "W," Division of Archives and Manuscripts.
- ¹⁵ John Parrish, *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, Vol. XVI, Philadelphia, p. 443.
- ¹⁶ Joshua Meek, Virginia Certificate # 492, Yohogania County Land Records.
- ¹⁷ Benjamin McCormick, Virginia Certificate #290, Yohogania County Land Records.
- ¹⁸ Crumrine, "*Virginia Court Records*," p. 518.
- ¹⁹ Joseph Bausman, *History of Beaver County* (New York, 1904), Deposition of Robert Vance, p. 155.
- ²⁰ Donald H. Kent, ed., *Papers of Henry Bouquet*, Vol. III (Harrisburg: Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, 1976) pp. 254, 434, 498.
- ²¹ James Kenny, *Journal 1761-1763*, Vol. XXXVIII, p. 113, Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania Archives.
- ²² E.G. Williams, ed., *Henry Bouquet Orderly Book*, Vol. XVII, p. 31, Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania Archives.
- ²³ Henry Montour, New Purchase Application, April 3, 1769, Application #145, Division of Archives and Manuscripts; George Croghan, Deed Assignment of Montour's Deed, Yohogania County Deed Record, Vol. I, c 3, p. 79, Washington County Deed Record Office, Washington, Pa.
- ²⁴ Robert Vance, Westmoreland County Land Deed 1768, Vol. B, p. 252, Westmoreland County, Deed Record Office, Westmoreland County Tax Assessment 1772, Westmoreland County Tax Assessor's Office, Westmoreland County, Greensburg, Pa.
- ²⁵ Ruben Thwaites and Louise Kellogg, *Frontier Defense on the Upper Ohio* (Madison, Wisc., 1912) p. 3.
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- ²⁷ Richard Aten, Warrant, Allegheny County, January 20, 1815, Warrant Register "A," Division of Archives and Manuscripts.
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- ³² Samuel Scott, Application, Washington County, August 24, 1784, Division of Archives and Manuscripts.
- ³³ William Warden, Application, Washington County, November 1, 1784, Division of Archives and Manuscripts.
- ³⁴ Washington-Irvine Correspondence, Appendix J, Vol. XVII, p. 298, Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania Archives.