Pennsylvania's Colonial Militia and the Founding of a Frontier Identity

by

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ABSTRACT

An anomaly among Britain's North American colonies, Pennsylvania initially lacked an organized militia in its engagement with Native Americans or with other imperial powers, focusing its energies instead on diplomacy and trade with such groups in the early decades of its colonial existence. During the period known as The Long Peace, extending from the 1680s through the 1740s, Pennsylvania established friendly relations with local Indian tribes that enabled the colony to expand territorially and to prosper economically. The Quakers who founded the colony and dominated its politics deemed a militia not only immoral but also impractical to Pennsylvania's fortunes. Virtually defenseless, frontier communities in Pennsylvania suffered an onslaught when the colony's former long-time Indian allies and trade partners joined the French in their war against Britain, in what became the French and Indian War (1754-63). Desperate to protect the frontier, the Pennsylvania assembly passed a militia act in 1755. Though the act proved futile as a tool for military defense (it forbade militia service lasting longer than three days), the militia allowed frontier communities to organize for the first time, frontiersmen took an increasingly active role in maintaining and advancing their own social and political interests. The desire to defend themselves during the French and Indian War and subsequent Pontiac's Rebellion (1763-65) fashioned Pennsylvania's diverse frontier population into a coherent frontier culture. Frontiersmen deployed the organizational power of the colonial militia to defend their own interests against, first, the Pennsylvania assembly, and shortly after against the British on the eve of the American Revolution.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND HISTORIOGRAPHY

An anomaly among Britain's North American colonies, Pennsylvania, in its early decades of colonial existence, lacked an organized militia in its engagement with Native Americans or with other imperial powers, focusing its energies instead on diplomacy and trade with such groups. During the period known as "The Long Peace," extending from the 1680s through the 1740s, Pennsylvania leaders established friendly relations with local Indian tribes that enabled the colony to expand territorially and to prosper economically. The Quakers, who founded the colony and initially dominated its politics, deemed a militia not only immoral but also impractical to Pennsylvania's fortunes.

In most British American colonies, local, organized militias enabled a community to defend themselves from outside threats. Just as importantly, however, militias served the social function of tying communities together and breaking down the many barriers between various religious and ethnic groups. This, in turn, facilitated the pursuit of common political goals. Yet in Pennsylvania, it was not until 1747 that the colony had anything even resembling an organized militia. Previous military engagements, such as King George's War (1739-1748), involved temporary expeditionary forces composed of volunteers. In 1747, at the behest of private citizens, the colonial assembly authorized the creation of the Military Association of Pennsylvania, known as the Associators. Centered primarily in the areas immediately surrounding Philadelphia, the Associators initially existed for the sole purpose of defending Philadelphia and the Delaware River against possible attacks from the French or Spanish. Eventually military associations expanded beyond this immediate area, with varying degrees of quality and effectiveness.

Importantly, the Associators also challenged the entrenched power of the Quaker elite. What separated the Associators from the militias of other colonies was that they were not legislated, controlled, or funded by the colonial assembly but by private organizations. The Associators filled the vacuum created by the absence of a formal colonial militia and allowed for diverse communities in Philadelphia and the lower counties to organize and form around shared identities pertaining to self-defense and for a greater voice in colonial affairs and administration.

Further west on the Pennsylvania frontier, communities in the early 1750s still lacked any defensive, social, or political institutions such as the Associators. Virtually defenseless, the western frontier suffered an onslaught when the colony's former long-time Indian allies and trade partners joined the French in their war against Britain, in what became the French and Indian War (1754-63). Desperate to protect the frontier, the Pennsylvania assembly passed a militia act in 1755. For the first time, frontiersmen were organized, funded, and armed by their government. What began as a desperately needed defensive organization for a beleaguered and fearful population in 1755 transformed into a proactive tool of hate, violence, and intimidation that by 1765 served as a vehicle in which frontier communities pursued social and political goals against Indians, the Pennsylvania government, and later against the British in the early stages of the American Revolution.

For primary sources I used the *Colonial Records of Pennsylvania*, the *Pennsylvania Archives*, the *Pennsylvania Gazette*, and letters and monographs authored by Benjamin Franklin. I also took advantage of Arizona State University's trial access to the UK National Archives *Colonial America* digital database. Due to widespread

illiteracy on the colonial frontier, most of the primary sources come from elites in Philadelphia and London, with views markedly different from those common on the frontier. Nevertheless, it is possible to extrapolate the experiences and emotions of frontier people through sources that include newspapers, official government records, autobiographies, letters, and diaries from government officials, correspondence from missionaries, military officers, landowners, merchants, and tradesmen. This thesis focuses on the white settler population of western population and how war and contact with Indians resulted in the creation of a militant frontier identity. The purpose of this work is not to sympathize or glorify the actions of the frontiersmen but rather explain why a population resorted to violence to achieve its aims.

One key aspect of this thesis is the role that the militia played in forming a frontier identity. The historiographical basis of this relies on the works of historians writing about the Revolutionary militia, a period a over a decade after the end of the French and Indian War. However, in that decade the role and function of the militia changed very little. I believe that the arguments made about the Revolutionary militia can be used to retroactively examine Pennsylvania's frontier militia during the 1750's and 1760's. The Revolutionary militia has been studied extensively by scholars who have provided accounts of its organization, tactics, and battlefield performance. In the last sixty years, research into the militia has expanded beyond the military sphere and into the social and cultural spheres. Scholars have shown that by examining the social and cultural circumstances surrounding the militia, it is possible to develop insights not only into the militia as an institution but the societies in which they inhabited.

Arguably, the most influential scholar on the Revolutionary militia is John Shy. In "A New Look at Colonial Militia," Shy examines the colonial militia system in the years leading up to the American Revolution and the Revolution itself. He criticizes earlier scholars who viewed the militia as a simplistic institution that was generally uniform across all of the colonies. Shy writes that his "aim is simply to raise a question about this conventional view; and to suggest that the early American militia was a more complicated - and more interesting - institution, that it varied from province to province, that it changed through time as the military demands placed upon it changed, and that these variations are of some historical importance."[1] He argues that colonial militias developed differently based upon variant social and cultural conditions. New England's many towns, for example, increased their capability of mobilizing manpower and mutual support. Southern colonies, on the other hand, with their more scattered plantations, had greater difficulty mobilizing manpower against various threats. Militias reflect the societies they inhabit. Pennsylvania's militia made up for its lack of manpower by overcompensating with offensive actions and indiscriminate violence towards its enemies.

Saul Cornell provides an excellent look into the militia as a social institution in *A Well Regulated Militia: The Founding Fathers and the Origins of the Second Amendment to the United States Constitution*. Cornell emphasizes the centrality of the militia as an institution to colonial American life. The militia functioned as a police force that preserved public order, a defense force against external threats, a social tool that brought

[1] John W. Shy, "A New Look at Colonial Militia" *The William and Mary Quarterly* 20, no. 2 (1963). Pg. 176.

communities together, and a politicizing body that spread ideology. The militia was vital to the maintenance of colonial society; colonials considered it a civic duty to own a weapon and serve in the militia. Legislation enforced this civic duty by requiring individuals to own arms and join local militia units. Cornell notes that colonial Americans viewed the militia as integral to liberty and representative of the "right of the people to govern themselves and legislate 'their internal police.'"[2] The militia as an institution did not just serve as a military force, but as an institution that formed the core colonial identity.

In "The Colonial Militia as a Social Institution: Salem, Massachusetts, 1764-1775," Ronald L. Boucher examines the militia of Salem, Massachusetts in the decade leading up to the American Revolution. Boucher argues that "the legal structure and regulation of the militia have been thoroughly studied, but its importance as a social institution has been neglected."[3] Salem's militia came into being in the year 1640 to defend against Indian, French, and Spanish attacks. Over time, however, as Salem prospered commercially, its militia gradually adopted a more social role. "When the colonies became more secure and permanent, and the militia's defense activities decreased," he writes, "its importance within colonial communities became increasingly social."[4] By the 1760s, Salem's militia had fully transformed from an organized military

[2] Ibid., 27. Need a full citation for Cornell.

[3] Ronald L Boucher, "The Colonial Militia as a Social Institution: Salem, Massachusetts 1764-1775." *Military Affairs* 37, no. 4 (1973). Pg. 125.

[4] Ibid., 125.

unit to an entirely social institution, with officers primarily serving in order to acquire prestigious titles and improve their standing in the community.

In *Arms, Country, and Class: The Philadelphia Militia and "Lower Sort" During the American Revolution, 1775-1783*, Steve Rosswurm examines the Philadelphia militia during the Revolutionary War. Rosswurm explains that "the focus of this study is one social group central to the Pennsylvanian revolution to which historians have paid little direct attention: 'the lower sort.'"[5] Rosswurm argues that Philadelphians experienced two separate, distinct revolutions during the upheaval of the war. The first revolution was the struggle for independence against Great Britain, while the second was a class revolution undertaken by the lower and middling sorts against the upper classes. Pre-revolutionary Philadelphia was dominated socially, economically, and politically by a wealthy merchant class, known as the "better sort," who expected a show of deference from the middling sort, consisting of artisans and tradesmen, and the lower sort, comprising laborers and mechanics. Deference began to wane in the 1750s and 1760s, when a flood of British goods into Philadelphia enriched the mercantile classes but impoverished many of the city's artisans and laborers, increasing class tensions. Much of the middling and lower orders in Philadelphia subsequently turned against the British and pressured the "better sort" to support non-importation and later independence.

Pennsylvania did not have an institutionalized militia system at the start of the war with Britain in 1775. Previous militia acts, such as the one passed in 1755, were

[5] Steven Rosswurm, *Arms, Country, and Class: The Philadelphia Militia and "lower Sort" during the American Revolution, 1775-1783*, Class and Culture Series? (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1987), 6.

emergency measures that had to be renewed after a set period. The Associators, for example, founded in 1747, were private military organizations with only limited involvement from the colonial government, and its funding and members came mostly from the middle class. The creation of a permanent Pennsylvania militia system during the Revolutionary War radicalized and empowered Philadelphia's lower classes. What set this Pennsylvania militia apart from militia systems in other states during the Revolution was that the former was not fully embedded in upper-class society, and not as controlled by elites. This led to a strong Patriot militia in Philadelphia that stressed democratic ideology and fostered radical ideas of liberty and equality.

Pennsylvania's frontier militia took advantage of the chaos of the Revolutionary War to deal with their own perceived enemies at home. Scott Paul Gordon examines this in detail in "Patriots and Neighbors: Pennsylvanian Moravians in the American Revolution," in which he builds upon the works of Shy and Rosswurm to explain the persecution of the Pennsylvanian Moravians at the hands of the frontier militia during the Revolution. At the outbreak of the war, the Moravian community refused to support either the Patriots or the Loyalists. When pressed by their Patriot-dominated communities to take public oaths of allegiance to independence or to join the militia in order to prove their support of the cause, they refused. Gordon states that "these patriots seemed unable to tolerate Moravians' refusal either to bear arms or to swear loyalty to Pennsylvania's new state government."[6] Identifying them as traitors, the militia terrorized the Moravians, enforcing a frontier identity that aligned overwhelming with independence. Over the

[6] Scott Paul Gordon, "Patriots and Neighbors: Pennsylvania Moravians in the American Revolution" *Journal of Moravian History* 12, no. 2 (2012). Pg. 113.

course of the war, members of the Moravian community had their property confiscated, suffered kidnappings in the middle of the night, and were even killed by militiamen, all intended to force a revolutionary ideology uniformly across the Pennsylvania frontier.

Historically, even in peacetime, militias have functioned as a tool for societies to achieve ideological and cultural goals, and when war erupted, that agenda accelerated and became much more militant and even extreme. The treatment of the Moravians during the Revolutionary War was but one example, and by no means the first in Pennsylvania. This pattern was also present during the French and Indian War and its aftermath: the subject of this thesis. Years of brutal warfare in the 1750s and 1760s led to the creation of a coherent frontier identity, long before the War for Independence. To understand the creation of this militant frontier identity, it is important to understand the period in Pennsylvania history preceding the French and Indian War: the Long Peace.

The Long Peace is explored in great depth by James H. Merrell in *Into the American Woods: Negotiators on the Pennsylvania*. Merrell examines the Long Peace from the perspective of the negotiators: a perspective that he feels had been neglected by most scholars. "For all the recent attention to relations between Indian and European in colonial times," he writes, "few scholars have ventured very far into the shadowy realm where negotiations operated."[7] According to Merrell, colonists and Indians alike viewed the wooded territories that separated them as places to be feared – where an alien enemy, difficult to even remotely comprehend, threatened to swallow them up. Such mutual suspicion required individuals "to step in in order to downplay differences and to

[7] James Hart Merrell, *Into the American Woods: Negotiators on the Pennsylvania Frontier*. New York: Norton, 2000. Pg. 30.

step up, or if need be, make up, areas of common ideology, common interests, and common experience."[8] This is where negotiators came in, men who breached the woods, that unknown place, to navigate the many peoples, customs, and languages of those who dwelled beyond.

Men like George Croghan and Conrad Weiser navigated this middle ground negotiating treaties on behalf of Europeans and Indians alike. However, the relationships they built ultimately collapsed because no amount of negotiating could reconcile the differences and establish common ground between the two groups by the 1750s. In the end, Merrell argues that "familiarity bred people with the skill to bring strangers together in order to share ideas and solve problems; but familiarity also bred contempt. Contempt so deep that by the end of the colonial era, go-betweens were practically out of work, the time for talk was all but over."[9] The Long Peace failed because in the end no number of negotiations, no matter how skilled, could satisfy the ever-increasing resentment from white Pennsylvanians. Once the French and Indian War began, the forthcoming bloodshed forever changed the face of the frontier, ending the Long Peace that had existed since the time of William Penn.

In *Peaceable Kingdom Lost: The Paxton Boys and the Destruction of William Penn's Holy Experiment*, Kevin Kenny echoes Merrill's argument that the Long Peace ultimately failed as a result of the friction between westward-settling Europeans and Indians. The Long Peace or Peaceable Kingdom, as Kenny calls it, was inspired by

[8] Ibid., 25.

[9] Ibid., 38.

William Penn's Quaker principles of compassion and tolerance in which Christians and Indians could live harmoniously together. According to Kenny, this idealism ran counter to Pennsylvania's colonialist foundations in which its primary objective was to acquire land that settlers could use to turn a profit. As a landed English lord, Penn believed that land could be bought or sold permanently in exchange for money and goods. This belief ran counter to the Indian practice in which land was held in a tribal trust. In this system the same land could be sold multiple times, transferring rights of use and occupancy rather than total control. Penn wanted to maintain peace with Indians but also desired possession of Indian-occupied land. Thus, Kenny argues, Penn's Peaceable Kingdom was always on life support, until the contradictions built into the system caught up with it, which it finally did in the 1750s and 1760s. With this outbreak of hostility between Indians and frontier settlers, the colonial desire for harmony with the Indians evaporated, replaced with a determination to seize land and eliminate the Indian threat. The collapse of the Peaceable Kingdom ushered in a new order that called for the destruction of Indian culture.

In *Our Savage Neighbors: How Indian War Transformed Early America*, Peter Silver examines the deterioration of relations between Europeans and Indians in the eighteenth century, explaining "how fear and horror, with suitable repackaging, can remake whole societies and their political landscapes."[10] Focusing on the middle colonies, and Pennsylvania in particular, Silver describes the region as one of the most racially, ethnically, and religiously mixed locations on earth, but one that by the middle

[10] Peter Rhoads Silver, *Our Savage Neighbors: How Indian War Transformed Early America* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2009), XVIII.

of the eighteenth century was fraught with increasing tension and mutual suspicion and hatred. According to Silver, "with few exceptions, living together made the different sorts of people frightened of one another's intentions. Forced proximity brought many groups to a fresh appreciation for their own distinctive ways. Ways they thought of as traditional and fought to recover amid the disturbing novelties that came with diversity."[11] In this situation most groups, rather than live in harmony and adjust accordingly, strove to make the peoples around them act more like them while resisting change themselves, often resulting in cultural and physical violence.

The first group, according to Silver, to unite in the face of these challenging circumstances were the disparate groups of Indians in the mid-Atlantic region, who realized that despite their many differences, they shared a common ideology and religion in comparison to the alien culture of the Europeans. It was not until the eruption of conflict and war that most European settlers perceived any substantial commonality across ethnic and religious groupings. War brought fear and death, which in turn created a contagion of terror that resulted in a militant and anti-Indian frontier identity. Any settler who expressed sentiments to the contrary, or who seemed not to care about the suffering that Indians wrought, were accused of going against the best interests of this new identity, in which the shared whiteness of the frontiersmen superseded former ethnic, class, and religious divisions. Silver explains that his new identity, and identities in general, came "in contact with other populations, members of some groups come to suddenly see new kinships with one another. Kinships that become easy to perceive only

[11] Ibid., XIV.

when they had a reason to imagine themselves as they must look through another group's unfriendly eyes."[12] The creation of this new identity led to a gradually evolving racism in Pennsylvania that highlighted the overall conflict between Indian and European interests by invoking the suffering of the frontier population. Colonial officials who acted against the interests of the suffering frontier population were deemed unworthy to govern. In Pennsylvania this manifested first in political action against the Quakers and then later against the British. In both cases, the Pennsylvania militia played a central role in enforcing this new ideology.

In *American Colonies: The Settlement of North America,* Alan Taylor argues that the guiding principle of the formation of new identities in British North America was race. Race became the prism through which identities and power shaped people's encounters. Taylor argues that the racialized sorting of people by skin color into white, black, and red was a product not a precondition of colonialism. At first, colonizing British elites viewed their purported superiority primarily in cultural terms – in terms of their particular brand of civility, politics, and Christianity. Moreover, it was not an uncommon belief that given time, Indians could in fact become civilized under English influence. However, Britain's colonial experience in America differed vastly from that of Spain and France. Over time they exhibited a far greater readiness to detect fundamental differences in color and share some political rights with "white people."

Taylor attributes the creation of a white colonial identity to Britain's use in America of colonial militias. Rather than use a professional army to guard against slave

[12] Ibid., XX.

revolts and fight Indians, British officials decided to utilize the white settler population. Service in the militia ensured that frequent conflicts with Africans and Indians created a sense of white superiority among European settlers. European settlers regarded other races as inferior. According to Taylor, '"to avoid alienating the militiamen, British elites gradually accepted a white racial solidarity based upon subordinating 'blacks' and 'reds.' Once race instead of class became the primary marker of privilege, colonial elites had to concede greater social respect and political rights to common white men."'[13] In his conclusion Taylor argues that the array of freedoms that European colonists enjoyed was a direct result of their encounters with a broad range of races, ethnicities, and people.

Echoing Taylor, Carol Anderson discusses the Second Amendment of the American Constitution in *The Second: Race and Guns in a Fatally Unequal America.* Anderson argues that "the Second Amendment's charge for a well-regulated militia and the right of the people to keep and bear arms offers a maddening set of double standards where race is concerned."[14] This silence, or double standard, was a feature whose purpose was meant to explicitly exclude Black people. After the American Revolution, the Second Amendment was justified on the grounds that it defended against foreign aggressors and government tyranny. Anderson argues that "Regardless of which legal interpretation of the Second Amendment is deployed - be it an individual right to bear arms, the right to a well-regulated militia, or even the attendant right to self-defense -

[13] Alan Taylor, *American Colonies: The Settling of North America* (New York: Penguin, 2002), XIII.

[14] Carol Anderson, *Second: Race and Guns in a Fatally Unequal America*. S.l.: Bloomsbury Publishing. 2021. Pg. 4.

each had been used against African Americans."[15] In the South, various state militias used arms to keep enslaved to keep enslaved Blacks in check and were particularly adept at crushing rebellions and capturing fugitive slaves. In this context the Second Amendment was designed and implemented to abrogate and deny the rights of Black People and protect a system based on their exclusion and debasement.

When taken together Kenny, Merrell, Taylor, Anderson, and Silver explain how contact with different groups brought European settlers in British colonial America together to combat the threat posed to them by African slaves and Indians. Benedict Anderson explores the process of identity-creation more broadly in his widely-influential book, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism.* "I propose the following definition of the nation," Anderson writes, "it is an imagined political community- and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign." "It is imagined," he argues, "because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of communion."[16] Nationalism, in this sense, is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness. Rather, nationalism is the invention of nations where nations do not exist. Colonial settlements throughout North America knew they were connected to people they would never know. Nevertheless, ties formed as a result of the blending of ethnicity, kinship, and clientship. These ties are limited because even the largest of them encompass factors that exclude certain groups. Nationality is defined as

[15] Ibid., 4.

[16] Benedict Anderson. *Imagined Communities Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso, 2016. Pg 6.

sovereign because the concept was born in an age in which the Enlightenment and revolutions destroyed the legitimacy of older feudal and theocratic systems. It is also imagined as a community. Regardless of the actual inequality and exploitations that may prevail, the nation is always conceived as a horizontal comradeship. It is this comradeship that has spurred millions of people over the last two centuries to kill and die for such limited imaginings. For the colonies lining the North American coast, the colonial militia tied communities together and forged a colonial identity.

Pennsylvania in the 1750s and 1760s presents a fascinating case study into how a frontier population that had never known war, possessed few slaves, and had relatively friendly Indian neighbors transformed into a fearful, paranoid, militant, and often-hateful identity capable of tremendous violence, threats of violence, and even savagery against groups that got in their way: Indians, Moravians, Quaker officials in Philadelphia, or British diplomats and tradesmen**.** The militia was the main institution responsible for forging a new frontier identity that helped to bring about the end of a sixty-year policy of diplomacy and peace in Pennsylvania.

CHAPTER 2

THE FOUNDING OF PENNSYLVANIA AND THE LONG PEACE

In 1681, one of the most prominent Quakers in England, William Penn, received a proprietorship in America from the Crown as payment for a debt owed to his father, admiral Sir William Penn, for his service in the First and Second Anglo-Dutch Wars (1652-54, 1672-74). Penn acquired 45,000 square miles of land west of the Delaware River encompassing preexisting Swedish, Dutch, and Finnish settlements, with authority, according to the grant, to exercise "diverse great powers, preheminences, jurisdicitons, and authorities, necessary for the well-being and government thereof."[17] The new colony, dubbed Pennsylvania, or "Penn's woods," allowed Penn the freedom to conduct a new holy experiment. Penn, as founder, combined his aristocratic heritage and worldview with radical religion. Surrounded as a youth by wealth and power, Penn's family owned large estates both in England and in Ireland, he wore clothing embroidered in gold in silver, and he was exceptionally well-connected in English social circles. To the surprise of those around him, especially his family, Penn converted to the Quaker faith in 1666 at the age of 22.

The Society of Friends, popularly known as the Quakers, was founded in England in the 1650s by George Fox. A visionary who had eagerly pursued spiritual life since early childhood, Fox eventually establishing a new religious sect, the Friends of God–later rebranded the Society of Friends–after a spiritual epiphany brought him to a state of

[17] William Penn, *The Charter of Privileges, Granted by William Penn, Esq; to the Inhabitants of Pensilvania and Territories*. Philadelphia: Printed and sold by B. Franklin., 1741.

"perfection." The term Quakers was a derogatory epithet given to Fox's followers for their practice of shaking or trembling with emotion during religious services. In the mid seventeenth century the Quakers spread throughout the British Isles, with many of their views openly threatening contemporary norms in many aspects of life. The Quakers were the products of an age of deep religious turmoil and radicalism in England, and like other non-conformist faiths, challenged the authority of the established Church of England. By the time of the Restoration of the Crown in 1660, the Quakers were firmly entrenched in England with nearly 25,000 members. Quakers relied upon mystical experience to commune with God and read the Bible allegorically rather than literally. They believed the Holy Spirit and Jesus Christ lived within every person. By seventeenth-century standards, the Quakers' religious doctrine led to the development of radical social policies, including egalitarianism, opposition to established social hierarchies, the wearing of plain clothes, a refusal to take oaths of allegiance, rejection of Anglican tithes, and the use of unadorned language even in the presence of aristocrats or royalty. Pacifism was their most radical and famous doctrine. Quakers refused to bear arms or serve in any armed forces, a position that would have a dramatic effect on Pennsylvania's development.[18]

By the time William Penn joined the Quakers in the late 1660s, Quakers were somewhat tolerated within broader English society, and in fact most Quakers were tradesmen, shopkeepers, and small farmers. Among the most wealthy and powerful men in England, however, the Quakers remained a despised group, which made the

[18] John Smolenski, *Friends and Strangers: The Making of a Creole Culture in Colonial Pennsylvania*. Philadelphia, Penn.: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 2010. Chapter I.

conversion of Penn, an aristocratic landowner, all the more shocking. Nevertheless, Penn never eschewed the elite and wealthy lifestyle to which he was long accustomed; rather, Penn used his position to advance Quaker interests as well as his own. In 1681, he famously stated, "Though I desire to extend religious freedom, yet I want some recompense for my trouble."[19] His efforts paid off when he received the proprietorship for the strip of land along the lower Delaware River that became Pennsylvania.

Proprietary governments were peculiar entities in the liberalizing world of the seventeenth century. Proprietorships were hereditary titles given to individuals and their families that granted them governorships and claims to the land in their jurisdiction. Those who owned land in Pennsylvania owed the Penn family an annual tax called the quitrent. Later critics, such as Benjamin Franklin, complained that this form of government was feudalistic, anachronistic, and demanded reform.[20] In 1767, a British official bemoaned the poorly run state of the Proprietorship in Pennsylvania: "It may seem improbable that men possessed of so much wealth as the owners of this immense property, should sustain no Rank in life and receive so small an annually income from it."[21] Despite their critics, the Penn family ruled as feudal lords of their own personal colony until the American Revolution in 1775. With his power as proprietor, William Penn transformed Pennsylvania into a profitable, albeit inefficient, venture for his family

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[19] Alan Taylor/Foner Eric (EDT), *American Colonies: The Settling of North America*. Penguin Group USA, 2002. Pg. 266.

[20] Patrick Spero, *Frontier Rebels: The Fight for Independence in the American West, 1765-1776*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 2018. Pg. 77.

[21] "An Estimate of the Estate of the Proprietors of Pennsylvania, April 24, 1767." UKNational Archives CO 5/1233.

while also pursuing Quaker religious and social goals. Under Penn's guidance, Pennsylvania became one of the few colonies with neither an official church nor religious taxes. From its inception, Pennsylvania became a refuge not only for Quakers and Britons but for all seeking equal rights and a better future. According to the "Charter of Privileges," a frame of government authored by the Quaker elite in Pennsylvania and approved by Penn in 1701:

> [N]o Person or Persons, inhabiting in this Province or Territories, who shall confess and acknowledge *One* almighty God, the Creator, Upholder and Ruler of the World, and profess him or themselves obliged to live quietly under the Civil Government, shall be in any case molested or prejudiced, in his or their Person or Estate, because of his or their conscientious Persuasion or Practice, nor be compelled to frequent or maintain any religious worship, Place or Ministry, Contrary to his or their Mind, or do or suffer any other Act or Thing, Contrary to the religious Persuasion.[22]

Penn transformed his colony into the fastest growing and most efficient province in the English empire and was firm in his belief that the worth and success of a settlement lay with its people. Industrious settlers reaped benefits for themselves, their colony, their proprietor, and the crown.[23] Most early settlers were Quakers from England, but their numbers were soon dwarfed by the arrival of English Anglicans, Scots-Irish Presbyterians, German Pietists, and Dutch Calvinists, many of whom became small farmers and settled in and around the city of Philadelphia. The surrounding hinterland was ideally suited to produce grain and the raising of livestock; moreover, the Delaware River made it easy to transport produce from farms to Philadelphia for shipment to a

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[22] William Penn, "The Charter of Privileges, Granted by William Penn, Esq; to the Inhabitants of Pensilvania and Territories." Philadelphia: Printed and sold by B. Franklin, 1741.

[23] Smolenski, *Friends and Strangers,* 187.

rapidly growing transatlantic market.[24] Because the temperate climate made it impractical or impossible to grow tobacco, cotton, indigo, and other lucrative cash crops that typically utilized intensive slave labor, plantation slavery never established a significant foothold in Pennsylvania as it did in the Southern colonies.[25]

Notably, Pennsylvania enjoyed a prolonged period of peace with the local Indian nations and managed, at first, to avoid the frontier wars that so devastated Virginia, New England, and most other colonies. At the colony's founding in 1682, the most powerful Indian nation was the Delaware. The Delaware - or the Lenape, that is, the "Original People," in their native language - were scattered in small bands along the banks of the Delaware River and numbered approximately 11,000 people. They survived off small-scale farming and hunting and gathering. Unlike most other Indian groups, the Delaware lacked the strong and cohesive tribal organization that allowed Indians elsewhere in North America to effectively combat European encroachment.[26]

Rather than challenge the fledgling colony, most of the disparate bands of Delaware Indians agreed to negotiate. On July 15, 1682, William Penn met with the Delaware leaders under a great elm tree at a location called Shackamaxon near Philadelphia. Penn brought a wide assortment of goods to the Indians at this famous

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[24] Michael V Kennedy, "'Cash for His Turnups': Agricultural Production for Local Markets in Colonial Pennsylvania, 1725-1783." *Agricultural History* 74, no. 3 (2000): 587–608

[25] Taylor, *American Colonies*, 268

[26] Thomas J. Sugrue, "The Peopling and Depeopling of Early Pennsylvania: Indians and Colonists, 1680-1720." The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography 116, no. 1 (1992): 3–31. Pg. 10.

meeting, including wampum, coats, shirts, stockings, blankets, kettles, guns, gunpowder, knives, axes, hoes, shoes, fishhooks, beads, saws, tobacco, rum, cider, beer, and "Three Hundred Gilders" (Dutch silver coins). All the aforementioned goods were exchanged to the Delaware Indians "for the use of them and their people."[27] In return, William Penn and his colony were, "To have and to hold the said Tract or Tracts of Land, Islands, and all and every other the said Granted premises, with their and every of their appurtenances onto the said William Penn, his Heirs and Assignees forever, To the only proper use and behoove of the said William Penn, his Heirs and Assignees, forevermore."[28] Penn acknowledged the Delaware as the previous owners of the land and publicly and respectfully sought to win their trust. As a result, Pennsylvania derived its security from policies that permitted settlement only on land that had been purchased from the Indians, often at fairer and higher prices than what other colonies had paid. Penn further cemented Pennsylvania's reputation among the Indians through his acceptance of native refugees driven off their land after conflicts with Virginia and the Iroquois, which included the Shawnee, Nanticoke, Conoy, Tutelo, and Mahican tribes.

The resulting peaceful relationship between Penn and local Indians stemmed as much from necessity as it did genuine goodwill. Penn wished to create a godly and peaceable kingdom, which no doubt influenced his paternalistic regard for the Delaware and other Indians.[29] But one of the reasons why Penn did not resort to forceful

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[27] *Pennsylvania Archives*, 9 series, 119 vols. Harrisburg, PA: Theo. Fenn, 1852-1935. 1:1:48

[28] Ibid.

dispossession was the reality that he did not possess the force necessary to alter the existing power of the Delaware. This was painfully obvious when in 1684 Surveyor General Thomas Holme complained that the Delaware chief Tammany violated the Treaty of Shackamaxon and "played the rogue by hindering our people to plant and seat upon their lands by war!" Irate, William Penn responded, "You must make them keep their word and if the Indians will not punish him, we will and must," but Quaker pacifism and the fledgling status of the colony obliged him rather to rely on diplomacy and treaties that preserved Delaware Indian power in the region.[30] Pennsylvania's Indian policy was certainly an anomaly among Britain's North American colonies. The colony even lacked an established military institution or militia. While most British colonies acquired land through military conflicts with local Indian nations, Pennsylvania acquired land through diplomacy and trade during the period known as the Long Peace (1682-1755). Influenced by Quaker religious tolerance and pacificism, Pennsylvania forged diplomatic ties with local Indians and used these ties as buffers against the French in Canada and hostile Indian nations. At its onset, the Long Peace appeared to benefit all parties and brought decades of peace to the region.[31] Pennsylvania was able to purchase excess Indian land while the Delaware acquired guns, clothing, merchandise, food, and a valuable ally against the Six Nations (the Iroquois Confederacy).

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[29] Steven Harper, *Promised Land: Penn's Holy Experiment, the Walking Purchase, and the Dispossession of Delawares, 1600-1763*. Lehigh University Press, 2006. Pg. 14.

[30] Ibid., 16.

[31] James Hart Merrell, *Into the American Woods: Negotiators on the Pennsylvania Frontier*. New York: Norton, 2000. Pg. 36.

Missionaries, traders, and government agents helped to maintain the Long Peace. Government agents, such as George Croghan and Conrad Weiser, ventured across the Pennsylvanian frontier into Indian Country to conduct negotiations that relied on a deep understanding of Indian languages, traditions, and complex inter-tribal relations. It was their task to downplay differences between Indians and the English while at the same time highlighting similarities in order to maintain peace and come to agreements that benefited both sides.[32] Their task proved difficult as agreements like William Penn's Treaty of Shackamaxon became impossible to maintain with the constant deluge of settlers into Indian territory.

After William Penn's death in 1718, Pennsylvania experienced its first large wave of non-English migration. The two largest groups were the Germans and Scotch Irish. The Germans hailed from the Rhineland and southern Germany and tended to isolate themselves into religious and cultural enclaves that could be found all over the colony. Their isolation from the rest of Pennsylvania was reinforced by a pervasive nativist sentiment among the English who saw them as the destroyers of English culture. Among those who voiced their displeasure was Benjamin Franklin, who complained in the 1720s:

> Why should the Palatine boors be suffered to swarm into our settlements, and by herding together, establish their language and manners to the exclusion of ours… who will shortly be so numerous as to Germanize us instead of our Anglyfying them and will never adopt our language or customs, any more than they can acquire out complexion.[33]

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[32] Ibid., 31.

[33]Benjamin Franklin, "Observations Concerning the Increase of Mankind, 1751." National Archive and Records Administration. Accessed April 25, 2022. https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Franklin/01-04-02-0080..

Despite Franklin's concerns of a large German population taking over the colony, it did not happen, owing in large part to the Germans' isolation, both from each other and the rest of the colony. There was no unified German identity that tied the people together. They practiced different religions, spoke different regional dialects, and adhered to their own unique customs. The only time German Pennsylvanians banded together was to form political alliances based on the principle of ethnic association in order to resist integration into the dominant English culture.[34] Organizing the various German identities together would have been comparable to putting the English and Scottish together. They might have seemed similar but fundamental differences in religion, culture, and history formed two distinct groups. There were simply too many perceived differences for the various German groups to realize their similarities with each other. The same could not be said of the Scotch Irish.

Hailing from Northern Ireland, the Scotch Irish were the descendants of Scottish planters who colonized Ulster in the seventeenth century. Unlike the various German groups that settled in Pennsylvania the Scotch Irish were a much more homogenous identity. They originated in a single compact province, followed the same Presbyterian faith, and spoke the same regional dialect of English. The Scotch Irish began to leave Ireland for North America in large numbers in the eighteenth century for many of the same reasons their ancestors left Scotland: land and religious toleration. In North America they hoped to find cheap and abundant land and distance themselves from

[34] Jan Stievermann, "A 'Plain, Rejected Little Flock': The Politics of Martyrological Self-Fashioning among Pennsylvania's German Peace Churches, 1739-65." The William and Mary Quarterly 66, no. 2 (2009): 287–324. Pg. 290.

British religious persecution. Beginning in 1719 Presbyterians in northern Ireland were not allowed to conduct their own religious services without fear of ecclesiastical prosecution, and suffered daily reminders that they were subject to Anglican overlords. Repeated crop failures, high rents, and a collapsing textile industry further pushed the migration of Scotch Irish to America.[35]

The first destination for most Scotch Irish when they arrived in North America was New England and the city of Boston. However, religious persecution, this time from the Puritans, propelled them further west and south. It did not take long Pennsylvania to supplant New England as the Scotch Irish's location of choice, having, as it did, a reputation as one of the most religiously tolerant places in the Atlantic world. One Scotch Irish settler remarked that they had been "so much oppressed and harassed by under landlords in our own country that they came to America with the chief and principal view of being, in this foreign world, freed from such oppression."[36]

Scotch Irish migrants to Pennsylvania, however, had little to no intention of honoring pacts the government made with Indians. They simply wished to be left alone to claim what they saw as the free land of the Pennsylvanian frontier. They were aided in this pursuit by Pennsylvania's various border disputes with Maryland, Virginia, and New York that provided them with the opportunity to settle land via squatting, without having

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[35] Kevin Kenny, *Peaceable Kingdom Lost: The Paxton Boys and the Destruction of William Penn's Holy Experiment*. New York (N.Y.): Oxford University Press, 2011. Pg 27.

[36] David L Preston, "Squatters, Indians, Proprietary Government, and Land in the Susquehanna Valley," essay *In Friends and Enemies in Penn's Woods: Indians, Colonists, and the Racial Construction of Pennsylvania.* Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004. Pg. 183.

to purchase it from colonial landlords. If they had to purchase land, it was not uncommon to acquire that land through New England based companies, such as the Susquehanna Company, outside of Pennsylvania's jurisdiction.[37] Frontier squatters, in some instances, paid their Indian neighbors rent and provided them with provisions in exchange for extra-legal agreements to occupy untitled land. These agreements were intended to resist Pennsylvania's attempts to eject them once the land was purchased and added to Pennsylvania. If they could show that they bought or rented the land from Indians and improved upon it they were oftentimes rewarded with a claim to said land.[38]

By the late 1750s, the Scotch Irish, through a combination of migration and high birth rates, made up a quarter of Pennsylvania's population, mostly settled in small, isolated, frontier communities. They desired landed independence and genuinely believed that squatting on the land and improving upon it gave them legal rights to it. The newcomers had taken extraordinary risks in moving families, possessions, and livestock into the frontier.

Once ensconced in the wilderness of the frontier, the Scotch Irish settlers were painfully aware of their unique isolation and vulnerability. There were no forts to flee to, no military force to mobilize quickly, and no roads to facilitate trade with the interior. Civil society was minimal and colonial authorities in Philadelphia exercised little power

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[37] Paul Moyer, "Real Indians, 'White' Indians, and the Contest for the Wyoming Valley." Essay. In Friends and Enemies in Penn's Woods: Indians, Colonists, and the Racial Construction of Pennsylvania, 221–37. Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004. Pg. 221.

[38] Preston, "Squatters, Indians, Proprietary Government, and Land in the Susquehanna Valley," 183.

over the region. The settlers survived in small log cabins with the fear that any day their Indian neighbors could turn on them. James Patterson, a Scotch Irishman who moved to Indian country in the 1750s and bartered with local Indians, drilled firing ports into his cabin to fend off potential attacks and was known to fire warning shots at passing Indians.[39] The isolation, vulnerability, and fear of their situation was tempered by a cultural cohesion that developed alongside a long history, dating back before the migration, of living in proximity to populations of a different language, religion, and culture. Before they had even set foot in North America, the Scotch Irish had many years' worth of experience confronting and displacing hostile peoples, formerly the Irish, but now the Pennsylvania Indians.[40]

The one frontier institution among the Scotch Irish that countered the remoteness of frontier life was the Presbyterian Church. The church served as the most important organizational tool on the frontier and fulfilled both religious and secular roles. It regulated morality, heard arguments, investigated marital disputes, illicit sexual relations, domestic violence, dishonest business, and even personal behavior. Religious sessions even served as a type of court, taking evidence from witnesses, ruling on guilt or innocence, and meting out punishments to wrongdoers.[41] The ability of the church to act as both moral arbiter and court of law meant that it was oftentimes the only basis for the

[39] Ibid., 189.

[40] Kenny, *Peaceable Kingdom Lost*, 27.

[41] Ibid., 27.

Scotch Irish community, but also one of the only effective forms of government on the frontier.

Despite its authority among the Scotch Irish, the Presbyterian Church did little to stop squatters from encroaching on Indian land. This process not only strained the Pennsylvania government's relationship with the Indians, but also the colonial government's relationship with the Scotch Irish, who often viewed the government in Philadelphia as an impediment to land acquisition. Upon settling most of its border disputes with neighboring colonies, the Proprietorship, in the 1730s, finally adopted an eviction policy against frontier squatters. Evicting squatters was seen as an effective means of increasing the authority of the central government on the frontier. It also kept settlers off Indian land, thus maintaining positive relationships with neighboring tribes, and bolstered the Proprietors' revenue from land sales. Most importantly eviction was seen as way to drill into the Scotch Irish the concepts of sovereignty, land rights, and property. Richard Peters, a Pennsylvanian official, remarked in 1750 that the government's policy towards squatters was intended to prevent "very Valuable Country" from "being cut to pieces by a Rabble." Thus, Pennsylvania began a process in which they evicted squatters, promoted land surveys and purchases, and collected overdue rents.[42]

According to Pennsylvania policy by the 1730s, if squatters could not show that they had worked the land and improved upon it, they could not legally obtain claims to

[42] Richard Peters to Thomas Penn, June 22, 1750, Penn OC, 5:261, quoted in Judith A Ridner, *The Scots Irish of Early Pennsylvania: A Varied People*. Pennsylvania Historical Association. Accessed August 18, 2022. ProQuest Ebook Central. Pg. 61.

the land. One irate frontiersman James Anderson remarked that "the removing of them from the unpurchased lands, was a contrivance of the Gentleman and Merchants of Philadelphia, that they might take rights for their improvements when a purchase was made."[43] This occurred in the Juniata Valley in 1750 when Pennsylvania sent Conrad Weiser and Richard Peters to evict a group of squatters. In their subsequent report, officials were shocked to discover that a total of sixty-one households had been evicted. Despite eviction, forty-three households stayed in the region only to suffer violence during the French and Indian War and Pontiac's rebellion. One such individual, Charles Stuart, was ejected from the land by the Pennsylvania government in 1750, witnessed the farm and home burned and his family captured by Delawares in 1755, and was finally killed in a raid in 1763.[44] On at least one occasion in 1750, an angry Scotch Irish settler in Cumberland County brandished a loaded gun and threatened to "shoot the first man that dar[e]d to come nigher," referring to colonial government officials.[45] Most of those evicted by the government remained on the frontier, resentful as ever of colonial governmental authority.

When the Long Peace fell apart at the start of the French and Indian War in 1754, the Delaware Indians attacked the Pennsylvania frontier. The Scotch Irish, fiercely

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[43] *Colonial Records of Pennsylvania, The Minutes of the Provincial Council of Pennsylvania, From the Organization to the Termination of the Proprietary Government*. 16 Volumes. Harrisburg, PA: Theo. Fenn, 1851. 9:509, quoted in Preston, "Squatters, Indians, Proprietary Government, and Land in the Susquehanna Valley," 184.

[44] Preston, "Squatters, Indians, Proprietary Government, and Land in the Susquehanna Valley," 200.

[45] *Colonial Records,* 5:443, quoted in Ridner, *The Scots Irish of Early Pennsylvania*, 61.

independent and greatly suspicious of governmental authority, could nevertheless not deal with the threat themselves. They were forced to look to Philadelphia, and those who evicted them, for aid. When it was not forthcoming, at least to the degree that they wanted, they fell back on their independent nature and took matters into their own hands. The tool they utilized to accomplish their goals, as we will see in later chapters, was the militia.

Without a doubt the most powerful Indian nation in eastern North America was the Iroquois Confederacy, a union of tribes who had long garnered a ferocious reputation as warriors in upstate New York and Canada after defeating and expelling the Hurons, Eries, Monongahela, and Shawnee; they also habitually grafted weaker Indian nations into a dependent relationship on the confederacy. At first, the Iroquois maintained a neutral position between the English and French, preventing French incursions into Pennsylvania and New York while also preventing English incursions further west and north into French territory. By the 1730s, the Iroquois gravitated more and more towards the British who offered them better trade deals and military access so that they could subjugate the tribes to the southwest. In exchange the Iroquois signed a series of treaties with the English ceding the lands of their dependents, including the Delaware, to Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Maryland.[46]

The most notorious of these treaties was the Walking Purchase signed at Easton, Pennsylvania in 1737 on behalf of the Delaware. By the 1730s, the thirst for land among

[46] Jon Parmenter, "After the Mourning Wars: The Iroquois as Allies in Colonial North American Campaigns, 1676-1760." The William and Mary Quarterly 64, no. 1 (2007): 39–76. Pg. 2.

Pennsylvania's frontier settlers was near insatiable. William Penn's sons and successors, John, Thomas, and Richard Penn, abandoned their father's peaceful tenets and aggressively pursued new lands to acquire, sell, and charge rent. Their most infamous pursuit was the "Walking Purchase" in which Proprietary agents fabricated claims on the western side of the Delaware River. The agents argued that Delaware leaders had signed the land to William Penn during the Treaty of Shackamaxon in 1682 in exchange for trade goods. The amount of land handed over was determined by how far a group of men could walk from a fixed point, hence the name "Walking Purchase."[47] By 1737 the Delaware were a shell of their former selves due the continual erosion of their land both at the hands of Pennsylvanian squatters and their Iroquois overlords. Unlike William Penn, who was forced to negotiate with the Delaware from a vulnerable position as a new power in the region, his successors, backed by alliance with the Iroquois, felt free to break previous promises with the Delaware.[48] One Pennsylvanian official in 1728 summed up this policy succinctly: "The Five nations have an absolute authority over all our Indians, and may command them as they please."[49]

Although the Delaware did not recognize the legitimacy of these claims, they were forced to accept them. On August 26, 1737, an appeal to the Confederacy was rejected by Iroquois leader Canasatego, who explained, "We conquered you, we made women of you, you know you are women… For all these reasons, we charge you to

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[47] Merrell, *Into the American Woods,* 176.

[48] Harper, *Promised Land,* 16.

[49] *Colonial Records*, 3:333, quoted in Daniel P Barr, "A Road for Warriors: The Western Delawares and the Seven Years War," 6.

remove instantly. We don't give you the liberty to think about it. You are women; take the advice of a wise man and remove immediately."[50] When the time arrived to determine the amount of land to be taken Proprietary agents used loopholes in the treaty and cut roads into the wilderness. Moreover, the agents notoriously ran the distance instead of walking it. This resulted in a chunk of land the size of Connecticut being taken by Pennsylvania.[51] The loss of this land fractured the Delaware into two distinct groups. One group chose to migrate west across the Appalachian Mountains into the Ohio River Valley into what is now western Pennsylvania. The second group moved further up the Delaware River into the Wyoming Valley.[52]

The Western Delaware henceforth developed a militant mindset that historian Daniel P. Barr refers to as a triangular pattern of resentment. They hated the Iroquois for selling their land and treating them like dependents, they hated the Eastern Delaware for not opposing the "Walking Purchase," and they hated Pennsylvania for the loss of their lands in the east.[53] These resentments only solidified in 1744 when the Iroquois ceded the entirety of the Shenandoah Valley to Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Maryland. By signing these treaties, the Iroquois alienated their dependencies and pushed them into the hands of the French and their *pay d'en haut*, the refugee tribes that the Iroquois had expelled in the past. Additionally, in signing this land away the Iroquois also unwittingly opened the

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[50] *Colonial Records,* 5:50-79.

[51] *Pennsylvania Archives,* 1:1:541.

[52] Michael N. McConnell, *A Country Between the Upper Ohio Valley and Its Peoples, 1724-1774*. Lincoln: Univ. of Neb. Press, 2010. Pg. 3.

[53] Barr, "A Road for Warriors", 3.

Ohio River Valley to Pennsylvania traders and Virginia settlers. This not only ratcheted up tensions with the Indians living there but soon after initiated an international crisis and global war.

For the French, the Ohio River Valley served as an important strategic location that bridged Canada and Louisiana. Rather than settle or garrison the valley they were content to leave it in the hands of neutral Indian tribes, so long as their soldiers, missionaries, and traders were able to traverse the region. However, this arrangement changed when the Iroquois abandoned their historic neutrality in Britain's favor. France was outraged by the arrival of Pennsylvanian traders and Virginia settlers in land they believed was theirs. The primary goal of the French in North America was to maintain their hegemonic control over their Indian allies, who served as important trade partners and military assets, and keep the British hemmed into a cordon on the eastern seaboard. Meanwhile, the rapid demographic growth of the British colonies fueled a thirst for land that colonial governments, crown officials, and land speculators used to push territorial claims and settlers east. Perhaps the most unsettling development to French officials was the presence of Pennsylvanian traders in the Ohio River Valley eroding the tribe's reliance on French goods. In response to this intrusion the French launched a series of brutal raids, burning down trading posts, expelling Pennsylvanian traders, halting British settlement of the region, and coercing tribes such as the Western Delaware to remain in their sphere of influence.

With the outbreak of war between France and Britain imminent, the Delaware offered their aid to the British in exchange for guarantees of security and the renunciation of land claims in the Ohio River Valley. General Edward Braddock refused these

entreaties and stated "No savage shall inherit the land."[54] The Ohio River valley was to be split among the British colonies. The shocked Western Delaware felt as if the British "looked upon us as Dogs… and never appeared pleased with us."[55] The western Delaware took this as a sign that diplomacy with the British was not going to get anywhere and so they chose the lesser of two evils: French trade and hegemony in exchange for Delaware security and land.[56]

In addition to recruiting local Indian nations, the French established a garrison in the Ohio River Valley and constructed a series of forts to secure the region. Fort Duquesne, the most important of these forts, was to be located at the forks of the Ohio River and was scheduled to be completed in 1754. However, the land the fort was to be built upon was also the planned site of a fortified Virginian trading post. On July 3, 1754 the French and their Indian allies engaged and defeated a force of Virginia militia under the command of George Washington sent to claim the region for Virginia. The shots fired that day marked the beginning of the French and Indian War, the global Seven Years' War, and served as the death knell of the Long Peace.[57] As Fred Anderson, the foremost historian on the conflict, notes, "that the greatest of European eighteenth-century wars could have begun in the Pennsylvania backcountry reflected the growing importance of

[54] *Colonial Records*, 6:398-399.

[55] *Colonial Records*, 6:588-589.

[56] Barr, "A Road for Warriors," 20.

[57] Fred Anderson, *Crucible of War: The Seven Years' War and the Fate of Empire in British North America, 1754-1766* (New York: Vintage Books, 2001). Pg 30.

America in the diplomatic, military, and economic calculations of European governments."[58]

The Long Peace as a viable foreign policy was never going to last. Pennsylvania's defense relied upon a policy of trade and diplomacy that was incompatible with the situation that they found themselves in. Indians desired Pennsylvanian trade goods but this angered the French who retaliated with brutal violence. In addition, Pennsylvania's westward settlement and deepening ties to the Iroquois displaced and alienated the Delaware. The Long Peace ended in 1755 when the Delaware took up arms to fight the British in their war against France. The Long Peace was a double-edged sword for Pennsylvania. It allowed the colony to expand and prosper but also alienated Indian nations. However, the most serious long-term problem caused by Pennsylvania's policies was the distrust and abhorrence it seeded among the frontier population. These sentiments transformed into outright rebellion after policies that neglected established defense encountered the brutal realities of Indian war.

[58] Ibid., 11.

CHAPTER 3

THE COLONIAL MILITIA AND THE PENNSYLVANIA ASSOCIATORS

The militia was an institution critical to social, political, and cultural life in colonial America. When discussing the colonial militia, it is important to note that the commonly held image of the militia as a crude, ad hoc band of disorderly volunteers is not completely accurate. Rather, in most colonies, militias were well-regulated institutions controlled by colonial governments. Officers were either appointed by the colonial government or elected by their communities, weapons were provided, training was regimented, and discipline was codified in law. A key aspect of the colonial militia was universal, compulsory service for adult men, as the need to fight wars against hostile Indians and to police expanding slave populations made large pools of manpower essential.

As an institution, the militia in England stretched back to the twelfth century during the reign of Henry II, who in 1181 issued an edict requiring all freemen to bear arms in defense of the realm. A century later, under Edward I in 1285, a new law required all enfranchised freemen eligible for military service to maintain law and order in the English countryside where city officials lacked jurisdiction.[59] In the late sixteenth century, under Queen Elizabeth I, a number of statutes standardized compulsory military service, regular training, and uniform equipment. Under this evolving militia system, only clergymen, judges, attorneys, and other civil officials were exempt from service.

[59] Joseph Seymour, *The Pennsylvania Associators, 1747-1777*. Yardley, PA: Westholme Publishing, LLC, 2012. Pg. 5.

The law required that all other males between age sixteen and sixty keep a longbow and arrows in their homes, as well as a bow and two arrows for every male child in the household – and the father was to be fined if he had "not brought them uppe in shooting."[60] To ensure that weapons were available for all those who required them local officials made sure that merchants sold to all ages at a reasonable price. Once called upon for service, the law required militiamen be paid decent wages. Elizabethan militia laws also required towns to store arms and armor and maintain training fields. Those eligible for militia service also had to demonstrate a minimum level of competency with weaponry. Depending on a man's wealth or social status the law required the maintenance of more advanced weaponry and supplies such as horses and armor. By the 1630s, the rapid development in firearm technology led to the replacement of the longbow by the musket. Further militia legislation in 1676 mandated arsenals in every town, with set training schedules and fines for noncompliance.

The codified institution of the militia in England served as the basis for similar militia laws in the American colonies. In North America militia laws departed from their English origins in that they required that most free adult white men participate in regular drills and possess their own weapons. English militias tended to be much more selective in who was ultimately allowed to serve. The law may have required all able-bodied men from sixteen to sixty serve but county officers often only selected a small band of socially, politically, and religiously reliable men for actual training and military service.

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[60] William Lambard, *Eirenarcha: Or of the Office of the Justices of the Peace* (London: 1581; repr., New York: Da Capo, 1970), 378, quoted in Seymour, *The Pennsylvania Associators,* 6.

In North America bearing arms was not so much a right as it was a social obligation to the body politic. Another marked difference between the two militia systems was a distinct dearth of laws restricting guns. From 1607 to 1815 colonial and state governments only seized weapons in times of great emergency, as will be seen later when the Pennsylvanian Assembly confiscated the arms of the Paxton militia following their unsanctioned military expeditions and massacres of friendly Indians.[61]

Not surprisingly, given the Quaker influence, inhabitants of Pennsylvania were not required by law to organize or train. In 1685 William Penn advised the Provincial Council against the use of force to achieve its goals "Heat is no more commendable, but in Government dangerous… if faults are committed, lett them be mended without noise and animosity."[62] But fortunately for Pennsylvania colonists, the need for organized defense was moot during the first few decades of its existence. Its natural borders protected the colony from most external threats: the Delaware River from the sea and the Allegheny mountains from attacks from the interior. Besides these natural borders Pennsylvania also relied heavily upon local Indian allies such as the Shawnee, Delaware, and Iroquois to serve as buffers against any potential threat from the French and their Indian allies.

Pennsylvania's strong geographic location combined with its pacifistic Quaker leaders' inclination towards trade and diplomacy to secure its borders ensured that the

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[61] Robert H Churchill, "Gun Regulation, the Police Power, and the Right to Keep Arms in Early America: The Legal Context of the Second Amendment." *Law and history review* 25, no. 1 (2007). Pg. 142-144.

[62] *Colonial Records*, 1:94.

need and desire for a militia, and that the laws that it required to function, were never developed. Notwithstanding, the Pennsylvania government was still responsible for providing for the common defense of the colony, and thus retained in its original charter the power and responsibility "to ordeyne, make, enact and under his and their Seales to publish any Lawes whatsoever, for the raising of money for the publick use of the said province, or for any other end appertaining either to the publick state peace, or safety of the said Countrey."[63]

In colonies where militias flourished, the militia served an important function in the formation of colonial identity, not just in its military application but in its social applications. John Shy, historian and authoritative voice on the colonial militia, argues that the institution of the militia provides a lens into a colony or region's "political behavior, social structure, economic activity, even religious belief," characterized, throughout the colonies, by "regional diversity and continual change."[64] Militaries closely reflect the societies they inhabit. This is even more apparent with the colonial militia, an institution composed of men from a broad range of colonial society that fulfilled various roles. The militia served as a police force that preserved public order, a defense force against external threats, a social tool that brought communities together, and a politicizing body that spread ideology. Militia service was a civic duty enforced through legislation. In colonial America, the militia and the possession of arms protected

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[63] "PHMC Pennsylvania Charter." Pennsylvania Charter | PHMC > Our Documentary Heritage. Accessed April 25, 2022.

[64] John W. Shy, "A New Look at Colonial Militia." The William and Mary Quarterly 20, no. 2 (1963). Pg 185.

liberty from outside threats: nefarious or noxious colonial officials, bandits, horse thieves, hostile Indians, runaway slaves or slave revolts, and other threats. Its very existence represented the '"right of the people to govern themselves and legislate "their internal police."'[65] The colonial militia served as the basis for community organization and the formation of a colonial identity.

Colonial militias were essential in the formation of colonial identities. They allowed communities to defend against internal and external foes and brought communities together, unifying them behind the shared interest of conflict with outsiders, whether French, Indians, or slaves. They forged what Benedict Anderson refers to as "imagined communities." Militias brought communities of diverse religious beliefs and European ethnicities together in an organization of compulsory service, and in doing so shed light on the many similarities and differences between the various groups involved.[66] Colonial militias fulfilled this role from the very beginning of English settlement in America. The first such militia came into existence shortly after the founding of Jamestown. The same occurred in the early Massachusetts Bay Colony, where a statute in 1637 required all male residents between the ages of sixteen and sixty to serve in the militia – a response to the brutal and bloody Pequot War in New England the same year.[67]

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[65] Saul Cornell, A Well-regulated Militia: The Founding Fathers and the Origins of Gun Control in America. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2006. Pg. 27.

[66] Peter Rhoads Silver, *Our Savage Neighbors: How Indian War Transformed Early America*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2009. Pg. XIX.

[67] Ronald L Boucher, "The Colonial Militia as a Social Institution: Salem, Massachusetts 1764-1775." *Military Affairs* 37, no. 4 (1973).

Unlike the rest of British North America, Pennsylvania lacked an organized colonial militia, and therefore developed alternative ways of forging its peculiar colonial identity. In *Friends and Strangers, the Making of a Creole Culture in Pennsylvania,* historian John Smolenski, for instance, explores the development of a creole culture in Pennsylvania, noting that, "Under the stewardship of Penn and the Quakers, Pennsylvania became a province hailed by American revolutionaries as a 'peculiar land of freedom' in the years before independence, a place where men and women of all nationalities enjoyed unparalleled rights and individuals of all faiths had the liberty to practice their religion."[68] Yet it soon became apparent to the Quakers that achieving a state centered on pacifism and religious tolerance was no easy task. They discovered that their beliefs were not well accepted by most Swedes, Finns, Dutch, Irish, German, and English settlers who populated the colony. To address this problem and to create a unified colonial identity, the Quakers undertook a process of creolization. Creolization is the creative process through which individuals and groups construct new cultural habits and identities as they attempt to make old world modes of thought fit in a new environment.[69] First generation Quakers creolized Pennsylvania by developing a provincial culture in which habits, practices, symbols, and languages established their authority. The Quakers achieved this through the creation of a secular, legal, and political culture that both maintained order and legitimized Quaker rule. By the 1730s, the colony's civic culture possessed an

[68]John Smolenski, *Friends and Strangers: The Making of a Colonial Records, Creole Culture in Colonial Pennsylvania*. Philadelphia, Penn.: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 2010. Pg. 2.

[69] Ibid., 4.

elaborate set of political narratives, symbols, and practices that legitimized the government's authority. One of the Quakers' most effective narratives was William Penn's signing of the Treaty of Shackamaxon in 1682. The Quaker leadership in Pennsylvania used such narratives to legitimize the Long Peace and militia policies, or lack thereof, decades after the event.

The extent to which the Quakers successfully forged a unified colonial identity around political and religious liberty can be misleading. Smolenski goes as far to call this Quaker "Peaceable Kingdom" a myth.[70] Pennsylvania, in actuality, was a deeply divided society in which Quaker elites maintained strict control through their domination of the colonial assembly and of transatlantic commerce, with no serious organized opposition from a population that was sharply divided along ethnic, religious, and even linguistic lines. The lack of an organized militia through the first half of the eighteenth century made it highly unlikely that there would be anything resembling unified opposition from the non-Quaker majority of the Pennsylvania population.

The first serious instance of organized opposition against the Quakers occurred in Philadelphia in 1747. Benjamin Franklin's proposal for a Military Association of Pennsylvania kickstarted the beginnings of a unified colonial identity from the non-Quaker majority. Benjamin Franklin exemplified the emerging colonial identity in North America. Franklin, born in 1706 to a Puritan family in Boston, settled in Philadelphia after running away from home at the age of seventeen. By the age of twenty-three he was a successful printer, writer, and editor for the colony's first and oldest newspaper, the

[70] IBID., 4.

Pennsylvania Gazette. He was known for writing such works as *Poor Richard's Almanac* and *Silence Dogood*. By the 1730s, Franklin was a well-known public figure in Pennsylvania who used his fame, influence, and printing press to venture into Pennsylvanian politics. Franklin represented a colonial identity that stressed the values of hard work, thrift, education, social organization, as well as Enlightenment thinking.[71] In contrast to William Penn, Franklin pressed for the establishment of a regular military force.

Franklin's advocacy for a strong defense derived from a combination of pragmatism as well as political ambition: an essential defensive measure as well as a way in which he, and others like him, could challenge the Quaker elite that had a stranglehold on Pennsylvania politics. Colonial Philadelphia, at the time of Franklin's coming of age, was still politically, economically, and socially dominated by the "better sort": a wealthy planter and merchant class mostly composed of the original Quaker settlers. Besides the "better sort," there were two other classes. The first was the "middling sort," which included Franklin, artisans, and tradesmen. The second, or the "lower sort," consisted of laborers and mechanics. The Quaker ruling class expected a show of deference from both the "lower sort" and the "middling sort," but such deference increasingly waned as non-Quaker immigration, westward expansion, and expanding commercial markets and British imports increased class tensions and raised the political ambitions of various

[71] H. W. Brands, *The First American: The Life and Times of Benjamin Franklin*. New York: Anchor Books, 2002.

rivals to the Quaker elite.[72] Opposition eventually coalesced around the debate over defense.

During the 1740s, Britain found itself again embroiled in a war with France: The War of the Austrian Succession, known in the colonies as King George's War. The war never came directly to Pennsylvania, but many Pennsylvanians feared French or Spanish naval attack or raids. The common belief was that the colony's lack of a militia law and fortifications along the Delaware River would entice invasion. Franklin recognized this threat and saw it as an opportunity to improve his political position. He attacked Quaker pacifism while also providing a pragmatic solution to Pennsylvania's lack of defense. On November 17, 1747, Franklin anonymously published an article entitled "Plain Truth" in the *Pennsylvania Gazette.* In "Plain Truth," Franklin raised the specter of a French or Spanish attack on Philadelphia:

> The Enemy, no doubt, have been told, That the People of Pennsylvania are Quakers, and against all Defense, from a Principle of Conscience; this, tho' true of a Part, and that a small Part only of the Inhabitants, is commonly said of the Whole; and what may make it look probable to Strangers, is, that in Fact, nothing is done by any Part of the People towards their Defense. But to refuse Defending one's self or one's Country, is so unusual a Thing among Mankind, that possibly they may not believe it, till by Experience they find, they can come higher and higher up our River, seize our Vessels, land, and plunder our Plantations and Villages, and retire with their Booty unmolested. Will not this confirm the Report, and give them the greatest Encouragement to strike one bold Stroke for the City, and for the whole Plunder of the River?[73]

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[72] Steven Rosswurm, *Arms, Country, and Class: The Philadelphia Militia and "lower Sort" during the American Revolution, 1775-1783*. Class and Culture. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1987.

[73] Benjamin Franklin, "Plain Truth, 17 November 1747." Founders Online. National Archives and Records Administration, n.d. https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Franklin/01-03-02-0091.

According to Franklin, the middling people suffered most from the lack of a militia. Quaker pacifism invited attacks on a prosperous colony that the French or Spanish would be happy to pillage. If attacked, Pennsylvanians would be incapable of defending themselves. Franklin did not promote offensive military action, but rather:

> The very Fame of our Strength and Readiness would be a Means of Discouraging our Enemies; for 'tis a wise and true Saying, that *One Sword often keeps another in the Scabbard.* The Way to secure Peace is to be prepared for War. They that are on their Guard, and appear ready to receive their Adversaries, are in much less Danger of being attack'd, than the supine, secure and negligent.[74]

Franklin therefore proposed the formation of the Military Association of Pennsylvania, known as the Associators, composed of volunteers and privately funded by the communities they resided in. Franklin modeled the Association on similar defensive organizations that had sprung up in Scottish and English coastal towns and cities. The Associators were organized by local communities who received government permission to form companies and even regiments; its members elected their own officers, chosen from the local communities. Franklin's proposal ensured that those willing to defend Pennsylvania were capable of doing so. The proposal also appeased the pacifistic Quakers in the assembly who opposed to compulsory military service and a taxpayer-funded militia.[75]

On November 21, 1747, Franklin outlined this proposal, entitled "Forms of Association," to a gathering of tradesmen in Philadelphia. Pulling his proposal from his coat pocket, Franklin made use of the very points he had deployed a few days earlier in

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[74] Ibid.

[75] Franklin Benjamin, "Forms of Association." *Pennsylvania Gazette*, December 3, 1747.

his "Plain Truth" article in the *Pennsylvania Gazette*. Two days later after this gathering, he addressed an even larger crowd of tradesmen, shopkeepers, and farmers. Five hundred observers signed a petition for the creation of voluntary Associator regiments. By December 3, the petition received more than a thousand signatures and was printed in the *Pennsylvania Gazette*.[76] On December 7, the first Associator regiment held an inaugural parade in Philadelphia.[77]

The Military Association of Pennsylvania represented a new constituency in Pennsylvania that stressed the desire for defense and sought a voice in Pennsylvanian politics. Without a formal militia law, most of the Pennsylvania's population lacked the means to organize and effectively express their own interests. In Philadelphia and its surrounding countryside, the formation of the Associators provided Franklin and other colonists of the middling sort with a vehicle to achieve their social goals and political ambitions. The Associators functioned as the modern equivalent of a worker's union or a political party and took inspiration from existing political clubs and associations such as libraries and fire companies for organizational blueprints.[78] It organized thousands of men into a body that operated as a venue through which the community could achieve common aims and bridge religious and ethnic divides.[79]

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[76] Ibid.

[77] Seymour, *The Pennsylvania Associators,* 89.

[78] Jessica Choppin Roney, "'Ready to Act in Defiance of Government': Colonial Philadelphia Voluntary Culture and the Defense Association of 1747—1748."' Early American Studies 8, no. 2 (2010): 358–85. Pg. 358.

[79] Ibid., 358- 361.

At its height in the 1770s, the Associators comprised more than 4,000 men capable of bearing arms. This is a remarkable sum when the colony only had a free adult male population, that was capable of voting, of 30,000.[80] The Associators brought a diverse range of Pennsylvania men into well-disciplined, funded, and organized bodies that men like Franklin could use to challenge Quaker political dominance. This organization not only defended their communities but forged a common colonial identity capable of pursuing shared social and political goals. With the establishment of the Associators in 1747, Philadelphia and Pennsylvania's lower counties had far less to fear from the potential invasion by sea from a hostile foreign power. The same could not be said, however, for the western frontier, which remained, by and large, defenseless even after the formation of the Associators.

[80] *Pennsylvania Archives*. 9 series, 119 vols. Harrisburg, PA: Theo. Fenn, 1852-1935. 4:3:1003.

CHAPTER 4

BLOOD ON THE FRONTIER

Though impactful in Philadelphia and the lower counties upon its establishment in 1747, the Military Association of Pennsylvania, or Associators, did not extend their reach to defending the western frontier. In terms of military doctrine, equipment, recruitment, and purpose, the Associators were practically indistinguishable from the militias found in Massachusetts and New Jersey.[81] What distinguished the Associators was their decentralization, voluntary nature, self-funding, and municipal level organization. They had little to do with the Pennsylvania government. Other colonies had established militia laws where service was compulsory, training was mandatory, and weapons and supplies were provided by the state. Most importantly, governors in such colonies acted as the commander in chief, with power to call the militia to arms and organize the war effort. In contrast, neither Pennsylvania's lieutenant governor nor the legislative assembly had authority to command Associator regiments. Regiments were organized and commanded locally at the county or municipal level by officers elected by its members while its funds were gathered through clubs and religious organizations.[82] Additionally, there was no colony-wide command structure or treasury. As a result, Pennsylvania's ability to defend itself varied a great deal depending on where in the colony a person resided. Philadelphia,

[81] Samuel J. Newland, *The Pennsylvania Militia: Defending the Commonwealth and the Nation, 1669-1870*. Annville, PA: Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Dept. of Military and Veterans Affairs, 2002. Pg. 44.

[82] Jessica Choppin Roney, "'Ready to Act in Defiance of Government': Colonial Philadelphia Voluntary Culture and the Defense Association of 1747—1748."' Early American Studies 8, no. 2 (2010): 358–85. Pg. 358. Pg.370.

along with other populated and prosperous areas, could provide Associator regiments that mirrored the discipline and organizational strength of the British Army. The quality and effectiveness of the Associators decreased the farther the settlement stood from Philadelphia. The Associators were meant to be locally based and assembled by neighborhood. According to Franklin, this was "to mix the Small together, for the sake of Union and Encouragement."[83] The problem was that the Associators were nearly nonexistent along the frontier.

The population that resided along the Pennsylvania frontier tended to be poor, desperate, and incapable of affording the equipment necessary for militia service. Settlers on the frontier were also segregated into enclaves based on language, nationality, and religion. It was a poor, disorganized region incapable of united defense against a determined enemy. In *Frontier Rebels: The Fight for Independence in the American West, 1765-1776,* historian Patrick Spero remarks, "In eighteenth century America, to be a 'frontier inhabitant' carried a specific meaning that is very different from our modern conceptions."[84] They were prone as much to contraction as they were to expansion; during wartime especially, most people fled the frontier.

Fear and uncertainty often filled the lives of those on the outskirts of settlement, and on July 7, 1755, those fears were fully realized when the only entity capable of broadly defending the frontier, the British Army, under the command of General Edward

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[83] "Forms of Association," quoted Jessica Choppin Roney, "'Ready to Act in Defiance of Government': Colonial Philadelphia Voluntary Culture and the Defense Association of 1747—1748."' Pg. 371.

[84] Patrick Spero, *Frontier Rebels: The Fight for Independence in the American West, 1765-1776*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 2018. Pg. 40.

Braddock sent to seize the Ohio River Valley and threaten Canada, was annihilated by French, Canadian, allied Indian forces. The crushing defeat eliminated the British Army's presence in Pennsylvania, leaving the frontier wide open to attack.

The first Indian attack to befall Pennsylvanian's frontier occurred a couple weeks prior, on June 22, 1755, shortly after the departure of General Braddock on his ill-fated military expedition to take Fort Duquesne. At Will's Creek, a small settlement founded in 1750 and 240 miles from Philadelphia, Indians killed three settlers. John Harris, a local trader reported to the Assembly in Philadelphia that twenty or more settlers in the vicinity of Fort Cumberland were "found killed, barbarously murder'd and missing." In the same report Harris made the prediction that "Upon the first Alarm of Murder being committed among us the general part or majority of our settlers will run off and leave their Habitations and Effects, Grain, &ca; You may certainly depend on it, For in the Situation our People are they cannot make any defense."[85]

Indian raids occurred across western Pennsylvania in the early years of the French and Indian War. Despite Harris's dire prediction of flight, many frontiersmen elected to stand and fight. Edward Shippen, a magistrate in Lancaster County, witnessed such an event unfold. Shippen addressed the fears of locals who refused to flee by encouraging them to fortify their homes and to organize defensive companies. Those who decided to fight organized themselves into ad hoc bands. These bands consisted of anywhere

[85] *Colonial Records of Pennsylvania, The Minutes of the Provincial Council of Pennsylvania, From the Organization to the Termination of the Proprietary Government*. 16 Volumes. Harrisburg, PA: Theo. Fenn, 1851. 3:435

between dozens to hundreds of men who patrolled their communities with anything they could get their hands on.[86]

The raiding parties were mostly comprised of Western Delaware Indians from the Ohio Valley, who split into small bands of twenty to fifty warriors. With French guns and ammunition, they attacked with the goal of rolling back colonial settlement and reclaiming lost land. To accomplish this, they relied on traditional modes of native warfare – raids, plunder, and kidnapping – but infused with European conventions of warfare that emphasized killing. They waged war in a personal manner, avenging past wrongs, and consciously committed violent atrocities designed to intimidate and dishearten their opponents.[87] Iroquois efforts to reign in the Delaware Indians were met with derision: "Say no more to us on that head lest we cut off your privates and make women of you, as you have done to us."[88] As the raids pushed deeper and deeper into Pennsylvania, the Eastern Delaware joined their western cousins in their war on Pennsylvania.

Across the Pennsylvania frontier, Indian enemies of the English slaughtered men in the fields as they worked, captured women and children, torched crops, burned buildings, and mutilated the dead. The objective was to terrorize the frontier population into abandoning their settlements and to turn against the Pennsylvania assembly,

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[86] Colonial Records, 6:459.

[87] Barr, Daniel P, "'A ROAD FOR WARRIORS:' THE WESTERN DELAWARES AND THE SEVEN YEARS WAR." Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies 73, no. 1 (2006). Pg 23.

[88] Colonial Records, 6:673- 674.

restoring the country to the native occupants.[89] Indian raids on the frontier cemented the deep psychological fear that had already existed in the colonial psyche. For colonials, historian James Merrell tells us, the wilderness beyond the frontier was "a scary place, a domain of transformative power whether it turned medieval knights into wild men or Indian hunters into cannibals."[90] Their location on a border zone between French and British settlements was already a source of anxiety for frontiersmen; Indian attacks compounded that terror to a startling degree. Frontiersmen who had never spoken or even seen their neighbors broke religious, ethnic, linguistic, and cultural barriers to form new kinship with one another and unite against a common foe: the Indians and French.[91] In an act of solidarity, Conrad Weiser, a German interpreter and trader, assembled two hundred German settlers to defend Scotch Irish settlers after hearing reports of an impending attack on Paxton in Lancaster County. Weiser "gave orders to them to go home and fetch their Arms, whether Guns, Swords, pitchforks, axes, or whatsoever might be of use against the Enemy."[92] As the attacks continued, the population coalesced behind a distinct frontier identity.

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[89] *Kevin Kenny*, Peaceable Kingdom Lost: The Paxton Boys and the Destruction of William Penn's Holy Experiment*. New York (N.Y.): Oxford University Press, 2011. Pg. 71.*

[90] James Hart Merrell, *Into the American Woods: Negotiators on the Pennsylvania Frontier*. New York: Norton, 2000. Pg. 27.

[91] Peter Rhoads Silver, *Our Savage Neighbors: How Indian War Transformed Early America*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2009. Pg. XX.

[92] *Colonial Records*, 6:656

The horrors of war functioned as a kind of social process of political education that forced those involved to adapt or die.[93] This bloody education instilled in the frontier population a fear that evolved into a deep seated hatred for Indians. This fear and hatred united the frontier population behind one common interest: an organized defense. Writing to Lieutenant Governor Robert Hunter Morris on October 20, the aforementioned John Harris requested that the Assembly pass some method to defend the frontier. He feared that if a single "company of Indians come and murder but a few families herabouts, which is daily expected, the situation we are in would oblige numbers to abandon their places, and our Cattle and Provisions, which we have plenty of, must fall a prey to the enemy." A petition from Penn's Creek in Northampton County stated that most of its population had fled but that "a few more" were "willing to stay and endeavor to defend the Land," yet "for want of Guns and Ammunition," they too "must fly and leave the Country to the mercy of the Enemy."[94] A militia law, they believed, was urgently necessary. This desire was noted by George Stevenson and other influential citizens of York, Pennsylvania in a letter dated November 1, 1755: "We believe Men enough willing to bear Arms and go out against the Enemy, were they supplied with Arms, Ammunition, and a reasonable Allowance for their Time, but without this, at least Arms and Ammunition, we fear little to purpose can be done."[95]

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[93] John W. Shy, "The Military Conflict Considered as a Revolutionary War," In Brunsman, Denver Alexander, and David J. Silverman. The American Revolution Reader. New York: Routledge, 2014. Pg. 135.

[94] *Colonial Records*, 6:646-48.

[95] *Pennsylvania Archives*, 1:2:448.

In November 1755 the call for assistance reached a fever pitch after the attack on Gnadenhutten in Northampton County. On November 24, 1755 David Zeisberger, an envoy sent by the Pennsylvanian Assembly to escort Eastern Delaware envoys from the Wyoming Valley to Philadelphia, arrived at the village of Gnadenhutten only to witness an ongoing raid. It was later reported in the *Pennsylvania Gazette* that:

> He heard the firing of guns, which he thought to be at the Mahoney, the place where our Brethren's Farm is, and when he came to the first House he heard more firing, where somebody hallowed to be fetched over the water, whom they fetched over; it was one of our Brethren that escaped the Mahoney, who told David that the Enemy was at the Mahoney and had killed the most of our poor White Brethren; he knew of only two that had escaped.[96]

One of these survivors, a young boy, recounted how his family sat down for dinner as these events played out. He heard a loud bang on their door followed by a shout demanding entrance into the home. Upon opening the door, a bullet struck and killed the man answering the door. One woman shrieked and attempted to escape through the front door but the Indian invaders forced her back inside. Others within the household attempted to run upstairs but only met their deaths. Flames consumed the bodies of the five inhabitants who died in the house. A man managed to escape the burning home but he was swiftly shot in the back and hacked to death with a tomahawk. The small boy, the only survivor from the attack, was grazed by a musket ball as he escaped from a nearby window.[97] The very day, November 24, 1755, the Pennsylvanian Assembly received a

[96] *Colonial Records*, 6:736.

[97] *Pennsylvania Gazette*. 4 December 1755. Pg. 2.

report that thousands of angry frontiersmen from Chester and Berks counties were organizing to march on Philadelphia if a militia law was not passed.[98]

The debate over a militia law had first begun several months earlier, in spring 1755 as General Braddock assembled his ill-fated expedition. In July the Assembly passed a bill to raise a militia force funded by a tax on all property. This included proprietary lands. Under strict orders not to accept any form of taxation of proprietary land, Lieutenant Governor Robert Hunter Morris, as the proprietor's agent, vetoed the bill. The militia debate was overshadowed by a constitutional debate over executive power; many Assemblymen were unwilling to give the governor broad powers to command, appoint officers, and enforce military discipline. For those on the frontier, the debate over the militia bill was aggravating as they felt that nothing was being done to aid them as they bled on the frontier. This antipathy was directed at the ruling Quaker party. Though still pacifists, most Quaker Assemblymen supported the necessary defense measures outlined in the militia bill, but their dispute with the Proprietorship derailed the proposed legislation.[99] Unable to understand the political situation in Philadelphia, most frontiersmen attributed the gridlock to Quaker pacifism. “In blaming the Quakers in general for their plight,” writes historian Kevin Kenny, “frontier settlers reduced the Assembly to Quakerism and Quakerism to pacifism. From this perspective the Assembly was at best ineffective and at worst indifferent to frontier suffering.”[100] Finally, in

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[98] *Colonial Records*, 6:729.

[99] Theodore Thayer, “The Quaker Party of Pennsylvania, 1755-1765.” The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography 71, no. 1 (1947): 19–43. Pg. 19.

[100] Kenny, *Peaceable Kingdom Lost*, 80.

November 1755, mounting anger from the frontier combined with months of Indian raids to prompt the passage of a militia act.

Benjamin Franklin was the chief author of the new militia act. Franklin had grown very powerful, politically speaking, since founding the Associators in 1747. He was elected to the Pennsylvanian Assembly in 1751 and appointed Postmaster General of British North America in 1753. In November 1755, almost seven years after the founding of the Associators, Franklin lobbied for and presented a militia bill to the Pennsylvanian Assembly. A strong proponent of military defense, Franklin saw the Quakers' pacifistic tendencies as a breach of the civil contract. He believed that in exchange for the population's obedience, the Assembly must protect its citizens. As Franklin explained, '"The frontier of any dominion being attack'd, it becomes not merely *the cause* of the people immediately affected but properly the cause of the whole body. Where Frontier People owe and pay obedience, there they have a right to look for protection. No political proposition is better established than this."[101] Franklin argued that any Quaker who would not yield his religious principles in order to perform his political responsibilities had no place in government.[102] In his mind, those who would not defend their country should step aside and let those without religious qualms take up

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[101] *"The Interest of Great Britain Considered, [17 April 1760],"* Founders Online, National Archives, https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Franklin/01-09-02-0029. [Original source: The Papers of Benjamin Franklin, vol. 9, January 1, 1760, through December 31, 1761, ed. Leonard W. Labaree. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966, pp. 47–100.]

[102] Jacquelyn C Miller, "Franklin and Friends: Benjamin Franklin's Ties to Quakers and Quakerism." Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies 57, no. 4 (1990). Pg. 328.

arms "great Numbers of People of other religious Denominations are come among us, who are under no such Restraint, some of whom have been disciplined in the Art of War, and conscientiously think it their Duty to fight in Defense of their Country, their Wives, their Families and Estates, and such have an equal Right to Liberty of Conscience with others."[103] His militia law was ratified on November 24th, 1755.

The Militia Act was modeled after the Associators and created a voluntary force meant for the purpose of local defense. The militia's voluntary nature was added to accommodate the Quakers, no inhabitants whose religious scruples prevented them from doing so would be required to serve in the militia. To alleviate financial strains, militiamen were provided weapons, supplies, and training at the colony's expense. Additionally, militiamen were not required to spend more than three days away from home and could not be mustered for more than three weeks.[104] The Assembly then appointed commissioners tasked with organizing the militia on the frontier. Franklin was appointed commissioner to Northampton County, where he spent six weeks organizing the militia and building fortifications.

While in Northampton County, Franklin observed the region's Moravian population in the village of Gnadenhutten. The Moravians were members of one of Pennsylvania's many German Peace Churches. These pacifistic German denominations stressed neutrality in the conflicts between Britain and France as well as belief in

[103] "Militia Act, [25 November 1755]," *Packard Humanities Institute: The Papers of Benjamin Franklin.* https://franklinpapers.org/framedVolumes.jsp.
[104] Ibid.

nonresistant martyrdom that utilized language of the meek righteously suffering.[105] As with the Quakers, Moravians were exempt from bearing arms under the Militia Act. However, upon arriving in the village, Franklin was shocked to discover the Moravian population bearing arms and fortifying the village, prompted by the recent Indian attack on Gnadenhutten: "common sense," Franklin wrote, "aided by present danger, will sometimes be too strong for whimsical opinions."[106]

The initial months of the French and Indian War wrought horrors on the Pennsylvania frontier and forced the frontier population, including pacifist Germans, to either adapt or suffer. By March 1756 an estimated seven hundred frontiersmen had been killed in raids, with thousands more fleeing to the interior.[107] In the harrowing months of 1755-56 the frontier population came together into a single recognizable identity focused on defense from Indian attack. Fear soon translated into a deep-seated hatred, against Indians more broadly as well as against a government accused of neglecting their safety by watching on indifferently as hostile Indians killed, scalped, raped, and pillaged settlers across the Pennsylvania frontier. Faced with the brutality of war, the frontier population was not prepared to unquestionably accept the leadership of eastern elites. They bitterly reprimanded the provincial authorities for failing to protect them. Lancastrians even

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[105] Jan Stievermann, "A 'Plain, Rejected Little Flock': The Politics of Martyrological Self-Fashioning among Pennsylvania's German Peace Churches, 1739-65." The William and Mary Quarterly 66, no. 2 (2009). 289-323.

[106] Benjamin Franklin, *Franklin's Autobiography (Eclectic English Classics)*. Project Gutenberg, 2011. Packard Humanities Institute: The Papers of Benjamin Franklin. Accessed September 11, 2020. Pg. 124

[107] *Colonial Records*, 6:363.

attacked government agent, trader, and negotiator Conrad Weiser. "Some of the people threatened to shoot me…" Weiser wrote. "The Crie was the land is betrayed and sold."[108] So little faith resided with the Pennsylvanian government that a group of frontiersmen went so far as to petition King George II to intervene and defend Pennsylvania:

> Your Majesty would rather be graciously pleased to interpose your royal authority that this important province situated in the center of your Magesty's American dominions may be in a position of defense which under your Sacred Majesty equitable accommodation we can firmly trust will be with the demands regarding to the general safety of the colonies as well as the particular determination of those rights and privileges with which we and all your Majesty's subjects are so highly favored.[109]

Militias reflect the communities from which they originate and are important social tools in those communities. When a militia law was finally passed, those who served in the militia had already served in ad hoc bands of volunteers who had self-organized in the months prior to the law and took it upon themselves to defend their homes. They were a fierce people who, having experienced the death and torture of neighbors and loved ones, were themselves capable of committing atrocities. In December 1755, for instance, David Weiser reported to the Pennsylvania assembly that the "Paxton people took an enemy Indian," and after torturing him, "they shott him in the midst of them, scalped him and threw his Body into the River."[110]

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[108] Weiser to Morris, Nov. 19 1755, Conrad Weiser Papers, 1:34, quoted in Matthew C. Ward. *Breaking the Backcountry: Seven Years War in Virginia and Pennsylvania 1754-1765*, University of Pittsburgh Press, 2004. ProQuest Ebook Central, Pg. 60.

[109] The National Archives. The National Archives, September 12, 2022. CO 5/1274.

[110] *Colonial Records*, 6:363.

By April 1756 the political debate over the now-broken status of the former Long Peace reached a fever pitch when Israel Pemberton Jr. and the radical Quakers in the Assembly presented a "Humble Address" to Governor Morris. In the "Humble Address" this small group of fervently devout Quakers evoked the memory of William Penn and the Treaty of Shackamaxon and advocated for an investigation of the Delaware's grievances against the colony. They believed that once the source of these grievances was addressed, peace could be achieved. By using diplomacy these Quakers believed they could halt what they viewed as a rising bellicose spirit that was anathema to everything Pennsylvania had long stood for.

At the same, the Assembly received a report that frontiersmen, now armed and organized into militia units, were preparing to march from Lancaster to Philadelphia in order to pressure the government to formally declare war on the Western Delaware and other hostile Indians. On April 14, 1756, before the marchers could gather, Governor Morris declared war, stating, "the Delaware Tribe of Indians, and others in Confederacy with them had for some Time past, without the least Provocation, and contrary to the most solemn Treaties, fallen upon this province, and in a most cruel, savage and perfidious Manner killed and butchered great Numbers of the Inhabitants."[111] In addition to declaring war, the proclamation began the practice of scalp bounties in Pennsylvania, in which the scalp of any Indian (it was impossible to conclusively determine if the scalp was from a friendly or enemy Indian) would bring a sum of 60 British pounds, however due to currency shortages the reward was often paid out in Spanish dollars, to the

[111] *Colonial Records*, 7:87-89.

provider.[112] As Peter Silver, historian, explains, the issuance of scalp bounties encouraged proactive aggression from the frontier population and countered the humiliation of settlers fleeing the frontier:

> Offered displaced farmers the prospect of scouting about independently – like Indian attack groups – and making sudden fortunes. Their showy pitilessness suggested resolve, and the taking of the offensive: the first few things stripped away by the flights and defeats of Indian War. And with the lack of spirit that followed most attacks, it seemed clear the country people would need some such 'encouragement' to stay on their farms.[113]

The declaration of war in April 1756 and the issuance of scalp bounties shattered the Quaker hold on the Assembly. Of the nine commissioners sent to the frontier to organize the newly authorized militia, only two – John Mifflin and Joseph Fox – were Quakers, and even those two were promptly excommunicated from the faith after they refused to disavow their actions, while many other prominent Quakers retired from political life. The October elections of 1756 effectively ended the Quaker oligarchy and brought new men to power who supported the proactive, aggressive defense of the frontier.[114]

Congruent to these political changes was the continuation of the bloodletting on the frontier. A food shortage among the Delaware had temporarily stayed attacks on the frontier in the spring of 1756, during which time frontiersmen further organized the militia and established a series of forts (while the governor also declared formal war).

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[112] *Pennsylvania Gazette*, July 1, 1756; *Colonial Records*, 7:84-85, 89-90.

[113] Silver, *Our Savage Neighbors*, 162.

[114] Jack Marrietta, *The Reformation of American Quakerism, 1748-1783* (Philadelphia, 1984), 150-6, in Fred Anderson, *Crucible of War: The Seven Years' War and the Fate of Empire in British North America, 1754-1766* (New York: Vintage Books, 2001). Pg. 162.

Nevertheless, raids from the Delaware resumed that summer, within seventy miles of Philadelphia. The worst such attack occurred on July 30, 1756 when a force of French and Delaware led by the Delaware chief Captain Jacob attacked, captured, and massacred the garrison of Fort Granville. The loss of Fort Granville prompted the abandonment of a now cut-off Fort Shirley and rolled back the frontier to Carlisle, only one hundred miles west of Philadelphia. In response to this devastating attack, on August 8 a force of three hundred militiamen led by Colonel John Armstrong – brother of the slain commander of Fort Granville – launched a surprise attack on the Delaware village of Kittanning. A massacre ensued, resulting in nine deaths among the Delaware, the taking of the same amount of scalps (including of women and children), and the release of a dozen white captives. Among the dead was Captain Jacob and his family, who died after a fire to his home detonated a large cache of gunpowder: "the leg and thigh of an Indian child of three or four years old were thrown to such a height that they appeared as nothing and then fell in the adjacent cornfields."[115] Frontiersmen generally viewed the assault on Kittanning as a spectacular success, setting the bar for what frontiersmen expected from their leaders: proactive and aggressive tactics that shifted the war from their homes.[116]

The bloody war on the frontier continued unabated into 1757 but abruptly ended in the fall of 1758 with the Treaty of Easton and the fall of Fort Duquesne to the British Army. The French and Indian War in North America lasted another five years, but for

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[115] *Pennsylvania Gazette*, September 23, 1756.

[116] Daniel P. Barr, "Victory at Kittanning? Reevaluating the Impact of Armstrong's Raid on the Seven Years' War in Pennsylvania." *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 131, no. 1 (2007): 5–32. http://www.jstor.org/stable/20093915.

Pennsylvania the conflict was over. The conflict marked the creation of a frontier identity organized around the militia that was distrustful of its government, increasingly hateful of Indians, and conditioned to believe that violence and the threat of violence could be used as a tool to handle both. The development of this militant identity led to the radical actions taken by the Paxton Boys in the winter of 1763-1764, with first the massacre of the Conestoga Indians and then a march on Philadelphia.

CHAPTER 5

RENEWAL OF HOSTILITIES ON THE FRONTIER

The war in Pennsylvania came to an end in 1758 in large part because of the Treaty of Easton. According to the treaty, the Eastern Delaware in the Wyoming Valley along with the Western Delaware, Shawnee, and ten other minor tribes in the Ohio River Valley agreed to cease hostilities and ally with the British in their war with the French. In exchange for the cessation of the conflict the colonial governments of Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia agreed to renounce their territorial claims west of the Allegheny mountains. Additionally, Governor William Denny of Pennsylvania decided to set aside the proprietorships land interests and agreed to Delaware requests to resume trade, relinquish land, and most importantly investigate the validity of the Walking Purchase of 1737.[117]

Despite these concessions, however, the Treaty of Easton secured peace along the Pennsylvania frontier for only five years. In 1762 Sir William Johnson, Britain's Superintendent of Indian Affairs, met with the Eastern and Western Delaware at Easton to resolve the Walking Treaty. The end result was the confirmation of Pennsylvania's claim to the disputed Wyoming Valley. The Delaware came out of the conference once again subjects of the Iroquois, who still thought of them as dependents. When asked by the Delaware to return some of their territory in central Pennsylvania, the Iroquois derisively replied "What are we English now to give Deeds to Indians?"[118] So too did

[117] Fred Anderson, *Crucible of War: The Seven Years' War and the Fate of Empire in British North America, 1754-1766* (New York: Vintage Books, 2001). Pg. 269.

Indian resentment rose against the British for their termination of the policy of "gift giving," which deprived the tribes in the Ohio of gunpowder, foodstuffs, and manufactured goods, exposing them to economic hardships and even starvation. More importantly it also signaled to the tribes that the British saw them not as valued allies or trade partners but rather imperial subjects in an unequal relationship that would eventually degrade their social and political statuses.[119] In a letter dated June 6, 1763 Edward Shippen, the magistrate of Lancaster, reported Indian trader George Croghan's belief that "It is highly probable there will be a General Indian War."[120] That summer, under the leadership of the Ottawa chief Pontiac, the tribes of the Great Lakes and the Ohio River Valley revolted against the British. War once again befell the Pennsylvania frontier in 1763.

By the end of July 1763, Indian had forces captured eight British forts around the Great Lakes. Within weeks, Delaware forces were laying siege to Fort Pitt, formerly Fort Duquesne, and conducting raids along the Pennsylvania frontier. Reminiscent of 1755, frontier families were once again at the mercy of a determined enemy. Writing from Lancaster, Reverend Thomas Barton reflected the fear and anxiety among the frontier population. "The Barbarians have renew'd their hostilities against us and our country

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[118] *Pennsylvania Archives*. 9 series, 119 vols. Harrisburg, PA: Theo. Fenn, 1852-1935. 8:4:4623

[119] Gregory Evans Dowd, *War under Heaven: Pontiac, The Indian Nations, & the British Empire*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004. Pg. 70.

[120] Edward Shippen to Joseph Shippen June 6, 1763, "Burd-Shippen Family Papers." ULS Digital Collection. University of Pennsylvania.

bleeds again under Savage Knife," he wrote, "News of Murdering, burning, and scalping is daily convey'd to us, and confirm'd with shocking Additions."[121]

But the Pennsylvania militia law from 1755 was no longer intact. The legislature let the existing militia act expire and saw no reason to renew the temporary measure following the cessation of hostilities in 1758. Once again, as at the beginning of the French and Indian War, the Pennsylvania Assembly was slow to respond to the crisis, instead squabbling over how to fund a new militia and the role of the governor in organizing and leading it. "The miserable people throughout almost the whole Frontier" sought to be saved from "a Dread of being cruelly butchered," James Hamilton, Governor of Pennsylvania, urged the Assembly.[122] The Assembly responded in July 1763 by passing a resolution establishing, for three months, a militia force of 700 men recruited from the frontier under the commands of Reverend John Elder of Paxton, known as the "fighting pastor" for his leadership of Paxton volunteers in the French and Indian War, and Colonel John Armstrong, the hero of Kittanning.[123]

Though a step in the right direction according to many frontiersmen, the resolution establishing a temporary militia was quickly criticized for not going far

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[121] Thomas Barton to Dr. Daniel Burton, June 28, 1763, HSP, AM 813 "Copies of Letters from Rev. T Barton, etc. to the Society for the propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts," quoted in Kevin Kenny*, Peaceable Kingdom Lost: The Paxton Boys and the Destruction of William Penn's Holy Experiment.* New York (N.Y.): Oxford University Press, 2011. Pg. 119.

[122] *Colonial Records of Pennsylvania, The Minutes of the Provincial Council of Pennsylvania, From the Organization to the Termination of the Proprietary Government*. 16 Volumes. Harrisburg, PA: Theo. Fenn, 1851. 9:31-33.

[123] *Colonial Records*, 9:36.

enough. For one, it was a purely defensive force tasked with responding reactively to Indian incursions. It was also assigned only the bare minimum of the manpower required to defend the frontier. In 1755 such a force even as small as this would have been celebrated; however, after the experiences of the French and Indian War, the frontier population demanded heightened military support and much more aggressive, offensive action. The French and Indian War had fundamentally altered the expectations, organization, and mindset of the frontier population, transforming them from a scattered collection of fearful settlers struggling to withstand vicious onslaughts, into a battle-hardened population with a coherent identity determined to protect themselves. Historian Fred Anderson characterizes the French and Indian War as a crucible that shaped the colonial American population and encouraged them to challenge the status quo: "But everywhere in the colonies that men had served as provincial soldiers, the war would have its influence, even if it was less encompassing than in New England. The intense, shared experiences of fatigue and discipline, of boredom and fear, of physical hardship and battle, would for years inform the perceptions and help shape the actions of the men who had served."[124]

In 1763 the frontier population was distrustful of its eastern, colonial government in Philadelphia, hateful generally of Indians, and ready to embrace aggressive policies against either. When Pontiac's Rebellion reached the Pennsylvania frontier in June 1763, the frontiersmen took it upon themselves to organize their own defense. Using Pennsylvania's Articles of Association, they formed their own associator companies.

[124] Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 289.

Named after the regions they were from, these units referred to themselves as the "Cumberland Boys" and the "Paxton Boys." With the passage of the militia resolution by the legislature in July, these Associator companies reorganized into militia companies tasked with defending the frontier. Rather than simply resort to defensive measures, however, the newly formed militias expressed a strong desire to bring the fight to the enemy.

Nothing emphasized this desire more than the call for a renewal of scalp bounties, which the Assembly had declined to renew the legislation after the capture of Fort Duquesne in 1758. With the outbreak of Pontiac's War, frontier leaders demanded the policy be renewed. Reverend Thomas Barton of Lancaster believed the restoration of scalp bounties would demonstrate the resolve of the Assembly to the frontier population, who then "would be prompted by Revenge, Duty, Ambition, and the Prospect of the Reward, to carry Fire and Sword into the Heart of the Indian Country"[125] Scalp bounties might also serve as a deterrent to potential attacks that they believed were aided and abetted by their Indian neighbors. Trader and interpreter Thomas McKee reported that in Paxton, rumors of an Indian raid prompted the town's residents to threaten to scalp the local Indian population who they believed were working with the raiders. While this threat was not carried out, McKee believed that "it would be far weller to have killed them [the Indians], then exasperate them in the manner they have done, And leaving them

[125] Thomas Barton to Dr. Daniel Burton, June 28, 1763, HSP, AM 813 "Copies of Letters from Rev. T Barton, etc. to the Society for the propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts," quoted in Kevin Kenny, *Peaceable Kingdom Lost: The Paxton Boys and the Destruction of William Penn's Holy Experiment*. New York (N.Y.): Oxford University Press, 2011. Pg. 119.

to Revenge these Barbarities, perhaps on Some Innocent family." Edward Shippen expressed in a letter to his son his belief that "a good reward offered for Scalps would be the most effectual way of quelling the Indians."[126]

The desire among frontiersmen for scalp bounties and their willingness to engage in violence and coercion against all Indians regardless of their tribal affiliation attested to an extreme sense of desperation that existed among the settler population in central and western Pennsylvania. Many frontiersmen had lost family, friends, and neighbors to Indian attacks, both during the French and Indian War and now during Pontiac's War. Many people on the frontier found themselves transformed into refugees, "driven from their Houses and Habitations, and all the Comforts and Conveniences of life." By July 25 there were 1,384 refugees in Shippensburg alone, of whom 738 were children.[127] John Elder, in a report dated August 4 to Governor James Hamilton, relayed that "here and everywhere else in the back counties were quite sunk and dispirited, so that it's to be feared that on any attack of the enemy, a considerable part of the Country will be evacuated, as all seem inclinable to seek Safety rather in flight than in opposing the Savage Foe." Elder believed that the formation of the frontier militia would galvanize the population and promote a sense of security. The problem was that the militia authorized by the Assembly in July 1763 lacked the numbers – only 700 men – to properly defend the frontier and act offensively against the threat. In order to cover as much territory as possible, the militia companies authorized by that resolution had been broken down into

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[126] Thomas McKee to James Burd July 9, 1763; Edward Shippen to Joseph Shippen July 13, 21, 30, 1763. "Burd-Shippen Family Papers."

[127] *Pennsylvania Gazette,* July 21, 1763 and Aug 4, 1763.

smaller detachments and stationed six miles from one another. If a detachment was attacked, nearby detachments would respond and come to their aid. However, due to the small size of the militia in the aggregate, Elder admitted that it was impossible to adequately defend the entire frontier, especially those isolated settlements "scattered along the river almost up to Augusta, and among the mountains in remote places."[128]

To compensate for their inadequate defensive capabilities, the frontier militia authorized by the Assembly resorted to terror and aggressive military tactics. They were inspired in great part by the Battle of Kittanning in 1756, during the early part of the French and Indian War, but especially by British Colonel Henry Bouquet's expedition to relieve Fort Pitt in August 1763. Though Bouquet's expedition, composed of British regulars and a detachment of Pennsylvania frontiersmen, was ambushed by Indians twenty-six miles from Fort Pitt at a place called Edge Hill, the British and Pennsylvania forces successfully defeated the Delaware and Shawnee at the ensuing Battle of Bushy Run. According to one soldier, "The Indians never had so severe a drubbing since they knew the use of Powder."[129] The Battle of Bushy Run resulted in the deaths of many Indian leaders and prompted the abandonment of the Indian siege at Fort Pitt. The expedition also demonstrated to the frontiersmen the benefits of offensive tactics that could compensate for a lack of manpower. It emboldened a population terrorized by raids. However, the ambush at Edge Hill that preceded the Battle of Bushy Run also reinforced fears of secret enemies among friendly Indian tribes aiding Pontiac's

[128] John Elder to James Hamilton, August 4, 1763, DCHS, Elder Collection, MG70, quoted in Kenny, *Peaceable Kingdom Lost,* 125.

[129] *Pennsylvania Gazette*, August 18, 1763.

Rebellion. One frontier participant recalled that the location of the ambush was "very advantageously chose by a savage enemy, surrounded on every side by rising grounds, except one, and that Morass; but by the Intrepidity and Coolness of our Men, they were soon put to fight."[130] Between 1755 and 1758, the frontier population had been forced to continually flee, fortify settlements, and weather out persistent attacks that could come from any direction at any time. After so many destructive raids, the *Pennsylvania Gazette* noted that "Today a British vengeance begins to rise in the Breasts of our Men."[131] With or without the assembly's approval, the Pennsylvania frontiersmen were determined to bring bloody retribution against the native population.

Despite a strong desire to undertake offensive actions and bring the fight to the Indians, the frontiersmen were hampered by a militia resolution that forbid offensive actions and an Assembly that saw the British presence and existing militia as an adequate force to defend the frontier. In order to achieve the offensive policy they desired, John Elder and John Armstrong chose to bypass the Assembly and act unilaterally. This was accomplished through the organization of ranger companies. Ranger companies were small units of men organized to fight in the Indian manner of irregular warfare, relying upon ferocity, speed, and surprise to raid, terrorize, ambush, and wreck chaos behind enemy lines. The ranger companies were formed using the Articles of Association of 1747 and the pre-established Associator companies that were established during the early days of Pontiac's Rebellion. These ranger companies were composed and commanded by

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[130] John Elder to James Hamilton, August 4, 1763, DCHS, Elder Collection, MG70, quoted in Kenny, *Peaceable Kingdom Lost,* 125.

[131] "*Pennsylvania Gazette* July 21, 1763," quoted in Dowd, *War Under Heaven,* 147.

members of the same militia that had been organized by the Assembly. They simply appropriated the funds, supplies, and weaponry provided by the assembly's resolution to launch punitive expeditions into Indian territory that were not sanctioned by the colonial government.[132]

The first of these expeditions, composed of a company of 110 volunteers, began August 20, 1763, and "set out in order to attack our Indian neighbors wherever they would find them."[133] On August 21, a large party of Delaware warriors attacked the expedition, who repulsed the Delaware with minimal losses. The ambush once again served to validate the theory that supposedly friendly Indians were aiding hostile raiders in their war against Pennsylvania. After the attack, the rangers seized, shot, and scalped three Moravian Indians: Christianized Delaware who had never attacked the settlers. Overjoyed in finally taking the offensive, the victorious and vengeful frontiersmen yearned for more action. "The young fellows are in high spirits and resolved as soon as possible to take another," wrote Thomas McKee.[134]

In taking unilateral action, the Pennsylvania frontiersmen not only defied the governing body in Philadelphia, but they also proved to themselves that offensive action was the correct course to take. In doing so, they put themselves above the legal authorities and convinced themselves that the only way to properly defend the frontier was through bloody retaliatory attacks against an Indian menace they believed was aided

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[132] Kenny, *Peaceable Kingdom Lost*, 125.

[133] Thomas McKee to James Burd, July 9, 1763. "Burd-Shippen Papers."

[134] Ibid.

by *all* Indian populations living within Pennsylvania's borders.[135] The rise of independent action was a result of the fear, hatred, and anxiety that had developed after nine years of vicious frontier warfare which saw frontiersmen attacked and farmsteads burned: their families and their property alike threatened. Gathering in groups such as the militia allowed frontiersmen an element of control in an out-of-control situation. This started out as largely symbolic actions in which men would gather to patrol their communities and fire their guns into the air. This gradually evolved into acts of organized and savage violence aimed at perceived enemies.[136]

As during the French and Indian War, the frontier perception that the Assembly in Philadelphia cared little for their plight was reinforced by yet another political-constitutional debate over the matters of the proprietorship. To the immense anger of the frontier population, a bill in October 1763 to extend the militia resolution an additional three months was hampered over the issue of the Proprietorships quitrent and the taxation of Proprietary funds. The Assembly refused to condone Governor Hamilton's military proposals, while the governor vetoed any legislation put in front of him, including a bill that would have renewed the militia resolution. After three vetoes, the Assembly finally relented and passed a funding bill in October that did not make use of Proprietary funds. This funding bill kept the frontier's defenses paid until February 1764, but the damage

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[135] Samuel J. Newland, *The Pennsylvania Militia: Defending the Commonwealth and the Nation, 1669-1870*. Annville, PA: Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Dept. of Military and Veterans Affairs, 2002. Pg. 99.

[136] Krista Camenzind, "Violence, Race, and the Paxton Boys," essay in *Friends and Enemies in Penn's Woods: Indians, Colonists, and the Racial Construction of Pennsylvania*, 201–20. Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004. Pg. 221.

was already done. To many frontiersmen it appeared that the aloof Assembly, and the pacifistic Quakers in particular, utterly disregarded their lives, property, and well-being, in favor of trivial matters of money and proprietary power.[137]

Faced with a seemingly apathetic government and convinced of a concerted Indian threat to destroy them, the frontiersmen took increasingly radical action to defend themselves, particularly beginning in October 1763. In the middle of that month, the Paxton Boys, under orders from John Elder, set out to destroy the Moravian Indians who were thought to have aided recent Delaware attacks on frontier settlements. In a letter to Governor Hamilton, Elder stated that the rangers were to "strike these in order to root out a nest of banditti there consisting of Delaware, Nanitocks, and others, our bitter enemies."[138] Without waiting for Hamilton's authorization, the Paxton Boys set out to the Wyoming Valley to exact bloody retribution. However, instead of revenge they happened across the scene of a bloody massacre.

On October 15, 1763 a force of Delaware raiders attacked the settlement of Mill's Creek killing ten whites and capturing another twelve. Writing later from Paxton, a participant in the expedition wrote:

> They met with no Indians but found the New Englanders, who had been killed and scalped a day or two before they got there. Nine men and one woman had been most cruelly butchered, the woman was roasted and had two hinges in her hands, supposed to be put in red hot, and several of the men had awls thrust into their eyes, and spears, arrows, pitchforks, and etc. sticking in their bodies.[139]

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[137] *Colonial Records*, 9:52-56.

[138] John Elder to James Hamilton, September 30, 1763, DCHS, Elder Collection, MG70; quoted in Kenny, *Peaceable Kingdom Lost,* 128.

[139] Julian P. Boyd and Robert J. Taylor, *The Susquehannah Company Papers*. Published for Wyoming Historical & Geological Society by Cornell University Press, 1969. 2:227.

Such tactics were intended to inflict as much terror as possible amongst the frontier population. However, far from inflicting terror, the massacre of Mills Creek served as the catalyst for an explosion of anti-Indian violence that would rock Pennsylvania and bring the frontiersmen's anger directly to Philadelphia.

In an act that made the government's relationship with frontiersmen even worse, the Assembly published a letter from British General Jeffrey Amherst to Governor Hamilton, expressing the general's "Surprise at the infatuation of the people in your province, who tamely look on while their brethren are butchered by the savages."[140] In response to Amherst's criticism, the Assembly noted that the general was "unacquainted with the vigorous measures which this Government has pursued, much beyond any of the rest of the colonies, for the protection and defense of their long-extended frontier."[141] Pointing to the supposed effectiveness of the 700-man militia force, which they had provided, at repulsing Indian attacks, the Assembly pinned the carnage squarely on the shoulders of Governor Hamilton, the Commander in Chief. They argued that it was his veto of the militia resolution and lack of overall military leadership that were the principal problems hindering Pennsylvania's defense. To further complicate matters, the Proprietor, Thomas Penn, removed Hamilton from his position as Governor and replaced him with his nephew John Penn, who arrived in Philadelphia on October 30 to assume the governorship.

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[140] *Colonial Records*, 9:62-63.

[141] *Pennsylvania Archives*, 8:5:484-85.

In 1758 the Pennsylvania frontier breathed a collective sigh of relief with the signing of the Treaty of Easton. Three years of terror, bloodshed, and paranoia brought about by a brutal Indian war was over and those who survived it sought to bring stability back into their lives. This period of peace ended abruptly in 1763 when Indians once again ravaged the Pennsylvania frontier. However, the frontiersmen of the previous conflict had evolved into a battle-hardened frontier identity that was willing to use force against their enemies. These enemies included Indians, regardless or not if they were friendly or hostile, and a seemingly apathetic government that did little to defend them. By the winter of 1763 simmering anger and frustrations culminated in a bloody and dramatic series of events as the frontier militia aimed to even the score.

CHAPTER 6

THE PAXTON BOYS

With the arrival of the new governor, John Penn, in Philadelphia on October 30, 1763, church bells rang, cannons fired, and the city celebrated. The hostile Indians that had ravaged the frontier for months were defeated and the arrival of a Penn governor was seen as the end to crippling political gridlock. This was enough not to quell the rage that had solidified on the frontier.

The hope and fanfare that Philadelphia and the Assembly draped upon John Penn, however, only masked the reality that the thirty-four-year-old man was completely out of his depth. Penn not only lacked political and administrative experience but had hardly spent any time in the colony he was supposed to govern. In a letter to his uncle dated November 15, 1763 he stated, "My whole time has been almost employ'd in receiving guests and addresses and attending feasts and entertainments which as they were made on purpose for me I could not by any means avoid tho it was the hardest duty I ever went thro in my life."[142] Thoroughly overwhelmed by his new position Penn was inundated with petitions and grievances from all over the colony. These petitions included those on the frontier who demanded action against the supposed Indian menace, which by November 1763 included, according to leading frontiersmen, friendly Indians residing in Pennsylvania. The challenge was that the colonial government was bound by treaty to protect those very Indians, among whom the Conestoga were chief.

[142] *Pennsylvania Archives*. 9 series, 119 vols. Harrisburg, PA: Theo. Fenn, 1852-1935. 4:3:235-236.

The Conestoga Indians were descendants of the once mighty Susquehannock Indians, who had dominated the lower Susquehanna River Valley in the seventeenth century. Wracked by disease and threatened by the Iroquois Confederacy, the Susquehannock migrated to the northern Chesapeake region at the behest of the Maryland governor. However, once in Maryland, harassment from Maryland and Virginia militiamen sparked a war in 1676. This war, known as Bacon's Rebellion, was catastrophic for the Susquehannock and resulted in the decimation of its population. The survivors of the conflict fled north with many joining the Delaware and Iroquois. Some decided to remain independent, however, and being led by Connoodaghtoh, this band returned to the Susquehanna River Valley, where they were granted five hundred acres of land by William Penn. The native people who settled this land, and the town in which they lived, eventually came to bear the simplified English name of their leader, Conestoga. By the beginning of the eighteenth century, the Conestoga served as a model template for the Long Peace in Pennsylvania, functioning as trade partners with the colonists and as a buffer state between Pennsylvania and hostile Indian groups further north and west. This was a role that the Conestoga willingly embraced. The alternative was subjugation at the hands of their old enemies the Iroquois. Rather than become subjects of the Iroquois, they bound themselves to Pennsylvania and William Penn.[143] This arrangement began in the 1690s, but it became official in April 1701 when Connoodaghtoh met with Penn and agreed to a treaty. The 1701 treaty stipulated that

[143] Kevin Kenny, *Peaceable Kingdom Lost: The Paxton Boys and the Destruction of William Penn's Holy Experiment*. New York (N.Y.): Oxford University Press, 2011. Pg. 11.

neither side would harm the other, and that the Conestoga would be protected by Pennsylvanian law. In return the Conestoga recognized "the authority of the crown of England and government of this Province."[144] For the next six decades the Conestoga lived peacefully under this arrangement. That all changed in 1763 with the radicalization of the frontier militia.

By the 1760s the Conestoga Indians had for all intents and purposes assimilated into the colonial culture of Pennsylvania. They farmed, wore European clothing, spoke English, and most had converted to Christianity. And yet despite these changes, the mentality of the Pennsylvania frontier had already begun a process of strictly differentiating between the two categories of "savage" and "civilized." Since both white settlers and Indians engaged in brutal and barbaric activities over the course of the 1750s, there was no real difference in this regard between the two groups. Historian Steven Craig Harper describes how solidifying these cultural categories of civilized and savage required a subtle, complex, and largely unconscious process of racialization that he argues helped to make the anxieties of frontier life more bearable and comprehendible.[145] William Parsons of Easton wrote that the frontiersmen "are so perverse and quarrelsome in all their affairs that I am sometimes ready to query with myself whether it be man or beast that the generous benefactors are about to civilize. It seems to me like attempting to

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[144] *Colonial Records of Pennsylvania, The Minutes of the Provincial Council of Pennsylvania, From the Organization to the Termination of the Proprietary Government*. 16 Volumes. Harrisburg, PA: Theo. Fenn, 1851. 3:601-2.

[145] Steven Harper, *Promised Land: Penn's Holy Experiment, the Walking Purchase, and the Dispossession of Delawares, 1600-1763*. Lehigh University Press, 2006. Pg. 87.

wash a blackamoor white."[146] The "civilized," on the one hand, constructed roads, government buildings, schools, jails, churches, and forts; on the other hand, the "civilized" sanctioned extreme violence, whether by mobs or legal authorities – a horse thief could be sentenced to hang by a judge or a mob could, in the case of the Conestoga, massacre a perceived enemy.[147] It did not matter to the frontiersmen that the Conestoga had converted to Christianity, farmed, or wore European clothing. Racially speaking, they were a separate group, and they had retained enough of their native culture and language to be categorized as savage and viewed as associates of the marauding Delaware.

Noticing the mounting resentment against them from the frontiersmen, who by this point refused to make virtually any distinction between hostile and friendly Indians, the Conestoga requested that an agent be appointed to protect them from colonial encroachment and violence, and to provide them financial assistance to survive the winter. In a petition on November 30, 1763 the Conestoga reminded John Penn that they were settled in Pennsylvania "at this place by an agreement of peace and amity established between your grandfathers and ours."[148] The colonial assembly in Philadelphia accepted the Conestoga petition and sent funds and an agent to ensure their survival. Additionally, considering the numerous ranger expeditions conducted against peaceful Christian Indians, the Assembly also sent commissioners to Northampton

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[146] Ibid., 100.

[147] Ibid., 101.

[148] *Colonial Records*, 9:88-89.

County earlier that month to assess the situation of the Moravian Delaware Indians living there. They ultimately came to conclusion that the only way to protect the Indians was to evacuate them to Philadelphia and away from the murderous frontiersmen.

On November 8, 1763, a party of 127 Moravian Indians set out for Philadelphia from Northampton County. According to John Penn their removal was designed "to quiet the minds of the inhabitants of Northampton County who were determined either to quit their settlement or take an opportunity of murdering them all, being suspicious of their having been concerned in several murders in that county."[149] The decision to evacuate the Indians enraged the frontier population who by this point were convinced that the government was more interested in protecting savages than they were in aiding them. They were particularly incensed that the government was willing to use public funds to not only to protect Indians but help them survive the winter.[150] This was not something that the government had done for the frontiersmen in even the most harrowing months of the French and Indian War. This sentiment was reinforced with the untimely arrival on December 8 of a new Royal Proclamation of King George III. The infamous Proclamation of 1763 codified the boundary line, initially established in the 1758 Treaty of Easton, that separated Indian from colonial lands, and prohibited further colonial expansion westward. Though not issued by the Pennsylvania government, the frontiersmen nonetheless perceived from the Proclamation that all forms of government

[149] *Pennsylvania Archives*, 8:6:5482-83.

[150] Peter Rhoads Silver, *Our Savage Neighbors: How Indian War Transformed Early America*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2009. Pg. 169.

were consciously out to get them. Amidst all this fear, hate, and resentment, the Conestoga Indians who had yet to evacuate made an attractive target.

On December 13, 1763, the Paxton rangers assembled in Paxton and traveled 80 miles down the Susquehanna River. The next morning, Wednesday, December 14, the rangers descended upon Conestoga Town and in a matter of minutes brutally massacred six of the inhabitants. Some rangers dismounted to fire their flintlocks while others rushed inside homes with tomahawks to butcher the hapless residents. Once all the Conestoga in the town were dead, the attackers' scalped men, women, and even children. Whatever loot could be found was strapped to the saddles, and as they departed they set fire to the buildings. Witnessing the rangers on their ride back north to Paxton, local Quakers and Thomas McKee – the agent assigned to protect the Conestoga – were horrified to discover the burned and mutilated bodies among the ruins of Conestoga Town.[151] Among the ashes, McKee also discovered two strands of wampum given to the Conestoga by William Penn and the remains of the 1701 treaty that had once guaranteed peace between Pennsylvania and the Indian tribe. Tragically, when news of the massacre reached Philadelphia, that evening a letter from the Conestoga personally thanking Governor John Penn and the legislature for their aid had just been read aloud to the Assembly.[152]

The next day an immediate investigation into the attack was launched at the behest of Penn. When questioned by Edward Shippen as to his knowledge of the attack,

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[151] Gregory Evans Dowd, *War Under Heaven: Pontiac, The Indian Nations, & the British Empire*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004. Pg. 163.

[152] Kenny, *Peaceable Kingdom Lost*, 138.

John Elder – Presbyterian minister and Scots-Irish commander of the Paxton militia – admitted that he knew of the rangers plans on the twelfth of December but denied ordering such an attack. The massacre, Elder explained, was perpetrated "by some hotheaded, ill-advised persons, and especially by such, I imagine, as suffered much in their relations by the Ravages committed in the late Indian War."[153] Elder's assessment was somewhat accurate. Most Paxton inhabitants justified the massacre based on the actions of Will Sock, a prominent Conestoga leader who had allegedly aided a Delaware attack on nearby Fort Augusta in 1757. For the next six years gossip and hearsay made its way among the frontier population, painting Sock as a secret supporter of the French who actively sought the deaths of frontiersmen. Will Sock's supposed crimes and sympathies justified, according to the Paxton rangers and other frontier leaders, the Conestoga's collective guilt and annihilation.

Governor John Penn was aghast at the inhuman and barbarous slaughter of the Conestoga. The Conestoga, he said, "were justly considered as under the protection of this government and its laws."[154] In attacking the Conestoga, the frontier population not only struck at the Indian population, but also openly challenged the lawful authority of the Pennsylvania government. Moreover, as Pennsylvania was also part of the British Empire, the affront was also taken as a sign of rebellion against the Crown. Governor Penn issued a proclamation for any information pertaining to the attack and its perpetrators, and ordered that the proclamation be posted in public places and published

[153] *Pennsylvania Archives,* 1:6:148-49.

[154] *Colonial Records*, 9:95-96.

in the colony's newspapers.[155] This tactic, however, not only failed to gather any witnesses or leads: it further enflamed the passions of the frontiersmen. In condemning the attack on Conestoga Town, the government proved the accusations that were leveled against them. It reinforced the belief that the government favored the Indians over the frontier population – that the government was willing to punish the brave men of the frontier for what they believed was a wholly justified attack. A few weeks prior, the government had acted on the petition of a handful of Indians, but the same government had neglected almost a decade of pleas from white settlers on a perilous and virtually defenseless frontier. The pent-up resentment and rage of the Pennsylvania frontiersmen was far from spent; the worst atrocity was yet to come for the Conestoga.

When the Paxton Boys attacked Conestoga Town on December 14, most of the town's Indian inhabitants were absent, leading to only six killed in the raid. In response to the ranger's attack, Penn and the Assembly expedited the relocation of the remaining Moravian Indians from Northampton County. The surviving Conestoga were relocated to the Lancaster Workhouse, where a company of Highlanders from the British Army guarded them. However, before the Conestoga could also be relocated to Philadelphia, the Paxton Boys struck once again. On December 27, 1763, according to sources, "a number of persons to amount, of fifty or sixty, armed with rifles, Tomahawks, and ca., suddenly, about two o'clock, rushed into town and immediately repaired to the Workhouse where the Indians were confined." After brushing aside government agents they killed all Indians there "being the fourteen … to have survived the former affair at

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[155] *Colonial Records,* 9:92-97.

their town."[156] Among the dead was Will Sock and thirteen others, including some women and children. As with the attack on Conestoga Town, the rangers' victims were scalped and systematically dismembered. To the astonishment of Governor Penn and the Assembly, none of the local magistrates, including Edward Shippen, attempted to stop the attacks. According to some reports, when the Highlanders requested permission to guard the Workhouse to defend the Conestoga, local officials denied their request. On the evening of December 27, 1763, the quiet streets of the German Moravian village of Lititz suddenly filled with men on horses, shouting, "God damn you, Moravians," from one end of the small village to another, firing off a "volley of shots" from their weapons before they left town. The German Moravians of Lititz learned the next day that these riders had just slaughtered fourteen Conestoga Indians in Lancaster and had injured the sheriff, John Hay, in the process.[157]

The hatred and violence exhibited by the Paxton Boys targeted any group, including pacifist Moravians who resembled Quakers, viewed as a threat to their interests. Symbolic violence – such as the marches during the French and Indian War, the firing of guns in Lititz, and the threat of scalping Indians – seems to have been a way in which the frontier population could suppress dissident voices while also persuading those of differing opinions to their cause. The categorical differences between savage and

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[156] *Colonial Records*, 9:103-4.

[157] Scott Paul Gordon, "The Paxton Boys and the Moravians: Terror and Faith in the Pennsylvania Backcountry." Journal of Moravian history 14, no. 2 (2014): 119–152. Pg. 120.

civilized were not necessarily set in stone. The Moravian experience shows that the Paxton Boys discriminated carefully between different groups of whites: the important division for them separated enemies of the state from loyal citizens. Racial prejudice influenced the groups that the Paxton Boys considered enemies. All Indians were enemies but the category of enemy itself was not limited by race. The Paxton Boys targeted whites, English Quakers, and German Moravians, when they believed that these groups, too, jeopardized the security of the backcountry.[158]

In carrying out these massacres, it was not the Paxton Boys' intention to overthrow and replace the colonial government. Rather, they simply sought to take the law into their own hands, while also forcibly and violently demanding that government authorities in Philadelphia meet their responsibilities to help defend the frontier. The rangers designed the massacres at Conestoga Town and Lancaster to shame and galvanize authorities such as Edward Shippen to meet their responsibilities and exert themselves to defend the frontier.[159] They resented the idea of frontier communities as protective barriers to elites in the coastal cities; they rejected the coastal idea of frontier towns as mere trading posts, listening posts, emergency forts, and perhaps most importantly protective screens. James Logan, one of William Penn's chief advisors and secretary, remarked in 1728 that Philadelphia's leaders encouraged Scots-Irish settlement on the frontier because "these hot-blooded Presbyterians could be relied upon to provide the first line of defense against Indian incursions."[160] The massacre of the Conestoga on

[158] Ibid., 123.

[159] Ibid., 135.

December 14, 1763 constituted a wholesale rejection of a frontier strategy that had long been advocated by Shippen and other Philadelphia elites, and which, according to the Paxton Boys and others like them, required immense sacrifice from frontiersmen in order to secure stability and comfort for those on the coast.[161]

The two men most likely to know the identities of the attackers, John Elder and John Armstrong, denied that any of their men had participated in the attacks. In response to Armstrong's denial, Governor John Penn stated that the Paxton Boys could not have marched "Thro' the country without being seen and known by a great number of people."[162] Indeed, from accounts of both the attack on Conestoga Town and then Lancaster, the perpetrators of the massacres were identified as leaders of the Paxton militia that John Elder himself commanded. In light of this, the governor removed John Elder from his position as commander of the Paxton militia and ordered him to turn over the weapons and supplies that the legislature had provided the militia to a replacement commander appointed by the Assembly. Penn removed Elder from power in part for the punitive expeditions he had launched against the Delaware Moravian Indians in October 1763. The governor reasoned that it was highly improbable, if not impossible, that Elder – given his prominence as a local Presbyterian minister and commander of the Paxton militia – was ignorant of the details or planning of the massacre

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[160] James Logan to James Steel, November 18, 1729, Logan Family Papers, 10:46, Collection 0379, quoted in Scott Paul Gordon, "The Paxton Boys and Edward Shippen: Defiance and Deference on a Collapsing Frontier." Early American Studies 14, no. 2 (2016): 319–47. Pg. 333.
[161] Ibid., 325.

[162] *Pennsylvania Archives*, 4:1:155.

In a redoubled effort to catch the killers Penn offered a monetary reward for the Paxton Boys ringleaders and pardons for those involved in the attacks. Not one frontiersman came forward to testify against the attackers. The brutal massacre on the Conestoga and the now-apparent frontier abhorrence for the colonial government convinced Penn that a general revolt was imminent. To combat the threat, Penn requested additional forces from British Commander-in-Chief of North America, General Thomas Gage. The frontier militia, Penn informed Gage, "could not be brought to act vigorously against friends, neighbors, and relations."[163] In addition to requesting British regulars from General Gage, Penn asked the colonial assembly to prepare funds for the defense of Philadelphia against an armed insurrection. The frontier force that the colonial government had once relied upon to defend Pennsylvania, was now about to be unleashed upon Philadelphia.

The fears of an armed rebellion were proven well justified when on January 2, 1764, Edward Shippen informed the Assembly that "many of the inhabitants of the townships of Lebanon, Paxton, and Hanover in Lancaster County, were forming themselves into a Company of 200 Men, to March to Philadelphia, with a design to kill the Indians on the Province Island."[164] These two-hundred-armed frontiersmen from Lancaster County set out for Philadelphia picking up hundreds of more men as they marched on the capital. To diffuse the situation, the Assembly desperately sent the Moravian Delaware Indians who had recently relocated to Philadelphia out of the city by

[163] *Colonial Records*, 9:105.

[164] *Colonial Records*, 9:108.

wagon and under British guard to New York. However, upon reaching the border the governor of New York, Cadwallader Colden, turned away the refugees out of fear that the Indians' presence would only agitate his own frontier population.

By the end of January 1764, The Paxton Boys accumulated an estimated fifteen hundred frontiersmen as they marched towards Philadelphia to voice their displeasure with a government that, according to John Elder, "...are so exasperated against a particular set of men, deeply confined in the government, namely Quakers, and the heavy burden they laid on the province in maintaining an expensive trade and holding Treaties from time to time with Indians."[165] In the minds of the frontiersmen, if the government was not going to act in their interest, then they would make their presence felt through their actions of raw intimidation and violence. From their perspective, the Philadelphia government did not hesitate to aid Indian populations at public expense while hardly anything was given to aid the frontier.[166]

On February 4, word reached Philadelphia that the Paxton Boys were expected to arrive the next morning "with the intention of coming to this city to put to death all the Indians in the Barracks under the protection of the government."[167] Penn, lacking an organized militia force, called upon Philadelphia's Associator regiments to mobilize and fight off the oncoming frontiersmen. For the first and only time in their history the Associators mobilized to defend Philadelphia, only against a foe they could not have

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[165] John Elder to Unknown, February 1, 1764, DCHS, Elder Collection, MG70, quoted in Kenny, *Peaceable Kingdom Lost*, 150.

[166] Silver, *Our Savage Neighbors*, 182.

[167] *Colonial Records*, 9:132.

imagined: their fellow colonists. The next day, six companies of Associators, along with a company of artillery and a troop of horse – a total force of about one thousand – formed ranks at the city's courthouse and prepared for battle.[168] They were joined by the British garrison and hundreds of more volunteers. The man commanding this force was Benjamin Franklin, who still retained his rank of colonel in the Associators from the 1740s. Fear swept through the city as its population anxiously prepared for the worst. Among the most anxious in the city were the Quakers, many of whom even took up arms. As the sun set on February 5, an attack had yet to materialize. Upon realizing the size of the force that awaited them, the Paxton Boys halted their advance on Philadelphia. To the government's surprise, the Paxton Boys sent representatives to Philadelphia to discuss their grievances.

The man sent to negotiate with the Paxton Boys on the government's behalf was none other than Benjamin Franklin. Franklin was well regarded and even popular among the frontier population for his long history of vocal support for the creation of defensive institutions and support for the beleaguered frontiersmen. On their march to Philadelphia the Paxton Boys authored a petition outlining their grievances entitled the *Declaration,* which justified their attacks as necessary actions against an Indian menace. They also blamed Quaker influence in the Assembly for the governments failure to protect them. With Franklin's aid Mathew Smith and James Gibson, the most prominent Paxton Boys, wrote a second petition entitled the *Remonstrance* in which they framed the actions of the frontiersmen as having arisen from a lack of representation. Both petitions were

[168] Franklin to Richard Jackson, February 11, 1764, "The Papers of Benjamin Franklin." The American Philosophical Society and Yale University. https://franklinpapers.org/.

submitted to the Assembly as the *Declaration and Remonstrance of the Distressed and Bleeding Frontier,* as a single document. The *Declaration and Remonstrance* urged a reevaluation of what the rangers had done and tried to show that all the chaos that had occurred was nothing less than the people's right to be heard by petitioning the government, as was their right.[169] The killings, they argued, were justified because, as subjects of the Crown, they were opposing the Crown's enemies, "whether openly avowed or more dangerously concealed under a mask of falsely pretended friendship, and cheerfully willing to offer our substance and lives in his cause."[170] The Paxton Boys also expressed their resentment towards Quaker assemblymen, who they believed showed favoritism towards the Indians, "but a part, of a small part of that excessive regard manifested to his Indians beyond his Majesty's loyal subjects, whereof we complain."[171] Furthermore, they pointed to the Long Peace and Pennsylvania's long-standing practice of gift giving, trade, and diplomacy with Indians as proof that the Assembly was content with aiding the Conestoga and Moravian Indians while "Publick money was lavishly prostituted to hire, at an exorbitant rate, a mercenary guard, to protect his majesties worst enemies, those falsely pretended Indian friends…. While hundreds of poor distressed families of his Majesties subjects, obliged to abandon their possessions, and flee for their

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[169] Silver, *Our Savage Neighbors*, 204.

[170] Mathew Smith and James Gibson, "*A Declaration and Remonstrance of the Distressed and Bleeding Frontier Inhabitants of the Province of Pennsylvania: Presented by Them to the Honourable the Governor and Assembly of the Province, Shewing the Causes of Their Late Discontent and Uneasiness and the Grievances Under Which They Have Laboured, and Which They Humbly Pray to Have Redress'd."* Philadelphia: Printed [by W. Bradford?], 1764.

[171] Ibid.

lives…. were left to starve neglected."[172] This feeling of neglect and victimization was further magnified in the eyes of the frontiersmen by the Assembly's placement of bounties on the heads of those responsible for the massacres. What troubled them was that money was readily offered for information on the perpetrators of the massacres even as the Assembly refused to issue scalp bounties against the Indian raiders who terrorized them. The killers of the Conestoga deserved praise, they believed, for rescuing Pennsylvania from an oppressive burden forced upon it by tyrannical Quakers.

The frontiersmen argued that the reasons for their grievances lay with the frontier's lack of equal representation in the Assembly, a fact they felt was "Oppressive, unequal, and unjust as freeman and English subjects, we have an indisputable Title to the same Privileges and Immunities with his other Majesty's other subjects, who reside in the interior counties of Philadelphia, Chester, and Bucks, and therefore ought not be excluded from an equal share with them in the very important Privilege of legislation."[173] The petition concluded with a statement denying a distinction between friendly and enemy Indians: they must all be removed or annihilated: "We humbly conceive that it is contrary to the maxims of good policy and extremely dangerous to our frontiers to suffer any Indians of what tribe soever, to live within the inhabited parts of this province, where we are engaged in Indian War, as experience has taught us that they are all perfidious."[174] The cruelties of the French and Indian War had made all Indians guilty, they believed,

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[172] Ibid.
[173] Ibid.

[174] Ibid.

transforming them into outlaws of civilized humanity. The Paxton Boys therefore believed they had the moral high ground.[175]

The massacre of the Conestoga, the march on Philadelphia, and the *Declaration and Remonstrance of the Distressed and Bleeding Frontier* all had an incredible effect on Pennsylvania politics. After the initial outcry died down surrounding the barbarity of the killings and the march on Philadelphia, the arguments espoused in the *Declaration and Remonstrance of the Distressed and Bleeding Frontier* were adopted by middle-sort politicians who used the frontier's anti-government and anti-Quaker hatred to attack the Proprietorship and the remnants of the entrenched Quakers in the Assembly. Politicians framed the aftermath of the Paxton crisis not as the actions of an insurrectionary armed mob but rather a legal and justified act of protest against the Proprietorship and its Quaker allies in the Assembly who ignored their plight and were worse than Indians. Using pamphlets, books, journals, and other forms of mass media, the Proprietors' enemies and the frontiersmen's supporters normalized the now rampant Indian hatred and, in the process, capitalized on a radicalized frontier and even city population that could be reliably used in the pursuit of their goals. The anonymous Philopatrius in his work *Quakers Unmask'd* writes that "compassionate and merciful Christians [Quakers] would not grant a single Farthing . . . for the Relief of their Fellow Subjects."[176] This

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[175] Jeremy Engels, "Equipped for Murder": The Paxton Boys and "the Spirit of Killing all Indians" in Pennsylvania, 1763-1764." Rhetoric & Public Affairs 8, no. 3 (2005): 355-381.

[176] Judith A Ridner, *The Scots Irish of Early Pennsylvania: A Varied People*. Pennsylvania Historical Association. Accessed August 18, 2022. ProQuest Ebook Central. Pg. 72.

presented a problem for John Penn and those in the Assembly who now found it difficult, if not impossible, to prosecute the Paxton Boys without invoking the wrath of public opinion.

Further complicating any effort to deal with the Paxton Boys, and any other future actions against the government, was the crystallization of a radicalized and militant frontier identity. That not one man was prosecuted in the aftermath of the crisis only served to encourage the frontiersmen that violence could be used to achieve political goals. By recasting their angry violence as a courageous and masculine struggle for liberty, rather than a riotous act of insurrection, the frontiersmen and their defenders outmaneuvered their more moderate Anglican and Quaker counterparts.[177] After the elections of 1764 the Scotch- Irish and German populations on the frontier acquired a sizable proportion of the seats in the Assembly and represented a shift in Pennsylvanian politics.

During Pontiac's Rebellion in summer 1763, Governor James Hamilton had encouraged and even celebrated the development of the martial spirit "that reflects the honor of the country."[178] This martial spirit was useful when directed against external foes, but as John Penn discovered, "I have found by experience that it is impossible to bring anybody to justice for the murder of an Indian, who takes shelter among our back inhabitants. It is among those people, looked on as a meritorious action, and they are sure of being protected."[179] The formation of this new frontier identity, forged in the crucible

[177] Ibid., 73.

[178] Silver, *Our Savage Neighbors*, 168.

of war, resulted in a rebellious and highly dangerous population that the government simply had no control over. The establishment of a frontier militia in the 1750s and the desire to defend themselves created a population willing to fight ferociously, while also resulting in the establishment of an unruly and insubordinate identity at odds with the government and its policies.

Benjamin Franklin and others like him co-opted the Paxton Boys' anti-government rhetoric and used it as a bludgeon against the proprietorship:

> All Regard for him (John Penn) in the Assembly is lost; all Hopes of Happiness under a Proprietary Government are at an End; it has now scarce Authority enough left to keep the common Peace; and was another Mob to come against him, I question whether, tho' a Dozen Men were sufficient, one could find so many in Philadelphia, willing to rescue him or his Attorney-General….[180]

In response to these attacks, and to win over the frontier population, Governor John Penn undertook a policy of appeasement towards the frontier. The first casualty of this appeasement was the final and formal abandonment of the Long Peace, the policy that had guided Pennsylvanian politics for nearly seventy years. The development of a vehemently anti-Indian frontier identity made it impossible for the Pennsylvania government to maintain relationships with Indians when it meant armed rebellion from the frontier populace. Additionally, Indian nations were unwilling to enter negotiations with a party whose population would rather kill them than live peaceably together.[181] Those who wished to conduct diplomacy faced the wrath of a vengeful frontier

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[179] *Colonial Records*, 9:349-50.

[180] Franklin to Fothergill, March 14, 1764, "The Papers of Benjamin Franklin." The American Philosophical Society and Yale University. https://franklinpapers.org/.

[181] Engels, "Equipped for Murder", 376.

population. Thomas McKee, for example, noted that after aiding the Conestoga, "I dare not make a step from my house. My family are in great consternation, being in imminent danger of having our house set on fire, or bodily hurt done us, as I have often been threatened by the rioters."[182] The age of peaceful coexistence between colonists and Indians was over.[183]

[182] *Colonial Records*, 5:111.

[183] James Hart Merrell, *Into the American Woods: Negotiators on the Pennsylvania Frontier*. New York: Norton, 2000. Pg. 254.

CHAPTER 7

EPILOGUE: THE BLACK BOYS AND THE COMING OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

Over the course of the French and Indian War and then Pontiac's Rebellion, the Pennsylvania frontiersmen forged a new and coherent identity. This frontier identity organized around the militia and was distrustful towards the government, deeply prejudiced against Indians, and conditioned to believe that violence and the threat of violence could be effectively deployed to handle both. The development of this militant identity led to the radical actions taken by the Paxton Boys in the winter of 1763-1764 with the massacre of the Conestoga Indians and the march on Philadelphia. By 1765, however, British policy had transferred the frontiersmen's ire from the government in Philadelphia to the imperial government in London. Here too, Indian policy and the issue of defense played a central role.

With the onset of Pontiac's Rebellion, the Crown sought to alleviate tensions with the Indians with the Proclamation of 1763. Based on Pennsylvania's Treaty of Easton with the Delaware in 1758, the Proclamation of 1763 set clear boundaries between Indian and colonial territories:

> And whereas it is just and reasonable, and essential to our Interest, and the Security of our Colonies, that the several Nations or Tribes of Indians with whom We are connected, and who live under our Protection, should not be molested, or disturbed in the Possession of such Parts of Our Dominions and Territories as, not having been ceded to or purchased by Us, are reserved to them. or any of them, as their Hunting Grounds… We do hereby strictly forbid, on Pain of our Displeasure, all our loving Subjects from making any Purchases or Settlements whatever, or taking Possession of any of the Lands above reserved... And We do further strictly enjoin and require all Persons whatever who have either wilfully or inadvertently seated themselves upon any Lands within the Countries above

> described. or upon any other Lands which, not having been ceded to or purchased by Us, are still reserved to the said Indians as aforesaid, forthwith to remove themselves from such Settlements.[184]

The Crown intended the Proclamation to pacify Indian nations who feared land loss at the hands of settlers. In setting a clear boundary between colonists and Indians, the Crown hoped to avoid future conflicts resulting from colonial migration.

To demonstrate their sincerity in maintaining a peaceful and respectful relationship, the British resumed the practice of gift giving that had been abolished by General Jeffrey Amherst at the end of the French and Indian War. By 1765 peace negotiations were well under way in Indian territory that the British hoped would usher in a long period of peace. To speed this process, and enrich themselves, the Superintendent of Indian Affairs, Sir William Johnson, and his deputy George Croghan, approached General Thomas Gage and proposed that a trade delegation be sent to hostile Indians to demonstrate Britain's sincerity in establishing friendly relations. The proposed mission was not exactly legal, as both British and Pennsylvania law prohibited the trade of goods to belligerent powers. General Gage, however, permitted the action as a necessary element the diplomatic mission. Upon approval, George Croghan and his associate Robert Callender purchased wares and set off for Fort Port in two separate caravans. Croghan arrived with his caravan first in late February 1765 and waited for Callender's caravan.

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[184]"The Royal Proclamation - October 7, 1763." The Avalon Project: Documents in Law, History, and Diplomacy. Yale Law School: Lillian Goldman Law Library, n.d. https://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/proc1763.asp.

Callender's caravan never arrived. Once rumors began circulating that British merchants were transporting goods to Fort Pitt to sell to Indians, the anger that had led to the Paxton massacres flared up again among the Pennsylvania frontiersmen. In their eyes formal peace had yet to be negotiated with the Indians and per Pennsylvania law the Indian trade was still illegal in the ongoing hostilities. To make matters worse, rumors spread that the caravans were transporting tomahawks, rifles, and gunpowder. According to one account, the porters of the caravan were told by an irate frontiersman that "it was well known that they [the Indians] had scarcely any ammunition, and were almost naked, to supply them, would be a kind of murder, and would be illegally trading at the expence of the blood and treasure of the frontiers." "Notwithstanding his powerful reasoning," the account continued, "these traders made game of what he said, and would only answer him by ludicrous burlesque."[185]

On March 6, 1765 Callender and his caravan were stopped three separate times by frontiersmen demanding that the goods be unloaded so that they could be inspected. Callender refused each time and carried on with his mission. At the third stop he was warned that by proceeding he would be attacked. When the caravan began its climb up Sideling Hill, two hundred men armed with rifles, faces painted black, and dressed as Indians emerged from the forest and killed the leading horses. They ordered the drivers and pack horsemen to dismount and gave them fifteen minutes to "Collect all your loads to the front, and unload them in one place, take your private property, and immediately

[185] James Smith, *An Account of the Remarkable Occurrences in the Life and Travels of Colonel James Smith*. Philadelphia: Grigg & Elliot, 9 North Fourth Street, 1834.

retire."[186] Taking nothing from the caravan for themselves, the frontiersmen destroyed every trade item except for the liquor, which they left as an insult to the Indians. When news reached Philadelphia of the attack, Governor John Penn estimated the value of the lost goods at the enormous sum of £30,000.[187]

Dubbed the Black Boys for their practice of painting their faces black, the frontiersmen that attacked Callender's caravan were a part of a militant frontier identity that was distrustful of the government, hateful of Indians, and willing to resort to violent means to defend their perceived interests. Their leader James Smith spent much of the French and Indian War as a captive among the Kahnawake Indians when he was captured during the Braddock expedition. After years of captivity Smith escaped back to his home in Pennsylvania where he took up farming. During Pontiac's Rebellion, Smith used the knowledge he had learned during his captivity to form and command a company of rangers that utilized Indian psychological and guerilla warfare. Smith and his Black Boys did not participate in the Paxton massacres or the march on Philadelphia. In 1763 and most of 1764 they were serving as scouts for Colonel Henry Bouquet in the Ohio River Valley. When diplomatic talks began with Pontiac in late 1764, the Black Boys were dismissed and returned home. What angered Smith and the Black Boys and motivated their attack on Callender and his caravan in March 1765 was not just the trade with

[186] IBID.

[187]John Penn to Thomas Gage, March 22, 1765, Gage Papers, in Patrick Spero, *Frontier Rebels: The Fight for Independence in the American West, 1765-1776*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 2018. Pg 62.

Indians but that traders and land speculators acting in their capacity as government officials were benefiting at their expense.[188]

The attack on the British trading caravans at Sidling Hill marked one of the earliest colonial actions taken against the British in the lead up to the American Revolution. Using guerilla tactics, the Black Boys harassed British soldiers sent to apprehend them, cut communications, and raided any trade caravan destined for Indian territory. In an especially brazen act, Smith and a few of his men captured the British commander of Fort Loudon and forced him to sign a document that allowed the release of seized rifles and gunpowder. The British, despite their best efforts, were unable to quash the frontiersmen and their wily leader. The more they attempted to apprehend Smith and his followers the more the people of the frontier turned against them. Accounts of British soldiers breaking into homes, without warrants, to seize arms and arrest men for protesting trade with their Indian enemies, did irrevocable damage to British influence in the region. Frontiersmen rejected the idea that Indians were British subjects; they took it upon themselves to dictate who was and who was not a true member of the empire. They were attempting to create a society based on exclusion of Indians. If groups such as the Black Boys existed, the British could not effectively attempt to integrate Indians or maintain peace on the frontier.[189]

The frontiersmen's long-standing grievances with the Pennsylvanian government and the Quakers was mostly about neglect and abandonment. The British, however, as

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[188] Gregory Evans Dowd, *War under Heaven: Pontiac, The Indian Nations, & the British Empire*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004. Pg. 204.

[189] Spero, *Frontier Rebels*, 155.

represented by their army, presented a much more visible and immediate foe. The colonial government in Philadelphia in fact hindered the British effort by doing little to nothing to stop the Black Boy rebellion. John Penn and the Assembly were unwilling to further agitate the frontier into yet another armed insurrection.[190] For some assemblymen, the inherent illegality of the British actions motivated their inaction against the Black Boys, who, technically speaking, were upholding Pennsylvania law by arresting a trade caravan destined for Indian territory. The British Army's use of heavy-handed tactics that went well above the limits of Pennsylvania law also did little to endear them to the Assembly.

The Black Boys took the colonial government's inaction as a sign that their assault on the trade caravans were sanctioned by law. This perception was aided by the fact that local officials either sympathized with the rebels or were intimidated into silence. An irate General Gage wrote Proprietor William Penn Jr. of the difficulty in quelling the frontier rebellion, "to find that the lawless Banditti on your Frontiers continue giving you fresh trouble. The Robberies and disturbances they have been guilty of with impunity, emboldens them to every Act of Violence, whilst they flatter themselves that they are secure from Punishment."[191] From 1763 onwards, imperial officials lamented the failure of local authorities to curb the "lawless Banditti" of the

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[190] Jeremy Engels, '"Equipped for Murder": The Paxton Boys and "the Spirit of Killing all Indians" in Pennsylvania, 1763-1764."' Rhetoric & Public Affairs 8, no. 3 (2005): 355-381. doi:10.1353/rap.2005.0053.

[191] *Colonial Records of Pennsylvania, The Minutes of the Provincial Council of Pennsylvania, From the Organization to the Termination of the Proprietary Government*. 16 Volumes. Harrisburg, PA: Theo. Fenn, 1851. 9:307

frontier and predicted dire consequences. These officials believed that frontier lawlessness was invigorated and encouraged by a lack of punishment. The frontier, they believed, had succumbed to anarchy and there was no effective law, no method of enforcement, and no adherence to superior authority that would rein them in.[192]

The animosity between the British and Pennsylvania frontiersmen grew so bad that even after Pontiac's Rebellion ended in 1765, the Black Boys remained active. On September 12, 1769 Smith and his men surprised the British garrison at Fort Bedford, freed its prisoners, and returned home. When British soldiers apprehended Smith later that month, they were outraged when a local judge acquitted Smith on all counts.[193] The Black Boys actions against the British continued until 1772 when Gage ordered the dismantling of Fort Pitt and the withdrawal of British troops from the frontier garrison. Gage hoped that the destruction of the frontier defenses would serve as a lesson to the frontiersmen. "The Indians at their backs will always keep them quiete," he said, "…let them feel the consequences, we shall be out of the scrape."[194] This action, however, only served to further enflame the passions of the frontiersmen, who again felt that the British government had left them to die at the hands of Indians. When the American Revolution began in 1775 and 1776, Patriot forces had little trouble persuading the Pennsylvanian frontier to take up arms against the British.

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[192]Alden T. Vaughan. "FRONTIER BANDITTI AND THE INDIANS: THE PAXTON BOYS' LEGACY, 1763–1775." Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies 51, no. 1 (1984): 1–29. http://www.jstor.org/stable/27772947. Pg. 21.

[193] Dowd, *War Under Heaven*, 207.

[194] Spero, *Frontier Rebels*, 160.

Critical in winning the frontier over to the Patriot side in the war was a major reconstitution of the Pennsylvania assembly under the new state constitution of 1776. In 1775 the Pennsylvania colonial assembly contained forty-one members, of whom twenty-six were from the older, wealthier southeastern section of Pennsylvania. Only seventeen seats of this colonial assembly represented the newer frontier settlements and western counties, though the population in these western counties now exceeded the population in southeastern Pennsylvania. But with the new 1776 constitution, every county in Pennsylvania, as well as the city of Philadelphia, received six seats in the legislature. This allotted twenty-four seats to Philadelphia and the three eastern counties, but forty-eight seats to the western counties, dramatically increasing the representation of rural, backcountry, and frontier populations in the legislative assembly.[195] The Pennsylvania Assembly became a much more democratic institution, reflecting the values of a frontier identity forged and hardened after years of war, now aimed directly at the British.

[195]Allan Nevins, *The American States During and After the Revolution, 1775-1789*. (New York, 1924). Pg. 132-133. https://archive.org/details/americanstatesdu00nevi/page/n7/mode/2up.

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