

The Fur Trade of the Ohio Valley

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As early as 1700, we find the English fur traders plying their trade in the Ohio valley. They were from the southern colonies, apparently, since we note French complaints of Carolina traders.¹ Pennsylvania traders did not enter the Ohio region until the 1720's, from which time they came in increasing numbers. Conrad Weiser told the Iroquois in a conference at Albany, July 3, 1754, that "The Road to Ohio is no new Road." It had, in fact, been traversed by the Pennsylvania traders for thirty years.² The Pennsylvania fur trade did not become of real importance, however, until the rise of the Iroquois to the position of supremacy in Pennsylvania's Indian relations. In the early history of the colony, the Delawares occupied that *post of vantage*. There was little intercourse between Pennsylvania and the Iroquois before the seventeen-thirties; the first treaty between them bears the date 1732. Under the influence of Conrad Weiser, Pennsylvania's celebrated expert in Indian affairs, Pennsylvania cultivated the Six Nations³ and Pennsylvania's relations with that confederacy "increased in importance."⁴ Since the western Indians were mostly Iroquois confederates, or owned a healthy fear of the Iroquois, the alliance of the latter with Pennsylvania had a direct influence on the fur trade of the Ohio country. In the beginning only the boldest *entrepreneurs* dared to venture west of the Alleghenies. Now Pennsylvania traders swarmed into the western country, doing a thriving trade in peltry.

In the meantime the French were moving eastward into the Ohio region, erecting forts and trading posts as they came. As a corollary of this eastern march, their main line of communication between New France and Louisiana was shifted from "the Fox-Wisconsin route to the Chicago-Illinois route and thence to the Maumee-Wabash route."⁵ In the valleys of the Maumee and the Wabash the French established

¹ Reuben G. Thwaites, *Afloat on the Ohio* (Chicago, 1897), 802-803.

² Edmund B. O'Callaghan, *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York* (Albany, 1855), VI, 872, 876.

³ Joseph S. Walton, *Conrad Weiser and the Indian Policy of Colonial Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia, 1900), 16, 56.

⁴ William M. Beauchamp, *A History of the New York Iroquois* (Albany, 1905), 274.

⁵ Albert T. Volwiler, *George Croghan and the Westward Movement, 1741-1783* (Cleveland, 1926), 20.

three highly important fortified trading centres, designed to intercept the Indian trade and communication with the British. "Post Miami" was first established among the Miamis of the St. Joseph River. Then in 1715, a party of these Indians settled near the present Fort Wayne, Indiana, where the confluence of the St. Joseph and the St. Mary forms the Maumee River. The elder Vincennes, commandant of "Post Miami," followed and erected his post at the head of the Maumee.⁶ In 1719 or 1720 the French built a fort at Ouiatanon, on the Wabash, at the mouth of the Wea River, four miles below the present city of Lafayette, Indiana.⁷ The third fort, at Vincennes, Indiana, on the lower Wabash, was established before March, 1733, perhaps in 1731 or 1732.⁸

Some form of war, commercial or otherwise, between the British and French was bound to ensue. That the fur trade of the Ohio valley was well worth a struggle, both sides knew. Collision first came in the spring of 1736, between the French and an Indian tribe devoted to the British interest. The Chickasaws, dwelling south of the Ohio and trading exclusively with the English, intercepted French traders and threatened the French post at Vincennes (commanded by the younger Vincennes). Bienville, governor of Louisiana, determined to make war on the Chickasaws, and by doing so strike a blow at the English trade. His plan was for D'Artaguiette, commandant in the Illinois and Vincennes, to march south with a force while Bienville marched north, forces to be united at a designated rendezvous. It was a good plan, only Bienville was a month late. The associated French and Indians from the north proceeded to make a war of their own and many were captured by the Chickasaws, including Vincennes and a number of his officers. D'Artaguiette was killed in the battle. The victorious Chickasaws then made merry, according to a contemporary account, by burning the captives the same day, "from three in the afternoon until towards midnight."⁹ It was somewhat damaging to French prestige.

Throughout the history of the French fur trade, the French suffered from a lack of trading goods. This was

⁶ Pierre G. Roy, "Sieur de Vincennes Identified," *Indiana Historical Society Publications*, VII, no. 1.

⁷ Oscar J. Craig, "Ouiatanon," *Indiana Historical Society Publications*, II, no. 8.

⁸ Paul C. Phillips, "Vincennes in its Relation to French Colonial Policy," *Indiana Magazine of History* (December, 1921), XVII, 311-337.

⁹ *Ibid.*

especially true in the Ohio region. Transportation of trading goods, whether from Canada or from the lower Mississippi, was a tortuous process. In 1735, we find Vincennes complaining that in one order of goods his superiors failed to send him shirts, guns, mirrors, combs, hats, powder, cloth, shoes, collars, and 2943 pounds of flour.¹⁰ Ten years later, during King George's War, the operations of the British navy on the Atlantic made it so difficult for the French to obtain trading goods that prices rose 150 per cent.¹¹ In October, 1745, we find Beauharnois, governor of New France, reporting home that because of the high prices of goods and the low price of furs the traders "have been discouraged from supplying themselves with goods, and notwithstanding I offered licenses for nothing."¹² The situation of the French fur trade was desperate and required action. De Noyan reported from Detroit in August, 1741, that "the English have been coming For a Number of years to corrupt the Savages Within the Sphere of This Post, and I Have resolved to have them pillaged. I will Begin by sending Them a Summons."¹³

Pillaging became a common device of the French, who made use of Peter Chartier and a band of Indians. When Pennsylvania complained (October, 1745) to the Iroquois of Chartier's propensity for robbing the Pennsylvania traders, the sachem Canassatego replied that he had spoken to the governor of Canada about it and that gentleman "said he knew nothing of the matter." In behalf of the Iroquois, Canassatego added: "Your Traders go very far back into the Country, which we desire may not be done, because it is in the Road of the French."¹⁴

Taking advantage of an almost exclusive trade in the western Ohio country, brought about by Chartier's activities, the French fur traders further depressed the prices of peltry.¹⁵ Such a policy did not meet with the approval of the savages, who undertook to tell the French how they felt, in their customary gentle fashion. On one occasion, when a French trader offered one charge of powder and one bullet in exchange for a beaver skin, "the Indian took up his

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Volwiler, *op. cit.*, 42.

¹² *Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin* (Madison), XVII, 449.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 358.

¹⁴ *Minutes of the Provincial Council of Pennsylvania* (Harrisburg, 1851), V, 24.

¹⁵ Walton, *op. cit.*, 153.

Hatchet, and knock'd him on the head, and killed him upon the Spot."¹⁶ In 1747, five French traders on the south side of Lake Erie were killed by Iroquois confederates, who apparently desired their permanent elimination from the fur trade.¹⁷ French officials claimed that English traders had incited the savages to kill Frenchmen "and there is very little doubt that the charge was true."¹⁸ Certainly one doubts that the fur traders of those days lived the life of Riley.

In the meantime, Pennsylvania had been improving her relations with the Iroquois. At the Lancaster treaty of 1744, Pennsylvania undertook to mediate between the savages and Maryland and Virginia regarding the troublesome question of Indian land claims. In the course of the council Lieutenant-Governor Thomas of Pennsylvania told the Iroquois of the glorious British victories over the French. The reply of the shrewd Canassatego was somewhat unexpected: "You tell us you beat the French, if so you must have taken a great deal of rum from them, and can the better spare us some of that liquor to make us rejoice with you in the victory." Thomas gave them some in small glasses, which he called French glasses. The next day Canassatego intimated that it was a little distasteful to celebrate British victories by drinking from French glasses: he desired to drink rum from English glasses, which were considerably larger. Thomas acceded, informing the Indians as he did so, that, "We are glad to hear that you have such dislike for what is French. They cheat you in your glasses as well as in everything else." This conference at Lancaster had an important bearing on the fur trade. The Pennsylvania trader extended the field of his operations. Under Iroquois protection,

He built his camp fires on the southern shores of Lake Erie, and drove his pack-horses over the Scioto. A few of the boldest hunted wild turkey on the Wabash. The Indian soon learned who paid the best prices for beaver.¹⁹

In 1747, Pennsylvania undertook to bring the Indians of the Ohio Valley into commercial and political relations with the province. George Croghan, on September 18 of that year, reported that the Indians south of Lake Erie were making

¹⁶ *Minutes of the Provincial Council of Pennsylvania*, V, 86-87.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 86.

¹⁸ Francis Parkman, *Montcalm and Wolfe* (Boston, 1884), I, 80.

¹⁹ Walton, *op. cit.*, 120, 152.

war on the French briskly "Butt is very impatient To hear from their Brothers, ye English, Expecting a Present of powder & Lead, which if they Don't gett . . . they will Turn to the French. . . ."²⁰ These Indians had previously forwarded a French "sculp" to the Pennsylvania officials. Weiser thought presents ought to be made to both the Lake Erie Indians and the Ohio Indians. Accordingly Pennsylvania made an appropriation for a preliminary present and Weiser divided it between them. In the spring of 1748 the Pennsylvania authorities sent Croghan to the Ohio country with these two preliminary presents, amounting to a total of £200. Croghan proceeded to inform the savages that, "I am sent here by the Honourable the President & Council of Philadelphia to return You thanks for the French Sculp You sent down last Spring." He also delivered to them powder, lead, vermillion, knives, and flints, and a proclamation forbidding the sale of liquor to the Indians, which traffic the savages had complained of. The natives said they approved of the proclamation, as they had "suffer'd considerably by such abuse." However, in calling attention to the Miami Indians, the spokesman for the redskins declared:

But, Brothers . . . there is a great Nation of Indians come from the French to be your Brothers as well as ours, who say they never tasted English Rum yet, but would be very glad to taste it now as they are come to Live with the English, so we hope you will order some of your Traders to bring them some.²¹

In 1748, Weiser and the Pennsylvania authorities planned to make a large present to the Ohio Indians and invited Maryland and Virginia to participate in the love feast. Maryland had no funds for Indian affairs and the Virginia legislature declined, animated by "a growing jealousy of the Pennsylvania fur trade" and by the fear of losing their western land claims. However, Governor Gooch of Virginia, who was more farsighted, offered to help Pennsylvania.²² The result was the two highly important treaties of Lancaster and Logstown. At the Lancaster conference in July, 1748, the Shawnees were received in alliance, after which the Iroquois formally introduced the Miami Indians, who were received

²⁰ *Pennsylvania Archives* (Philadelphia), ser. I, vol. I, 770.

²¹ *Minutes of the Provincial Council of Pennsylvania*, V, 287-289.

²² Walton, *op. cit.*, 175.

as allies.²³ At Logstown, on the Ohio a few miles below the forks, another meeting took place, at which time the presents were distributed. The goods lay in five piles, one of which had been sent by the governor of Virginia. One pile went to the Senecas, one to the other Iroquois tribes (except Tuscaroras), one to the Delawares, and the rest to the western tribes. This treaty left Pennsylvania in control of the fur trade of the entire Ohio valley, north of the Ohio River, subject, of course, to the competition of the French and a few traders from New York, Maryland and Virginia.²⁴ The Treaty marks "the zenith of English influence in the Ohio region until after 1763."²⁵

In 1750, sundry gentlemen of Virginia formed the Ohio Company, with a view to planting settlers in the Ohio valley. The executive committee of the company employed Christopher Gist to explore the region and select land for them. Gist was told, on September 11, 1750, that "the nearer in the Land lies, the better, provided it be good & level, but we had rather go quite down the Mississippi than take mean broken Land."²⁶ In February, 1751, Gist reached Pickawillany, chief town of the Miami confederacy, located on the Miami River, about three miles north of the present Piqua, Ohio. He was delighted with the country, declaring that it was

fine, rich level Land, well timbered with large Walnut, Ash, Sugar Trees, Cherry Trees &c, it is well watered with a great Number of little Streams or Rivulets, and full of beautiful natural Meadows, covered with wild Rye, blue Grass and Clover, and abounds with Turkeys, Deer, Elks and most Sorts of Game particularly Buffaloes, thirty or forty of which are frequently seen feeding in one Meadow. . . .²⁷

The Ohio Company was unable to settle the country, but their plans had an important bearing on the fur trade and Indian relations. The company proceeded to engage in the fur trade. They erected a trading post on Will's Creek, a tributary of the Potomac, where quite a thriving trade developed. This aroused the jealousy of the Pennsylvania traders, who told the Indians "that the Virginians meant to steal away their lands. This confirmed what they had been

²³ *Minutes of the Provincial Council of Pennsylvania*, V, 807-819.

²⁴ Walton, *op. cit.*, 198.

²⁵ Volwiler, *op. cit.*, 67.

²⁶ William M. Darlington, *Christopher Gist's Journals* (Pittsburg, 1898), 81-82.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 47.

taught by the French emissaries, whose intrigues it powerfully aided."²⁸

While Croghan tarried at Pickawillany in February, 1751, chiefs of the Piankashaw and Wea Indians came, seeking alliance with the English. Although Croghan had no authority to do so, he drew up a treaty of alliance, which was signed by himself, Gist, Andrew Montour, and three other fur traders. When Croghan reported what he had done to Lieutenant-Governor Hamilton, that gentleman was annoyed. He submitted the treaty to the Pennsylvania Assembly, but stated that he "had reprov'd Mr. Croghan for acting in publick matters without his orders." The Assembly replied that they would "readily concur" with Hamilton "in any measures" necessary to prevent the repetition of such an act in the future.²⁹ Notwithstanding Pennsylvania's reception of the treaty it was effective in fact. The Piankashaws "helped to seduce other tribes from the French" and killed seven Frenchmen. Thirty-three Piankashaws turned up at Kaskaskia and obtained munitions from the French commandant on the plea of making war on the Cherokees. The commandant discovered that the Piankashaws had conspired with the Illinois to kill the French as they came from church. With the plot revealed, the French killed a number of Piankashaws and the Illinois made prompt submission.³⁰

Later in the same year (1751) Croghan was again reprimanded by the Pennsylvania Assembly. He had persuaded the Indians that it would be a good thing if the English built a fort in their country and as a result they had asked that it be built. When Hamilton submitted Croghan's report the Assembly declared that the request of the Indians for a fort and the danger from the French "have been misunderstood or misrepresented" by Croghan. As for the offer of the Penns to contribute £400 toward erecting the fort and £100 per annum for its maintenance,

we could wish our Proprietaries had rather thought fit to join with us in the Expence of those Presents, the Effects of which have at all Times so manifestly advanced their Interest with the Security of our Frontier Settlements.³¹

²⁸ Parkman, *op. cit.*, I, 59.

²⁹ *Minutes of the Provincial Council of Pennsylvania*, V, 522-526.

³⁰ Clarence W. Alvord, *The Illinois Country, 1673-1818* (Springfield, 1920), 234-235.

³¹ *Minutes of the Provincial Council of Pennsylvania*, V, 515, 529, 547.

In the meantime the French had not been idle. In 1749, it was reported to La Jonquière, governor of Canada, that the English traders at Sandusky were seducing the Hurons from their allegiance to the French.⁸² La Jonquière was indignant and ordered the traders seized. Four of them were brought to Montreal, questioned and sent to France. There they were finally released at the request of Lord Albemarle, British ambassador to the court of Louis XV. The French government announced that as a result of the interrogation of the prisoners, "It was proved that the Governor of Pennsylvania had actually sent Arms and Ammunition and other Presents to the Indians to excite them to a War."⁸³ While the prisoners were still held in Canada Governor Clinton of New York demanded their release on the ground that they had a right to trade in the Indian country under the terms of the treaty of Utrecht, and complained of the new French fort at Niagara, which he said was in Iroquois territory. La Jonquière, in his reply, August 10, 1751, attempted to justify the arrests and declared that the Iroquois were not British subjects.⁸⁴

French officials repeatedly blamed their Indian troubles in the Ohio country upon the English fur traders. In 1747, Raymond reported:

The only way to remedy it and to secure the fidelity of all the Savages, the peaceful and Complete possession of all the upper country, and the Entire Trade with all the Savages that dwell there, is, therefore: to deprive them of all Communication with the English.⁸⁵

Two years later (1749) the Marquis de la Galissonnière, governor of Canada, dispatched Céleron de Blainville into the Ohio region to vindicate French rights. On his journey Céleron warned Pennsylvania fur traders to leave, gave "advice" to the Indians, and buried leaden plates claiming the territory for King Louis XV.⁸⁶ After the Céleron expedition "the English were on the defensive."⁸⁷ By some Pennsylvania traders, Céleron sent a letter to the governor of Pennsylvania declaring that he was "greatly surprised" to find English

⁸² William Smith, *History of Canada* (Quebec, 1815), I, 214.

⁸³ Jacob N. Moreau, *A Memorial Containing a Summary View of Facts*, "being a translation of *Mémoire contenant le précis des faits* (Paris, 1756), published by the French Government" (New York, 1757).

⁸⁴ Parkman, *op. cit.*, I, 79.

⁸⁵ *Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin*, XVII, 474-477.

⁸⁶ Céleron's journal of the expedition has been published a number of times. The most accessible edition is probably the one in the October, 1920, issue of the *Ohio Archaeological and Historical Quarterly*.

⁸⁷ Volwiler, *op. cit.*, 67.

trespassers on French soil. "I know that our Commandant-General," he wrote, "would be very sorry to be forced to use violence; but his orders are precise, to leave no foreign traders within the limits of his government."³⁸

Upon his arrival at Logstown, Céleron found the Indians there in an ill humor. Joncaire having heard, "through some women of his acquaintance," that a night attack was intended, Céleron ordered "a ring of sentries" maintained. The next day he delivered a conciliatory message from the governor of New France. He had come, he said,

to open your eyes to the designs of the English against your lands. The establishment they mean to make . . . tend to your complete ruin. They hide from you their plans, which are to settle here and drive you away, if I let them. As a good father who tenderly lives his children . . . I must warn you of the danger that threatens you. . . .³⁹

Céleron finally reached Pickawillany, chief town of La Demoiselle, called by the English Old Britain. The Frenchman offered gifts and asked the Miamis to leave their new homes on the Miami River and return to the vicinity of the French fort on the Maumee, where they would not have to fear "English seduction." La Demoiselle thanked Céleron for the gifts and good advice. He promised to follow the advice "at a more convenient time."

If Céleron did no more, he at least "revealed clearly the deplorable condition of French interests in the West."⁴⁰ As a result a wave of alarm swept through the French outposts. Joncaire reported that all the tribes of the Ohio valley had gone over to the English. Raymond, commandant of the French fort on the Maumee, reported in October, 1751: "My people are leaving me for Detroit. Nobody wants to stay here and have his throat cut." Longeuil, acting governor of Canada, wrote home that, "We are menaced by a general outbreak, and even Toronto is in danger. . . . Before long the English on the Miami will . . . get possession of Fort Chartres, and cut our communication with Louisiana." Saint-Ange, commandant at Vincennes, wrote "that a storm would soon burst on the heads of the French." Each dispatch "brought news of murder." All French officials realized that counter-attack was imperative. Raymond declared:

³⁸ Parkman, *op. cit.*, I, 45.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, I, 47.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, I, 51, 53.

We have made peace with the English, yet they try continually to make war on us by means of the Indians; they intend to be masters of all this upper country. . . . If the English stay in this country we are lost. We must attack, and drive them out.⁴¹

It was not enough to send letters to the English about their encroachment upon soil claimed by France. That had no virtue beyond annoying British colonial officials. In 1751 Joncaire, while on a tour through the Indian country, encountered Croghan at Logstown and left with him a letter for Lieutenant-Governor Hamilton. In due course Hamilton sent the letter to the Pennsylvania Assembly. That august body, full of righteous wrath, declared that Pennsylvania's Indian agents should be warned against accepting

Letters from every inferior French Officer who shall presume to send down his Threats or pretended Claims to our Governor, in order to give himself an Air of Authority among our Indian Allies.⁴²

Nor was it enough to pillage the Pennsylvania fur traders, though such action was not without effect. Croghan alone claimed to have lost one hundred pack-horses to the French from 1749 to 1754.⁴³ Even the offer of money for specified English scalps did not make sure that the scalps would be forthcoming. Morris Turner and Ralph Kilgore, servants of John Frazier, Pennsylvania trader, were captured by Indians and taken to Detroit. While there, a French soldier told them the French had offered \$1,000 for the scalps of James Lowry and George Croghan.⁴⁴ What the French needed was direct, positive, offensive action of a kind calculated to impress the Ohio tribes. Only action of this nature could save the French fur trade in that region. It came with the arrival in America of Du Quesne, new governor of Canada. Du Quesne was instructed (1752) by his government, relative to the Ohio, to "make every possible effort to drive the English away from our lands in that region, and to prevent their coming there to trade, by seizing their goods and destroying their posts."⁴⁵

The Indians were to be told that they could trade with the English on English soil but not on French territory.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 1, 82-83.

⁴² *Minutes of the Provincial Council of Pennsylvania*, V, 540-541, 547.

⁴³ Volwiler, *op. cit.*, 88-89.

⁴⁴ *Minutes of the Provincial Council of Pennsylvania*, V, 482-483.

⁴⁵ *Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin*, XVIII, 121.

Now the centre of the English fur trade in the Ohio was Pickawillany. In 1750, with the permission of La Demoiselle, the traders erected a building for their headquarters, surrounded by "a high wall of split logs, having three gateways." Within this wall the traders dug a well, which failed only in summer.⁴⁶ There were sometimes as many as fifty English traders here at one time. Longueil reported, April 21, 1752, that it was these traders "who are the instigators of revolt and the source of all our woes." From the French viewpoint La Demoiselle was the "moving spirit of disaffaction." La Jonquière had ordered Céleron to attack Pickawillany, but that gentleman "could not or would not obey." Action finally came, however, in June, 1752, at the hands of Charles de Langlade, a young French trader of Michillimackinac. De Langlade led a band of Indians into the Ohio and captured Pickawillany. La Demoiselle was boiled and eaten. The surviving English traders were plundered and sent to Canada.⁴⁷ Du Quesne reported to the home government that the destruction of Pickawillany had

added to the complete pillage suffered by the English on this occasion, will discourage them from trading on our lands. . . . As the Sieur de Langlade is not in the service and has married a Savage woman, I will content myself with asking . . . for a yearly pension of 200 livres wherein he will be highly pleased.⁴⁸

It was certainly worth all of that amount to the French cause. In the spring of 1753, Du Quesne dispatched an expedition into the Indian country to erect French forts. One was built on the site of Erie, Pennsylvania; another, called Fort Le Boeuf, was established on French Creek. The news of the French expedition was brought to Sir William Johnson in April, 1753, by Indians, the savages arriving at Johnson's house at midnight, "whooping & hallowing in a frightfull manner." Johnson promptly forwarded the information to the governor of New York.⁴⁹ In due course the letter reached Robert Dinwiddie, lieutenant-governor of Virginia, and since the leading role in resisting the French had passed from Pennsylvania to Virginia, it was Dinwiddie who acted. That gentleman dispatched Major George Washington across the

⁴⁶ Alfred T. Goodman, *Journal of Captain William Trent* (Cincinnati, 1871), 48.

⁴⁷ Parkman, *op. cit.*, I, 81, 84-85.

⁴⁸ *Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin*, XVII, 129-130.

⁴⁹ O'Callaghan, *op. cit.*, VI, 778-779.

mountains with a summons to the french at Fort Le Boeuf:

I must desire you to acquaint me by whose authority and instructions you have lately marched from Canada with an armed force, and invaded the King of Great Britain's territories. It becomes my duty to require your peaceable departure. . . .⁵⁰

The French commandant replied that he would send Dinwiddie's letter to the Marquis Du Quesne, but in the meantime he would stay where he was in accordance with his orders. Washington was told that the Ohio country was French soil and as for the seizure of English fur traders, of which Washington had complained, that was his orders from the governor of New France.⁵¹

Various colonial governors in America warned London of the French activities on the Ohio, with the result that the Earl of Holderness addressed a letter of general instructions to all governors in the New World, on August 28, 1753. They were told to order the French to leave—

But as it is His Majesty's determination not to be the aggressor, I have the King's commands, most strictly to enjoin you, not to make use of the armed force under your direction, excepting within the undoubted limits of his Majesty's dominions.⁵²

The meaning of the above was a puzzle to some colonial officials. Who could say what were "the undoubted limits" of British soil in the Indian country? Pennsylvania professed not to know, and with reason. But if Pennsylvania didn't know, Virginia espoused no such modesty. Dinwiddie thought he knew and proceeded to act accordingly. The Ohio Company had sent Captain William Trent to build a fort at the forks of the Ohio. In 1754, Dinwiddie instructed Washington to "use all Expedition in proceeding to the Fork of Ohio." There "you are to finish and compleat in the best Manner" the fort already under construction.⁵³ While Washington was marching through the wilderness, the French quietly came down the Alleghany in boats (April, 1754). They landed cannon and demanded the fort's surrender, "on pain of what might ensue." Ensign Edward Ward, whom Trent had left in command, was forced to accede. Ward went

⁵⁰ Parkman, *op. cit.*, I, 134.

⁵¹ *Collections of the Virginia Historical Society*, N. S. III (Richmond, 1883), 61-62. 1883), 61-62.

⁵² O'Callaghan, *op. cit.*, VI, 794-795.

⁵³ *Collections of the Virginia Historical Society*, N. S. III, 59.

back over the mountains to report the disaster to Washington, while the French built a large fort at the forks which they named Fort Du Quesne.⁵⁴ A curious feature of the episode is the location of the English fort. All English sources agree that it was built at the forks of the Ohio. Jacob N. Moreau, official commentator for the French Government, states positively that Trent's fort was not on the Ohio at all but was located in the forest between the Ohio and French Creek. The French, he said, burned the incomplete fort and then proceeded to the forks of the Ohio, where they found "traces" of another English fort. These "traces" they extended and used in erecting Fort Du Quesne.⁵⁵ The English and French accounts, in this particular, are wholly irreconcilable.

Washington was unable to execute his orders relative to the fort, but he did encounter and destroy a small French expedition commanded by Coulon de Jumonville. The French ever afterward claimed that Jumonville was assassinated as he was having a summons read to Washington and his officers.⁵⁶ It is true that the Frenchman had a written summons, but there was no time for its use. When Washington appeared, the French seized their arms and Washington ordered his men to fire. Probably the question of murder hinges upon whether war or peace obtained. After the seizure of a British fort "by planting cannon against it and threatening it with destruction" both Washington and Dinwiddie "acted much as if war had been declared."⁵⁷ One may observe that the Anglo-French wars in America usually began with some overt act or acts rather than with proclamations. Under such circumstances a military commander had to decide on his own responsibility whether bands of his neighbors whom he might encounter sauntering in the forest were peaceful or otherwise. In any case, there could be no peace after Washington's attack on Jumonville and it is usually said to have opened the French and Indian War, although the honor is sometimes bestowed on the French destruction of Pickawillany two years earlier.⁵⁸ Certainly war was in being after

⁵⁴ Goodman, *op. cit.*, 62.

⁵⁵ Moreau, *op. cit.*, N. Y. edition, 12.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁵⁷ Parkman, *op. cit.*, I, 144.

⁵⁸ George Chalmers, *An Introduction to the History of the Revolt of the American Colonies* (Boston, 1845), II, 288-264.

the Jumonville episode and the French soon obtained revenge upon Washington at Fort Necessity.

After Washington's retreat from the capitulation of Fort Necessity "not an English flag waved beyond the Alleghenies" and most of the western tribes "drew their scalping knives to aid the French."⁵⁹ There were many reasons why the savages adjoined the English cause. One was the notorious injustice to Indians that obtained in Pennsylvania.⁶⁰ Conrad Weiser tried repeatedly to secure the "administration of justice locally in Indian affairs." On the frontier "very few magistrates . . . would administer law where an Indian was concerned."⁶¹ Another cause of dissatisfaction was the encroachment of settlers on Indian soil. The attempts of Sir William Johnson and other colonial officials to run a line between the Indian hunting grounds and the white settlements failed because the settlers would not be bound. In 1749 Croghan warned the Pennsylvania Council that "the Indians Dos nott Like to hear of there Lands being Setled over Alleghany Mountain. . . ."⁶² Pennsylvania's "Walking Purchase" of 1737 rankled in the minds of the savages for generations. But the vital, controlling cause of Indian disaffection toward the British lies in the aggressive advance of the French in the Ohio valley. Nothing impresses an Indian so much as power. This thought is nowhere expressed more clearly than in the speech of Hendrick, Mohawk sachem, to the Albany conference, on July 2, 1754: "Look at the French, they are Men; they are fortifying everywhere You are all like Women, bare and open without any Fortifications."⁶³ So successful was the French aggression that the entire scene of conflict was changed and "while the conflict in the West during King George's War took place in the Maumee Valley near Detroit, during the French and Indian War it took place east of the forks of the Ohio."⁶⁴

The French had been compelled to make an eastward drive in the Ohio area by the activities of the Pennsylvania traders, who were five hundred miles west of the settlers' frontier, and in a position to threaten communication between

⁵⁹ Volwiler, *op. cit.*, 88.

⁶⁰ *Minutes of the Provincial Council of Pennsylvania*, V, 87-88.

⁶¹ Walton, *op. cit.*, 160.

⁶² *Pennsylvania Archives*, ser. I, vol. II, 81.

⁶³ *Minutes of the Provincial Council of Pennsylvania* (Harrisburg), VI, 81.

⁶⁴ Volwiler, *op. cit.*, 59.

New France and Louisiana. Thus it may be said the Pennsylvania fur traders were "chiefly responsible for the immediate opening of the French and Indian War."⁶⁵ Certainly there is no doubt that it was, in America, a war for the control of the fur trade. In 1766, Benjamin Franklin testified before the British House of Commons:

As to the Ohio, the contest there began about your right of trading in the Indian country, a right you had by the treaty of Utrecht, which the French infringed; they seized the traders and their goods, which were your manufactures; they took a fort which a company of your merchants, and their factors and correspondents, had erected there, to secure that trade. Braddock was sent with an army to retake that fort (which was looked on here as another encroachment on the king's territory) and to protect your trade. It was not until after his defeat that the colonies were attacked. They were before in perfect peace with both French and Indians; the troops were not therefore sent for their defence. The trade with the Indians, though carried on in America, is not an American interest. The people of America are chiefly farmers and planters; scarce anything that they raise or produce is an article of commerce with the Indians. The Indian trade is a British interest; it is carried on with British manufactures, for the profit of British merchants and manufacturers; therefore, as it commenced for the defence of territories of the crown, the property of no American, and for the defence of a trade purely British, was really a British war.⁶⁶

Since Franklin was urging repeal of the Stamp Act, his remarks, though containing much that is true, were exaggerated in certain particulars. The fur trade of Pennsylvania certainly was an American interest as well as a British one. In 1754, it amounted to no less than £40,000 per annum, according to a contemporary estimate,⁶⁷ and Doctor William Clarke of Boston declared (1755) that three hundred Pennsylvania traders journeyed over the mountains each year.⁶⁸

During the course of the war there was little trade in peltry, but after the defeat of the French in Canada trade was resumed, in spite of the fact that technically war still obtained. But actual hostilities had scarcely ceased before the savages were claiming grievances. For one thing they objected to the large number of English forts. The Canadian

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁶⁶ *The Debates and Proceedings of the British House of Commons, from 1765 to 1768* (London, 1772), 181.

⁶⁷ *Pennsylvania Gazette* (Philadelphia), September 26, 1754.

⁶⁸ Dr. William Clarke, *Observations on the Late and Present Conduct of the French* (Boston, 1755), 10.

Indians told Lieutenant-Governor Hamilton at a conference in Philadelphia in August, 1761 that, "We, your Brethern of the seven Nations are penned up like Hogs. There are forts all around us, and therefore we are apprehensive that Death is coming upon us."⁶⁹ The Christian Oneidas naively petitioned Sir William Johnson on August 30, 1762, "that these Forts may be pull'd down & kick'd out of the way."⁷⁰

The newly acquired Indian tribes, formerly attached to France, were quick to compare the treatment of the Indians by the two nations. The French garrisons had always treated Indians "with attention and respect." English officers gave the visiting redskins "cold looks and harsh words." Those lounging around British forts "met with muttered ejaculations of impatience or abrupt orders to depart, enforced, perhaps, by a touch from the butt of a sentinel's musket."⁷¹ The British no longer felt the need to avoid offending the savages, who, "no longer important as allies, were treated as barbarians." The Iroquois asked that the officers at posts "behave in a brotherlike manner toward us." The Indian complaints of ill treatment at forts, which were general, were not believed by Major-General Jeffery Amherst, British Commander-in-Chief in America, who thought the alleged ill treatment was probably "necessary Checks which the Commanding officers are obliged to give them, in their Drunken Frolicks." Amherst had little use for the Indians—in time of peace—and he desired to abolish the giving of presents. He objected to the large sums Johnson and Croghan were spending on Indian presents. "Services must be rewarded," he wrote to Johnson, February 22, 1761, "but as to purchasing the good behavior either of Indians, or any Others, is what I do not understand; when men of what race soever behave ill, they must be punished but not bribed."⁷²

Johnson felt that it was necessary to purchase Indian friendship "with favours and notice." The French, he said, realized that however expensive it might be to give presents, "they wisely foresaw that it was infinitely cheaper, and much more effectual than the keeping a large body of Regular

⁶⁹ *Minutes of the Provincial Council of Pennsylvania*, VIII, 642.

⁷⁰ *The Papers of Sir William Johnson* (Albany, 1921), III, 871.

⁷¹ Francis Parkman, *History of the Conspiracy of Pontiac* (Boston, 1851), 155-156, 163-164.

⁷² *The Papers of Sir William Johnson*, III, 845, 515.

Troops in their several Countrys”⁷³ As Johnson pointed out, even the presence of forts in hostile Indian country could not protect the fur trade. That could only be done by the maintenance of friendly relations with the Indians, and not only was it cheaper to do this by giving presents but it was “more certain of success.”

It is necessary to emphasize the historical importance of Amherst’s policy relative to Indian presents. More than all else this policy was responsible for the Indian unrest throughout America, an unrest that ended in a war that cost the British many times more than the presents, not to mention the losses sustained through the cessation of the fur trade during the hostilities. It is significant that Amherst maintained his economy order over the protest of every officer in America having anything to do with Indian affairs. Throughout the country the Indians were talking of the matter. Croghan reported from Fort Pitt in May, 1762, that the Indians declared that, “ye French was butt a poor peple butt they allways Cloathed any Indians that was poor or Naked when they Come to see them”⁷⁴

Amherst not only refused presents but made threats. He ordered Johnson to tell the Indians “to adhere firmly to His Majesty’s Interest,” for if they did not do so,

they Must not only Expect the Severest Retaliation, but an Entire Destruction of all their Nations, for I am firmly Resolved, Whenever they give me an Occasion, to Extirpate them Root & branch. . . . ⁷⁵

On April 30, 1763, Croghan reported to Amherst that the western Indians were uneasy because the King of France had ceded their lands without their consent. Amherst returned a bombastic reply declaring that it was quite unimportant what the Indians thought, “as it is to their interest to behave peaceably, and while they continue to do they may be assured of His Majesty’s Protection.”⁷⁶ For a commander with but meagre military forces available, Croghan thought “Gineral Amhurst” as he called him spoke very rashly. Very soon it was His Majesty, or rather His Majesty’s representatives, who sought protection—and from the Indian allies of all people! Under the circumstances it is ludicrous to find

⁷³ *Ibid.*, IV, 275-276.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, III, 783.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, III, 520.

⁷⁶ Volwiler, *op. cit.*, 162.

Amherst and Johnson seeking the aid of the Iroquois (except Senecas) in putting down an Indian revolt.⁷⁷

During 1761 and 1762, several Indian plots were discovered and forestalled, but in 1763 the storm broke. The leader was a chief of the Ottawas named Pontiac: "The genius of Pontiac united and enthused the natives; the French traders spread rumors to incite the savages against the English."⁷⁸ It seems probable that French military and colonial officials helped to spread such rumors by their indiscreet apologies for the French withdrawal and prophecies of their early return. Pontiac afterwards told Croghan (November, 1765) that the trouble had been stirred up by the French and called the Pontiac Conspiracy, a "Bever War."⁷⁹

The Pontiac revolt included the Senecas and most of the western tribes. For an Indian rebellion, it was extraordinarily successful. West of Niagara, the savages captured all English forts except two—Detroit and Fort Pitt—and these two were invested, with Pontiac in personal command at the siege of Detroit. Croghan reported to the Lords of Trade, that, during the summer of 1763, the Indians killed and captured 2,000 British subjects, drove thousands "to Beggary and the greatest distress," captured and destroyed nine forts, and plundered troops and traders to the extent of £100,000.⁸⁰ The Pontiac rebellion was only put down with difficulty by energetic military expeditions under Bouquet and Bradstreet (1764-1765) and the success of Sir William Johnson in retaining the friendship of the Iroquois confederacy (except the Senecas). At Detroit, Pontiac did not depart until a letter arrived there from the French commandant of Fort de Chartres reminding the savages that Great Britain and France were at peace and ordering his "Dear Children" to desist "from spilling the blood of your Brethern the English."⁸¹

A recent writer has made what the writer believes to be an ill-considered assault upon the historical importance of Pontiac.⁸² He intimates that Pontiac did not start the uprising that bears his name. If this be true, then all the British

⁷⁷ *The Papers of Sir William Johnson*, IV, 170, 172, 210, 235-236.

⁷⁸ Volwiler, *op. cit.*, 164.

⁷⁹ *Collections of the Illinois State Historical Library* (Springfield), XI, 53.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, X, 256.

⁸¹ *Michigan Pioneer and Historical Society Collections* (Lansing), XXVII, 653-654.

⁸² Randolph G. Adams, "Pontiac," *Dictionary of American Biography*.

and French military officers in America and all the contemporary experts on Indian affairs, including Sir William Johnson, were incredibly deceived. All unite in reporting Pontiac to be an Indian of amazing ability and influence. In 1764, General Gage reported that the Illinois Indians had been ready to treat for peace "till that villain Pontiac got amongst them." The remark is indicative of the most striking feature of Pontiac's career: his influence beyond his own tribe. Both Gage and Johnson declared in December, 1764, that Pontiac's influence extended to the mouth of the Mississippi. Aubry, French governor of Louisiana, told the British (December 20, 1764) that Pontiac "is the firebrand of all the nations and it is he who excites them against you."⁸³ George Croghan reported in 1765 that Pontiac was "a shrewd Sensible Indian of few words" who commanded more respect among the western tribes "than any Indian I ever saw could do amongst his own Tribe."⁸⁴

The Pontiac War interrupted the fur trade in the west for nearly three years (1763-1765) and did enormous damage to the settlers upon the frontier. The latter were opposed to the fur trade on the ground that the traffic supplied the savages with arms and powder to use against the settlements. In Pennsylvania, the Cumberland County settlers, who had suffered much during the hostilities, were determined to prevent the resumption of the Indian trade. In the spring of 1765, Croghan was ordered on a mission to the western country. The traders obtained his permission to send their trade goods to Fort Pitt with the Indian presents in anticipation of the re-opening of the fur trade. A group of settlers led by Captain James Smith, disguised as Indians who came to be known as "Black Boys," attacked the party, "killed a few Horses, and burnt and destroyed above fourscore Horse-Loads of Indian goods; amongst which, were the Presents purchased by Mr. Croghan, for his Embassy to the Illinois."⁸⁵

On another occasion, one hundred fifty "Black Boys," led by Smith and attended by three justices of the peace, appeared before Fort Loudoun (Pennsylvania) and demanded to search all goods within the fort to see if any trade goods were there. Lieutenant Grant, commanding, refused. The justices told the

⁸³ *Collections of the Illinois State Historical Library*, X, 368, 385, 393.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, XI, 53.

⁸⁵ Clarence E. Carter, *The Correspondence of General Thomas Gage* (New Haven, 1931-1938), II, 284.

Lieutenant that they would not admit the validity of "any Military Officers' pass of whatever rank he might be."⁸⁶ The "Black Boys" presumed to issue passes for all persons journeying to and from Fort Loudoun, even including British soldiers! Such a pass, given under the hand of Captain Smith, read as follows:

As the Sidling Hill Volunteers have already Inspected these goods, and as they are all private property, it is Expected that none of these brave fellows will molest them upon the Road, as there is [*sic*] no Indian Supplies amongst them.⁸⁷

General Gage reported in disgust that some of the "Black Boys" had been brought to trial and acquitted and he had heard that some of the jury were themselves "Black Boys"!⁸⁸ He reported to the Earl of Halifax that the "Black Boys" had intercepted a sutler taking supplies to the garrison of Fort Pitt and that, "The Communication is become so dangerous, that even the Expresses are obliged to proceed with Caution, and Stealth."⁸⁹

Gage was enraged and offered military aid to Lieutenant-Governor John Penn, declaring that both government and law "seem in danger of entire Subversion."⁹⁰ The activities of the "Black Boys" gradually receded but they did not disappear until the outbreak of the American Revolution. In 1768, Gage, upon Penn's request, ordered a detachment of thirty men and an officer from Philadelphia to escort Croghan from Lancaster to Fort Pitt, since the "Black Boys" had threatened to destroy the Indian presents and kill Croghan.⁹¹ The latter went ahead before the troops arrived but the escort saved the presents.

All along the frontier, the settlers, who were opposed to the fur trade and hated the Indians, seldom missed an opportunity to destroy a stray redskin. It was "a long series of mutual grievances and outrages" between the settlers and the western tribes that culminated in Lord Dunmore's War (1774).⁹²

⁸⁶ *Minutes of the Provincial Council of Pennsylvania*, IX, 270.

⁸⁷ *Pennsylvania Archives*, Ser. I, vol. IV, 220.

⁸⁸ *The Papers of Sir William Johnson*, IV, 789.

⁸⁹ Carter, *op. cit.*, I, 62.

⁹⁰ *Minutes of the Provincial Council of Pennsylvania*, IX, 268.

⁹¹ Carter, *op. cit.*, I, 170.

⁹² Reuben G. Thwaites and Louise P. Kellogg, *Documentary History of Dunmore's War* (Madison, 1906), Introduction, ix.

Throughout the history of the fur trade in the Ohio valley complaint is made of the traders. Hamilton of Pennsylvania said they were "a very licentious people" and Dinwiddie of Virginia referred to them as "abandoned Wretches."⁹³ Parkman wrote that the English fur traders were "ruffians of the coarsest stamp, who vied with each other in rapacity, violence, and profligacy. They cheated, cursed, and plundered the Indians, and outraged their families"⁹⁴

Among such an assemblage of citizenry, the Pennsylvania fur traders did not find it necessary to occupy back seats: they were among friends. In a message to Hamilton in 1754, the Pennsylvania Assembly said:

We are now to join with the Governor in bewailing the miserable Situation of our Indian Trade carried on (some few excepted) by the vilest of our Inhabitants and Convicts imported from Great Britain and Ireland. . . . These trade without Controul from either beyond the Limits or at least beyond the Power of our Laws.⁹⁵

George Croghan had urged regulation of the fur trade for years. In 1749, he wrote to a member of the Pennsylvania Council that "No people Carries on ye Indian Trade in So Regular a manner as the French. I wish with all My heart ye Government of this Province wol'd Take Some Method to Regulate ye Indian Trade. . . ."⁹⁶

Sir William Johnson, under authority of the military commander-in-chief, tried to regulate the fur trade and failed. The substitute plan of 1768, providing for colonial control of the trade, resulted in virtual anarchy in the Ohio valley. The New York Assembly, seeing the desperate need for regulation, formulated a plan in 1769, which they forwarded to Pennsylvania and Quebec for their consideration.⁹⁷ Such proposals failed, as Lieutenant-Governor Cramahé of Quebec reported home, October 31, 1771, because the interests of New York and Quebec "differ too widely to expect they will ever perfectly agree upon regulations."⁹⁸ In the end the problem of the Ohio country was settled (1774) by placing it under the jurisdiction of the Province of Quebec.⁹⁹

⁹³ *Minutes of the Provincial Council of Pennsylvania*, V, 628, 680.

⁹⁴ Francis Parkman, *History of the Conspiracy of Pontiac* (Boston, 1851), 155.

⁹⁵ *Minutes of the Provincial Council of Pennsylvania*, V, 749.

⁹⁶ *Pennsylvania Archives*, ser. I, vol. II, 81.

⁹⁷ *Minutes of the Provincial Council of Pennsylvania*, IX, 642-643.

⁹⁸ Victor Coffin, *The Province of Quebec and the Early American Revolution* (Madison, 1896), 418.

⁹⁹ *Statutes-at-Large* (London), 14 George III, Chap. 83.

By the treaty of 1783 that ended the Revolutionary War, the Indian country was ceded to the United States and Great Britain engaged herself to turn over the military posts therein to the American authorities "with all convenient speed." The British retained these posts for thirteen years, and both the United States Government and American historians have claimed that the principal reason Great Britain desired the posts was the retention of control of the fur trade. "The letters passing between Haldimand on the one hand and North and Sydney on the other," says McLaughlin, "show that this was in the minds of the Canadian authorities and the English ministry." And it may now be stated positively, declares A. L. Burt, that "the British archives contain reams of documents which provide fine ammunition for the American charge."¹⁰⁰

With close of hostilities, American fur traders swarmed into the western territory in such numbers that Haldimand, governor of Canada, warned the post commanders to be on their guard, as the newcomers might try to occupy the posts. Canadian fur traders asked that new posts be established. The enormous value of the fur trade goes far toward explaining their anxiety. In 1785, the Canadian fur trade was reported to amount to £180,000 per annum, of which £100,000 came from lands belonging to the United States under the treaty of peace.¹⁰¹

On December 9, 1791, the merchants of Montreal presented a memorial on this subject to J. G. Simcoe, lieutenant-governor of Upper Canada:

We have ever deplored with the deepest regret the impolicy and want of local information and lavish unnecessary concession which induced the negotiations of the Treaty with America to lay at her feet the most valuable branch of trade in this country by ceding so large a territory, and thereby to present her with the means of our future subjection by putting the keys of our remaining colonies into her possession.¹⁰²

A further reason for the retention of the posts lay in the non-payment of the debts owed to British merchants by Americans. That the two were closely connected was pointed

¹⁰⁰ Andrew C. McLaughlin, "The Western Posts and the British Debts," *Annual Report of the American Historical Association*, 1894, 427; A. L. Burt, "A New Approach to the Problem of the Western Posts," *Canadian Historical Association, Report of the Annual Meeting*, 1931, 70.

¹⁰¹ McLaughlin, *loc. cit.*, 428.

¹⁰² William Kingsford, *History of Canada* (Toronto, 1894), VII, 845.

out by John Adams in June, 1785, when he informed the Marquis of Carmarthen

that the withholding the posts had withheld from our merchants a very profitable fur trade which we justly considered as our right; that the furs which would have been obtained, if the posts had been in our hands, would have come to England in payment of debts to the amount probably of several hundred thousand pounds. . . .¹⁰³

In May, 1790, Gouverneur Morris told William Pitt that if it was the fur trade that caused Britain to retain the posts, it wasn't worth the candle, since the fur trade would center in England, "let who will carry it on in America."¹⁰⁴ Throughout the long negotiations over the retention of the western posts the United States government repeatedly mentioned the fur trade. Jefferson, as Secretary of State, in 1792, in a long memorandum to George Hammond, British minister to the United States, again connected the debt question with the fur trade, and added a new grievance. The retention of the posts, he said, would

cut us off from the fur trade, which before the war had been always of great importance as a branch of commerce, and as a source of remittance for the payment of our debts to Great Britain: for to the injury of withholding our posts they added the obstruction of all passage along the lakes and their communications.¹⁰⁵

In the end, the British Government may have decided to yield posts, among other reasons, because the wars growing out of the French Revolution had wrecked the fur trade. Certainly British traders had sustained great losses. Then too, the wars between the Indians and the United States, ending with Anthony Wayne's decisive defeat of the savages in 1794, had seriously interfered with the fur trade. It is not surprising that the business was scarcely mentioned in the negotiations preceding Jay's Treaty. In any case, the fur trade could never again be important in the Ohio country. The American states had ceded their western lands claims to the general government, which had organized the Northwest Territory, into which settlers poured in considerable numbers. This caused the fur trade to move west.

Unlike the Ohio valley proper, the Wabash valley continued a thriving fur trade as did the Maumee country. By

¹⁰³ Charles F. Adams, *The Works of John Adams* (Boston, 1853), VIII, 269.

¹⁰⁴ *American State Papers, Foreign Relations* (Washington, 1833), I, 124.

¹⁰⁵ *State Papers and Public Documents of the U.S., 1789-98* (Boston, 1815), 230-231.

the act of May 19, 1796, executing the treaty of Greenville, the Congress of the United States laid down a boundary between the United States and the Indian tribes and under this plan the Maumee and Wabash valleys were reserved to the savages. American regulations required the traders to be licensed under \$1,000 bond. The trade was for some years open to British subjects but the act of April 29, 1816, declared that licenses should only be issued to American citizens, "unless by the express direction of the President of the United States, and upon such terms and conditions as the public interest may, in his opinion, require."¹⁰⁶ Subsequently even this limited privilege was taken away from the British.

The importance of the fur trade in the Maumee-Wabash country is shown by the establishment of a government factory for the fur trade at Fort Wayne, Indiana Territory, in 1802. The factory did "a flourishing business" for a decade.¹⁰⁷ In September, 1812, the factory was burned during an Indian attack. With the establishment of European peace in 1815, at the end of the Napoleonic era, fur prices began to climb rapidly and new traders came to the Maumee-Wabash region. John Jacob Astor entered the trade before 1819. In 1822 Alexander Ewing, an old Pennsylvania trader, settled in Fort Wayne, and, with his sons, did business under the name of A. Ewing & Sons. After the older Ewing's death in 1826, the firm became W. G. & G. W. Ewing. The Ewings were at first friendly to Astor's American Fur Company and obtained their trade goods from Astor's man at Detroit. In 1828, the Ewings made an arrangement with a New York house, which supplied them with trade goods and sold their furs on commission in America and Europe. This brought them into direct competition with Astor's company, but the two firms continued to be friendly for a decade.

Both the American Fur Company and the Ewings had troubles with **their traders**, but the Ewings were more diplomatic in maintaining internal peace. On one occasion in 1828 one of the Rousseau brothers wrote to his employers: "Gentlemen, i think you are very deceitful." The Ewings handled the situation delightfully: they presented Mr. Rousseau with a breastpin!

¹⁰⁶ *Statutes-at-Large of the U.S.A.*, I, 137-138, 469, 701; III, 332-333.

¹⁰⁷ Edgar B. Wesley, "The Government Factory System among the Indians." *Journal of Economic and Business History*, May, 1932.

In the eighteen-thirties, fashionable people began to admire the silk hat. As a result Ramsay Crooks, of the American Fur Company, wrote, June 17, 1838, that "Rats, Beavers & Otters are dead stock." Beaver prices tumbled and raccoon prices rose. This was a boon to the Maumee-Wabash trade since that region "produced enormous numbers of raccoons" and as a result "became for a few years the center of interest of the fur business of America."¹⁰⁸ In the ensuing boom of the trade, the Ewings and the American Fur Company engaged in a trade war (1838). The following year a trade agreement was tried but it did not work very well, so war was resumed. It was a cut-throat competition with no holds barred. G. W. Ewing who was a member of the Indiana state senate, introduced a bill in January, 1840, laying a heavy tax upon the American Fur Company! The bill passed the senate but failed in the house. N. D. Grover reported from Logansport that if any legislator voted for Ewing's bill "his Hide will be on the fence and well Stretched at that." Ramsay Crooks was enraged at Ewing's bill. He "denounced it as unconstitutional and planned resistance." Having failed to get this bill enacted into law, Ewing privately wrote to Crooks suggesting that peace be made! Crooks replied in some heat, on July 31, 1840:

I have reflected on your course since the contract of 1839, and when I call to mind more especially your efforts last winter to legislate us out of Indiana, I should consider myself an unfaithful servant of the corporation I represent if I encouraged you to expect we can ever come to any mutual understanding. . . . The position you now occupy is of your own choosing and we have not the slightest inclination to change the existing relations.¹⁰⁹

However, both firms used discretion for two years. In 1842, war was resumed on a broad scale and was only ended by the bankruptcy of the American Fur Company. That did not help the Ewings much as they too were in financial difficulties. Also, the fur trade was dwindling. The lines of the Indian country in Indiana had been gradually constricted, almost from the beginning. Most of the savages had migrated and the years 1846-1848 mark the end of the important period of the fur trade in the valleys of the Maumee and the

¹⁰⁸ Paul C. Phillips, "The Fur Trade in the Maumee-Wabash Country," *Studies in American History* (Bloomington, 1926), 109.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 114.

Wabash.¹¹⁰ It has been well said of fur-bearing animals:
"They recede with the aborigines, before the tide of civiliza-
tion. . . ."¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 117-118.

¹¹¹ Anonymous, "On the Fur Trade, and Fur-bearing Animals," *The American Journal of Science and Arts* (New Haven, 1884), XXV, no. 2.