

THE FRENCH AND INDIANS

Good day, everyone--it's a beautiful day in Pennsylvania.

You might have been speaking French in Pennsylvania today as you know if this area had not been one of the scenes of the world-wide struggle between France and England--the Seven Years War. France laid claim in the Eighteenth Century to the vast country between Quebec and Louisiana, but it was unable to exercise effective control of so large a domain of wilderness. But by mid-century 1750, England's commerce in the Ohio River Valley was threatening French Sovereignty and France determined to halt the British advance by erecting chains of forts in Western Pennsylvania. French and Canadian militiamen erected four such forts under the direction of the Marquis Duquesne--Presque Isle, LeBoeuf, Machault and Duquesne. And that was the kindling which ignited the French and Indian War. Major George Washington, only 21 at the time, came into Pennsylvania to demand that the French withdraw, but Washington failed to budge the "intruders," as he called them. By 1758, the numerical superiority of the British overwhelmed the French and they withdrew to Detroit. A year later, France's complete North American empire fell in the famous encounter of Wolf and Montcalm at the Plains of Abraham in Quebec.

Actually, Pennsylvania itself had been a peaceful land--and it was world-wide desire for Empire which brought it war. The gentle and wise Indian policy of William Penn had given the Province a quiet frontier for almost three-quarters of a century at its beginning--a rare historical achievement in this new land. However,

by the 1750's, incited hostilities of empire produced a change. The crushing defeat of British and colonial troops under Braddock at Fort Duquesne--now Pittsburgh--spurred the General Assembly of Pennsylvania to action. Forced to abandon its official pacifism, the Assembly voted to raise troops and build forts to defend the eastern part of the colony against possible Indian attacks.

And Pennsylvania wisely built Fort Augusta at Sunbury, at the juncture of important Indian trails, and important river confluences. Although it was never attacked, its presence there discouraged Indian raids on frontier settlements. You can still see a one-sixth scale reproduction of the fort which has been erected on the site. It is another of the visits that can be made on Pennsylvania's trails of history which are part of the French and Indian period. Fort Augusta can be called Pennsylvania's first movement from peace into war. The Great Quaker Experiment became the scene of armed conflict. The frontier continued to be held until the Indian was finally pushed into the plains--only because France and England greedily tried to dominate the entire world and its commerce. As a result, the birth pangs of a new nation began in Pennsylvania.

This is Pete Wambach. It's a beautiful day in Pennsylvania.