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## SQUATTERS, INDIANS, PROPRIETARY GOVERNMENT, AND LAND IN THE SUSQUEHANNA VALLEY

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On 1 November 1755, early in the Seven Years' War, approximately ninety Delawares, Mingoes, and Shawnees attacked the Euro-American settlements in the Great Cove Valley in south-central Pennsylvania. Squatters began moving into the valley as early as the 1730s, but the provincial government did not purchase the Great Cove lands from the Six Nations until the Albany Congress of 1754, in a fraudulent arrangement that the Indian attackers refused to recognize. Columns of smoke rising from the valley, bloating corpses of settlers and livestock, and refugees fleeing eastward were visible signs of the warriors' successful offensive. So, too, was the capture of several Euro-Americans the Indians considered to be squatters on their lands, including Charles Stuart, his wife, and their two small children.<sup>1</sup> A short distance from the scene of their capture, the war party halted, and some English-speaking Indians informed Charles Stuart in excruciating detail of the execution that awaited him.<sup>2</sup> But Stuart lived to see another day, largely because the Delaware leader Shingas reminded his comrades that the squatter had "lived on the Frontiers and that their People had Frequently Call[ed] at [his] House in their Passing and Repassing between Aughwick and Fort Cumberland and had Always been supplied with Proviss[ions] and what they wanted Both for themselves and Creatures without Ever Chargeing them anything for it."<sup>3</sup>



Stuart's experience reveals far more than the familiar story of encroaching settlers, frontier violence, and grueling captivities. It vividly illustrates that the Seven Years' War in Pennsylvania was a war between neighbors. Throughout the ridge and valley country of the Appalachians, squatters had frequently encountered Indians at their homesteads. The Stuarts, for example, settled in the Great Cove sometime in the late 1740s, probably after King George's War (1744–48). Their homestead was near the Tuscarora Indian path, and, as Shingas remembered, they had extended hospitality to untold numbers of Indian travelers over the years. Such apparently amicable encounters raise the question of how ordinary people on the frontier—Euro-American and Indian farmers, hunters, and their families—shaped their worlds at a local level.<sup>4</sup> How did the Delawares, Shawnees, Iroquois, and other Natives—many of whom were relatively “new Settlers” themselves—interact with neighboring Euro-American families?<sup>5</sup> How, and by whom, in such a complex matrix of interactions, were Indians actually dispossessed of their lands?

A close analysis of the face-to-face meetings among ordinary people reveals an important aspect of the colonial encounter that has largely escaped historians' attention: how colonial and Indian frontier inhabitants intensely negotiated with each other over boundaries, land use, and possession both before and during the upheaval of the Seven Years' War. In spite of their conflicts and misunderstandings, they coexisted, communicated, and crafted mutually beneficial relationships in such routine encounters as small-scale trading of corn, alcohol, tobacco, and wild game. Some squatters acknowledged Indians' occupancy and approached them for permission to remain on the land or tried to purchase it from them without the authorization of proprietary leaders. Natives also enlisted European farmers as tenants in an adaptive response to colonial expansion in Pennsylvania, New York, and South Carolina. In the Mohawk Valley, for example, one group of German farmers rented land from the Canajoharie Mohawks for nearly two decades. Under such arrangements, Euro-American farmers typically paid Indians yearly fees in return for planting rights. Some farmers hoped that these extralegal actions (along with their improvements) would bolster their claims when the government actually purchased the lands. Settlers cleverly exploited their local relationships with Indians to resist the proprietors' attempts to eject them. For many frontier Euro-Americans, then, negotiations and trading relationships with the Indians were means to landed ends—part of the lifelong process of achieving com-



petency, asserting masculine patriarchal ideals, and building prosperous farms.<sup>6</sup>

Thus the struggle for lands in eighteenth-century Pennsylvania was at least a triangular contest among proprietary officials, squatters, and Indians. But often the contest had as many as nine dimensions as Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, the Six Nations, Susquehanna Indians, Ohio Indians, squatters, land speculators, and British officials in Whitehall all battled for control of the same valuable patches of ground. Imperial officials, proprietary agents, and speculators alike fretted over the unofficial relationships that squatters and Indians were forging, for these ties threatened their interests. Squatters did not pay for land, they did not pay quitrents, and they blurred visions of orderly settlement. Colonial officials regarded unlicensed settlers as “mutinous spirits” who would “cut and mangle the best parts of the Country and make it impossible for the Proprietors to appropriate . . . good lands for their own use.” In 1749, Thomas Penn envisioned a dark future in which “we shall have the Country intirely over run with people, who will neither pay us our due nor submit to the Laws of the Country.”<sup>7</sup> Informal or unofficial negotiations between ordinary Euro-Americans and Indians also threatened the government’s claims to exclusive jurisdiction over diplomatic negotiations with Indians. The need to extinguish Indian title made it essential that the Pennsylvania proprietors try to maintain rigid control over Indian diplomacy and the purchase of land by treaties. From William Penn to John Penn, proprietors and other officials issued stern warnings against private individuals buying land or otherwise “intermeddling” or “tampering” with Indians.<sup>8</sup> Colonial magistrates occasionally prosecuted squatters for trespass, burned their cabins, and ejected them, but such means could not resolve the problem. Squatters’ confrontations with colonial authorities are a useful reminder that Pennsylvania’s frontier diplomats were aggressively negotiating their own economic interests, vision of orderly expansion, and definition of property.<sup>9</sup>

The relationships among proprietors, squatters, and Native Americans reveal the permeable nature of the eighteenth-century frontiers and yield insights into larger processes that would transform those frontiers into juridically and racially defined colonial borders after the Seven Years’ War.<sup>10</sup> They shed light on the interplay of local events with imperial developments, on the entire spectrum of cultural contact (from routine encounters between ordinary people on the frontier to official diplomacy between

colonial and Native leaders), and on the complicated, often indirect, processes by which proprietors and ordinary settlers eventually displaced Native peoples.

Conflict on the eighteenth-century Pennsylvania frontier belies the colony's reputation as "the best poor man's country in the world," a place where Euro-Americans could easily attain landed independence and enjoy religious toleration. To be sure, Pennsylvania's alliance with the Six Nations sustained an exceptional period of peaceful relations from the 1680s to the 1750s. Pennsylvania, however, advanced the most expansive settlement frontier in all of British North America, and it could not forever hide from the consequences of its displacement of the Shawnees, Delawares, and multiethnic Susquehanna Indians. By the 1750s, Euro-American settlements had pushed relentlessly into the area southeast of the Blue (or Kittatinny) Mountain, an imposing, nearly unbroken ridge running diagonally across Pennsylvania from southwest to northeast.<sup>11</sup>

Even as the territory occupied by Euro-Pennsylvanians expanded, an eighteenth-century "feudal revival" in North America was fast eclipsing the province's reputation as "the best poor man's country." Between 1730 and 1745, proprietors from New York to Pennsylvania to South Carolina began to revive old land claims that had not yielded wealth in the seventeenth century. In keeping with this trend, William Penn's indebted sons asserted their proprietary rights to restore their shaky finances, initiating an aggressive policy of raising land prices and quitrents, collecting quitrents in arrears, and ejecting trespassers. They also colluded with Canasatego and other spokesmen for the Six Nations Iroquois to purchase frontier lands that were actually settled by Shawnees, Delawares, and Susquehanna Indians.<sup>12</sup> Not coincidentally, the Pennsylvania government, negotiating with the Six Nations, bought the disputed lands out from under resident Euro-American and Indian settlers in 1749, 1754, and 1768.<sup>13</sup>

Squatters' decisions to ignore proprietary claims and treaties with the Iroquois were prompted in part by the Penns' aggressive land policies and socioeconomic conditions in the colony. One squatter remarked that the Scotch-Irish 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." Settlers also objected to land speculators' practice of buying land cheap and selling it dear. One colonial farmer believed that "the removing of



them from the unpurchased Lands, was a Contrivance of the Gentlemen and Merchants of Philadelphia, that they might take Rights for their Improvements when a Purchase was made.” In a period when economic inequality (in terms of land ownership and proportionate wealth) in Pennsylvania was growing, settlers bristled at tenancy, rising land prices, and rampant land speculation, which drove freeholds further out of reach.<sup>14</sup>

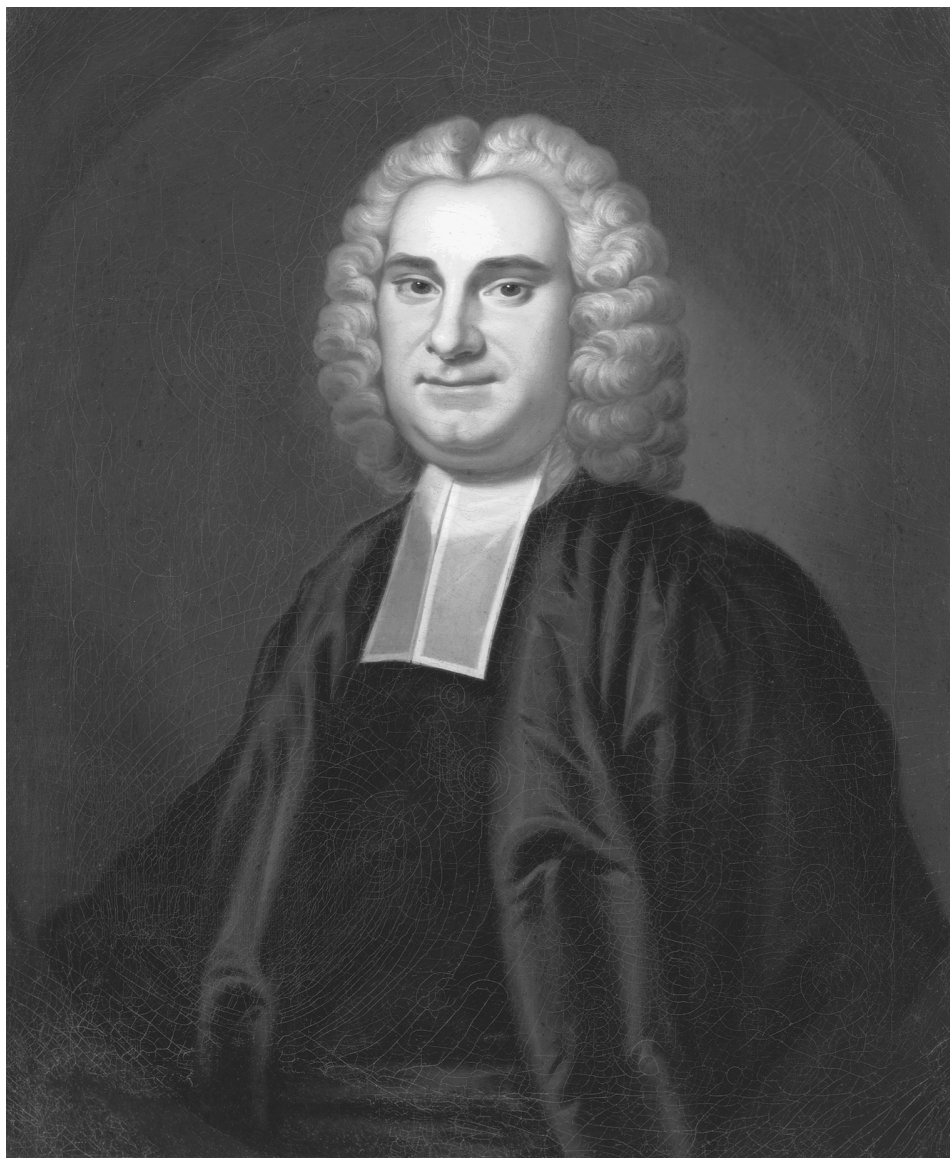
By the late 1740s, then, unsettled lands (especially in older settlements) were becoming scarce and too expensive for poor immigrants disembarking at Philadelphia. Proprietors, meanwhile, saw their wealth dwindling away as discontented families either migrated down the Great Valley into Maryland, Virginia, and the Carolinas or ventured into Indian country to establish homesteads. The settlers’ desire for competency and landed independence was the most important motivation in their decisions to plant themselves on Indians’ territory. Squatters’ deeply held beliefs in the value of their labor and improvements to the land sustained their hopes of eventually possessing legal title to their properties. Indeed, when unlicensed settlers had an opportunity to apply to the proprietors for land on good terms after the government’s 1754 and 1768 purchases, they would do so. In the eighteenth century there were no overt acts of collective squatter resistance against the proprietors over land policy. Like their accommodations with the Natives, squatters’ defiance was limited and practical.<sup>15</sup>

Squatter families began moving north up the Susquehanna Valley and west along the Juniata Valley in the 1730s. Many poorer Ulster emigrants in search of land moved directly to the frontiers after disembarking at Philadelphia. The life of Simon Girty, Sr.—whose family appears on a list of squatters compiled by Provincial Secretary Richard Peters in 1750—illustrates one of many Euro-American paths to the frontiers and personal relations with Natives. Girty immigrated from Ireland to Pennsylvania in 1735. He quickly entered into the fur trade and developed contacts with Delawares in the Ohio country; he undoubtedly became familiar with the geography of the central Appalachians through the course of his westward journeys. After his marriage to an English woman named Mary Newton in the late 1730s, Girty established a homestead in the Path Valley, present-day Franklin County. He continued his fur-trading activities without official license until Peters and Cumberland County magistrates expelled him and his family and burned their cabin to the ground in 1750. Like Girty, many squatters were unlicensed Indian traders or had informal connec-

tions to the Indians. Such individuals may have occupied frontier land under the pretense of trading, or Natives may have given them permission to establish posts at convenient locations. Trader George Croghan believed that the Juniata Valley squatters were “a Set of White Men that make their living by trading with the Indians.” Many settlers—or “little Traders” as the Provincial Council called them—“without any Authority from the Government take a few trifling Goods and go into the Woods to sell them.” It is likely that some squatters saw a brief stint as a trader as a means to acquire land.<sup>16</sup>

A “frontier exchange economy” prevailed in the decades before the Seven Years’ War. As recent historians have argued, Euro-American and Indian settlers’ economic goals and social organization were similar, at least temporarily. The newcomers had taken extraordinary risks in moving families, possessions, and livestock over steep mountains. Once ensconced in the mountain valleys, the inhabitants must have been exceptionally cognizant of their isolation and vulnerability. There were no forts to flee to, no military forces to mobilize quickly, no roads to facilitate trade with more settled parts. Poorer frontier families typically lived in temporary log cabins in small, isolated clearings. They subsisted, in Indian fashion, through hunting and agriculture and depended on Indian largesse. Peaceable dealings with their Native neighbors were a necessity on a frontier that was still an Indian world and one increasingly threatened by French imperial power.<sup>17</sup>

Native peoples in turn faced a potent combination of zealous proprietors, ecological changes, and rapid expansion of colonial settlements, all of which dramatically heightened tensions in the region. Many Susquehanna and Delaware Valley Indians had found little evidence of benevolence in the Penn family’s actions. The colony’s strong alliance with the Six Nations was partly designed to bring the Delawares, Shawnees, and Susquehanna Indians (and their lands) under Iroquoia’s preponderant power. The proprietors presumed that “the Five Nations have an absolute Authority over all our Indians” and negotiated with the Iroquois for Delaware, Shawnee, and Susquehanna Indians’ lands. Incidents like the Walking Purchase of 1737, the loss of key hunting and agricultural grounds, ecological changes, unprincipled Euro-American traders, and settlement expansion prompted many Delawares and Shawnees living in eastern Pennsylvania to migrate to the Juniata Valley, the Ohio Valley, and Iroquoia after the 1720s. Yet, as the previous chapter shows, Indians did not simply retire westward when



*Figure 11.* Pennsylvania provincial secretary Richard Peters vigorously asserted proprietary claims against those he considered squatters. Portrait by John Wollaston (attrib.), c. 1758. Courtesy of the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, Philadelphia. Gift of Mrs. Maria L. M. Peters.

colonial settlements appeared in their valleys. Some Delawares, Shawnees, and Conestogas remained east of the Appalachians intending “to live and dye where they are now settled.” Other Indian peoples weakened by warfare and disease—Tuscaroras, Nanticokes, Tutelos, and Conoys—migrated northward and settled in the Susquehanna and Juniata valleys.<sup>18</sup>

Thus Euro-Americans moving onto frontier lands did not enter a vacant wilderness. Multiethnic Indian towns and farms still lined the Juniata and Susquehanna valleys; Native hunters sought game in the same bottomlands that squatters were using. On the Juniata, the Shawnee leader Kishacoquillas presided over twenty families at the town of Ohesson well into the 1740s; further upstream was the Delaware town of Assunepachta, which contained twelve families. A group of Tuscarora settlers continued to live in the Tuscarora or Path Valley until the 1760s and maintained ties with their kin living in Iroquoia and in the Carolinas. In his 1747 journey through the Conococheague Valley in Pennsylvania and Maryland, the Rev. Michael Schlatter noted that “in this neighborhood there are still many Indians, who are well disposed and very obliging, and are not disinclined toward Christians.” Although Schlatter may have misrepresented Indian attitudes, he rightly noted that Natives and newcomers shared the same valley.<sup>19</sup>

Euro-Americans apparently had no qualms about living near Indian towns or amidst the numerous individual Native American families who remained in the area, and some Indians were willing to accommodate limited numbers of newcomers. In the late 1740s, Arthur Buchanan and three Scots-Irish families approached the Shawnees at Ohesson and received permission to settle on the Juniata; Buchanan evidently developed close ties with the Shawnee leader Kishacoquillas. In 1755 George Armstrong applied for 300 acres of land along Tuscarora Creek that was “opposite to the settlement of the Indians called Lakens.” Turbut Francis described his tract as lying “about 3 miles below the place where an Indian lived whose name was Connosque.” Even if Francis had no personal dealings with Connosque, it is significant that Indian peoples and Indian landmarks figured so prominently in his mental landscape. He added that the creek running through his tract was “almost opposite to the place that John Thompson a Delaware Indian formerly lived.”<sup>20</sup>

Perhaps Thompson was among those Native Americans who were dissatisfied over colonists’ encroachments and removed to the Ohio country. Others were relocating closer to Iroquoia. A Nanticoke band that had once





lived at the mouth of the Juniata River, for example, had established a new settlement in the Wyoming Valley by 1750. Tuscaroras settled among the Iroquois “brought forward the subject of the history of their land on the Juniata” to three Moravian missionaries in 1752. They told the Moravians that they were “deeply grieved to see white people living on their lands. They wished to have them removed.” The Tuscaroras’ desire to avoid “dissension in their land” explains why they chose relocation over confrontation. But many Native families could not forget the familiar faces of farmer-hunters who had displaced them. When Indian warriors attacked Pennsylvania’s settlements in 1755–58, they frequently targeted the very settlers who had earlier invaded their lands. As Teedyuscung concluded, “the Land is the Cause of our Differences; that is, our being unhappily turned out of the land is the cause.”<sup>21</sup>

The Brandywine Delawares, living near Philadelphia, illustrate the larger processes of displacement accompanying European settlement; the Delawares faced ecological changes similar to those that had sparked open warfare between Algonquians and English in the seventeenth-century Chesapeake and New England. Hannah Freeman, a Delaware woman who remained in the area, testified that “the country becoming more settled[,] the Indians were not allowed to Plant Corn any longer”—probably because of unpenned livestock and an inability to relocate seasonally to new lands—and so “her father went to Shamokin and never returned.” In a 1729 letter to Lieutenant Governor Patrick Gordon, the Lenape sachem Checochinican complained that “the Land has been unjustly Sold [to the proprietors], whereby we are redused to great wants and hardships.” He described his people as “greatly disquieted” and complained that “new settlers would not even allow them to cut down trees for their cabins.” Whereas Euro-Americans saw the trees and livestock as their property, Natives did not give up the right to bark trees for shelter and treated the colonists’ roaming livestock as, at best, fair game and, at worst, a source of “dissension” in their land. Colonists’ unpenned livestock trampled Indian cornfields and, running free in the woods, competed with deer for food. Declining numbers of deer and other game also remained a thorny issue between Euro-American and Indian settlers.<sup>22</sup>

Nevertheless, colonial and Native inhabitants were capable of communicating effectively and creating mutually beneficial relationships with one another. Indians and Euro-Americans lived beside each other in a world of great ambivalence: friendship, harmony, trust, understanding, and amity

coexisted with antagonism, suspicion, fear, misunderstanding, and enmity. Squatters often bartered, worked, socialized, and hunted with Indians at their homesteads. The frontier inhabitants could readily and clearly communicate, perhaps through the Delaware Jargon or through English-speaking Indian intermediaries. Meetings must have been an almost daily occurrence for settlers and traders who often lived along well-worn Indian paths. Perhaps Native and colonial travelers found lodging and food at their respective cabins. Rural artisans, such as blacksmiths, repaired weapons or mended hatchets and pots for the Indians. A settler named Richard Thomas believed that he had entertained and provisioned “the king of the five nations” and other Iroquois; they took up “their Lodging near to his house, whear they Resided about fore days and nights” in July 1727. A Delaware sachem “in want of provisions received ten bushels of meal from a miller on Tulpehocken Creek” in 1730. The missionary David Brainerd complained of Indians who “upon Christmas days” in the 1740s went “to drink and revel among some of the white people.” When the Seven Years’ War began in 1755, John Bartram captured the sense of betrayal that many settlers felt in light of such past hospitality: Indians destroying “all before them with fire ball and tomahawk” in 1755 had once been “allmost dayly familiars at thair houses eat drank cursed and swore together were even intimate play mates.”<sup>23</sup>

Underlying peaceful interactions was a current of disagreement. Euro-American and Indian settlers were competing over such crucial resources as hunting grounds, springs, and alluvial soils for agriculture. As previous chapters demonstrate, different cultural beliefs about alcohol use, land use, property, and reciprocity in social interactions made Euro-Indian encounters prone to break down into fights, brawls, and, more infrequently, murders. Moreover, some squatters were openly hostile to “friendly” Indians. James Patterson, who began trespassing in the Juniata Valley in the early 1750s, carved out loopholes in his log cabin in case of attack. His Native neighbors frequently visited his homestead “on the friendly mission of bartering furs and venison for rum and tobacco.” But Patterson—“Big Shot” according to legend—used these visits to gain much-needed food supplies and to intimidate the Indians. He allegedly fired at a target posted on a nearby tree whenever Natives visited so that they could see what might happen to his human targets.<sup>24</sup>

Unofficial meetings between Euro-Americans and Indians, whether peaceful or violent, remained a potent issue for many British colonial gov-



ernments. As squatters began moving up the Susquehanna and Juniata valleys, they established farms astride major Indian trade routes and north-south war paths that Iroquois parties used to attack their Catawba and Cherokee enemies in the Carolinas. Colonial officials in Pennsylvania, Virginia, and the Carolinas feared that the intruders would provoke these war parties to open conflict. During the winter of 1742–43, the nightmare almost came true when a group of Virginia squatters inflicted eight casualties on an Iroquois war party. Only the deft diplomacy of Conrad Weiser, Shikellamy, and Canasatego staved off war between Virginia and Pennsylvania and the Six Nations, but their efforts could not quiet fears that such incidents would happen again.<sup>25</sup>

Squatter encounters with Indian war parties also provided occasions for misunderstanding over the meanings of reciprocity and property. Villages in the Susquehanna Valley had long been centers of hospitality for travelers and especially for Iroquois warriors who camped near the colonists' homesteads and requested (or demanded) food and supplies. Well into the 1760s, Iroquois passing through expected supplies from Euro-American and Indian settlers alike. Often alcohol took the place of less troublesome fare. During his journey to Onondaga in 1737, for example, the provincial interpreter Conrad Weiser encountered a destitute and ragged Iroquois warrior north of Shamokin, a major Indian town in the upper Susquehanna Valley. The warrior's condition resulted in part from a raid against southern Indians that had gone awry and in part because he "had squandered a part of his property drinking with the Irish" at a backcountry tavern or homestead. An Iroquois imbibing with the Irish is only one indication that squatters frequently socialized with members of war parties. In 1749, George Croghan reported that an Iroquois warrior was killed while drinking with his comrades on the way home to Onondaga. The four Iroquois men stopped at a "Stillhouse" or tavern along Aughwick Creek and one of them died from knife wounds during a scuffle. Croghan promised to "Secure all the white Men that was att the plese till I find outt the Truth of the affair." He believed that such meetings occurred frequently enough to justify a stiff fine on "all Stillers and Tavern keepers . . . for Making the Indians Drunk, and Espesely warriers."<sup>26</sup>

Squatters routinely used such encounters to engage in unauthorized negotiations for rights to live on Indian land. Shikellamy complained of a German squatter named Frederick Star who moved to the Juniata Valley in the early 1740s and claimed "a Right to the Land meerly because he gave

a little Victuals to our Warriours, who stand very often in need of it.” Shikellamy desired that Pennsylvania officials would “take the Dutchman by the Arm and . . . throw him over the big Mountains within your Borders.” Similarly, in July 1742, a Six Nations delegation at Philadelphia complained of squatters along the Conococheague Creek who brazenly approached some Iroquois warriors “while they were hunting.” According to the Iroquois speaker, the squatters “made some proposals about the Purchasing of Land from them,” and the Iroquois warriors tentatively agreed to “receive five Duffield Strowds for two Plantations on the River Cohongoranta [Potomac].” The warriors, of course, had no authority to give away land and probably thought that the strouds were gifts, not down payments.<sup>27</sup>

Shikellamy’s protest was only one in a decades-long series of Indian complaints about trespassing in the Susquehanna and Juniata valleys. The Susquehanna Indians, as Weiser once reported, were “very uneasy about the white peoples Setling beyond the Endless mountains on Joniady [Juniata], on Shermans Creek and Else where.” In 1749, they reported that “above 30 familyls are settled upon [their] land this spring, and dayly more goes to setle thereon; some have settled all most to the heads of Joniady River along the path that leads to Ohio.” As Weiser’s phrasing indicates, the Indians’ conceptions of frontiers or borders usually involved mountains. They viewed the long ridgeline of the Blue Mountain as a natural divide between their settlements and Euro-American settlements. Ogash-tash, a Seneca sachem, once argued that “our Boundaries are so well known, and so remarkably distinguish’d by a range of high Mountains.” The Iroquois also saw the Susquehanna Valley as an important border zone between Iroquoia and Pennsylvania. As the major north-south war paths ran through that zone, Iroquois diplomats and warriors saw firsthand the constant seepage of settlers into the fertile river valleys.<sup>28</sup>

Pennsylvania officials usually replied to Indian complaints with official proclamations warning trespassers to remove and forbidding them to purchase lands from Indians. But proclamations alone could not effectively stem the rising tide of squatters, and the government finally took direct action in response to Indian complaints. The proprietors’ first major attempt to remove squatters by force occurred in August 1748 in the Path Valley. Set between sharp and rugged mountain ridge lines, such pockets of alluvial soils attracted both Indian and Euro-American settlers. During Weiser’s journey to the Ohio country to conduct treaty negotiations with



the Wyandots in that year, the proprietors ordered him to expel squatters who had taken up residence along the Allegheny path, the main trade route between the Ohio country and the Susquehanna River. In what might appear at first glance a strange twist of events, Indians and squatters combined to resist the evictions. About fifty miles west of George Croghan's trading post on Aughwick Creek, Weiser and a few local magistrates encountered the Oneida sachem Scaroyady (Monacatootha) with a group of Indians who were probably Ohio country Mingo Iroquois. The squatters had somehow received advanced warning of Weiser's mission and appealed to the Indians for help, lest they "be turned off by the Government." The Indians did not insist that all of the Euro-Americans be unconditionally removed. Instead, they "desired that at least two familys, to wit, Abraham Shlechl and another, might stay, that they, the said Indians, had given them liberty, and that they thought it was in their power to give liberty to" whomever they preferred. Scaroyady made it clear to Weiser that "if any of the people now living there was turned off, no other Body should setle there, they [the Indians] being informed that as soon as the people were turned off others would be put on the land" who would presumably be more favored by the government.<sup>29</sup>

Scaroyady's comment reveals that some Natives were willing to accommodate trustworthy Euro-American settlers who had demonstrated good will and hospitality. His insistence that "no other Body should setle there" reflected the Indians' unwillingness to negotiate with the Pennsylvania government for lands that would be permanently alienated and settled with outsiders unknown to them. Scaroyady and his party clearly had established friendly relations with a few squatter families and may have genuinely sympathized with their plight. Weiser reported that "the people used [the Indians] well on their coming by, and Informed them of the design" for their eviction. The squatters, like Indian settlers, mostly desired small plots of land for farming, whereas the proprietors negotiated for hundreds of thousands of acres. Moreover, Scaroyady must have perceived the squatters' disaffection from the provincial government and perhaps hoped to forge informal alliances with them to forestall a more wholesale and irreversible invasion of his people's territory.<sup>30</sup>

But why would Scaroyady and his companions allow certain families to stay given the Susquehanna Indians' previous complaints? Why did the Oneida sachem believe that he had the authority to decide on the matter? Weiser himself was at a loss to explain it.<sup>31</sup> Scaroyady was probably grant-

ing these people some kind of usufruct rights to Native lands for farming or hunting. Native peoples in the eighteenth century, including Mohawks and Oneidas in Scaroyady's Iroquoian homeland, frequently invited displaced or indigent neighbors to live among them; they also bestowed usufruct rights upon favored individuals in instances of "associative adoption," a reflection of the strong hospitality ethic that bound Native societies together.<sup>32</sup> Such complicated and overlapping rights were a major source of controversy between the proprietary government and the Indians over whom it hoped to extend its legal sovereignty.

The changing political and military balance of power in the Ohio country may also have influenced Scaroyady's decision. Keenly aware of English and French designs on the Ohio country, he perhaps hoped to retain trustworthy settlers as sources of information on colonists' intentions. When the disgruntled Shawnees and Delawares migrated to the Ohio country in the 1720s, they cultivated close ties to the French. Both Pennsylvania and the Six Nations fretted over their inability to control the independently minded Ohio Indians. By the end of King George's War in 1748, however, some western Indian nations, such as the Wyandots and Miamis, were breaking ties with the French, whose expansionism they feared, and entering into alliances with Pennsylvania; hence the warm reception Conrad Weiser received when he traveled to Logstown in 1748. On that occasion, Scaroyady urged Weiser to delay any action on illegal settlement until after the Logstown meeting, at which point the Six Nations would arbitrate the affair. Indians in the Juniata Valley were probably resentful of Iroquois decisions regarding their homes, but as client peoples, they were expected to defer to Iroquois leadership.<sup>33</sup>

As discussed in chapter 8, the problem of illegal settlement was much on the minds of both Pennsylvanians and the Iroquois delegation, which was represented by Canasatego at the Philadelphia treaty of 1749. On that occasion, Governor James Hamilton attempted to shift responsibility for the squatters' encroachments to the shoulders of the Indians who had "give[n] them Countenance" and seized the opportunity to propose a land purchase to diffuse the crisis. He and other proprietary officials hoped that the swath of territory between the Susquehanna and Delaware rivers, transferred to Pennsylvania by the 1749 treaty, would lure unlicensed settlers away from the troubled Juniata Valley. Hamilton accordingly assured the Indians that squatters would yield to his proclamations to remove, "especially as they may be provided with Land on the East side of Sasque-



hanna within the new Purchase.”<sup>34</sup> Thus squatting increasingly became the ideological pretext for colonial land purchases in the eighteenth century. Controlling the frontier and its inhabitants was an important corollary of colonial Indian policy. Members of the provincial elite espoused general views of social evolution in which frontier people living without law were degenerating into a state of savagery. They argued that lawless and violent settlers would inevitably spark a war with the Indians. Peters greatly feared that “the lower sort of People who are exceeding Loose and ungovernable from the mildness of the Constitution and pacifick principles of the Friends wou’d go over in spite of all measures and probably quarrel with the Indians.” He worried that “the People over the Hills are combin’d against the Government, are putting in new Cropps and bid us Defiance.” Believing that “it would be impossible to preserve the Peace of the Province,” Peters urged the Penns to resolve the Indians’ grievances over colonial encroachments. But the provincial secretary’s resolution did not include respect for Indian sovereignty. Pennsylvania officials believed that squatters had to be contained and peace preserved by purchasing disputed lands from the Six Nations by whatever means necessary. In 1749, Peters suggestively informed the sons of William Penn that “all mouths were full of the necessity of an Indian purchase” as the only way to forestall a frontier war.<sup>35</sup>

In fact, proprietary officials were even willing to fabricate a diplomatic crisis, anticipating that Natives would try to resolve it with a treaty culminating in a land purchase. Even as war loomed in 1754, Weiser suggested to the proprietors that “our people Should be let loose to Set upon any part of the Indian lands upon giveing [security] for their Complying with the Proprietary terms after [purchase;] the Indians would Come in and demand Consideration and what Can they Say, the people of pensilvania are their [brethren] according to the treatys subsisting.” The only problem with Weiser’s plan was that the squatters had never been on the proprietors’ leash.<sup>36</sup>

To contain the threat posed by land negotiations between squatters and Indians, the proprietors worked to completely dispossess both groups. Like southern planters who saw the Appalachians as a possible haven for runaway slaves, proprietors considered the possibility that endemic squatting might result in a total loss of control over frontier lands. Weiser and other colonial officials feared that illegal settlement, if not “nipt in the bud,” might lead to a lasting accommodation between Indian and Euro-Ameri-

can settlers. According to Peters, Weiser apprehended “a worse Effect, that is that . . . [squatters] will become tributary to the Indians and pay them yearly sums for their License to be there.” Settlers paying tribute to Indians would be a complete disaster for the Penns, who were deeply in debt at the time and dependent on income derived from land sales and quitrents; as Thomas Penn once observed, “the regulation of our Quit Rents is of the utmost consequence.” And in 1749, Weiser claimed to know “positively” that squatters “are got into this way [paying tribute] on the East side of Sasquehanna’ beyond the Hills and receive acknowledgements and are easy about those Lands.” Weiser envisioned that Pennsylvania’s rulers would “not only have all the abandon’d People of the Province to deal with but the Indians too and that they will mutually support each other and do a vast deal of Mischief.” Peters agreed that “this consideration has alarm’d me more than any other.”<sup>37</sup>

Colonial officials were never able to discover which Indians had granted rights to colonial farmers—an indication of just how peripheral the officials could appear in local negotiations and how elusive and personal such arrangements could be. Thomas Penn believed that the culprits were Delawares at Shamokin and that they should be “severely reprimanded.” Peters speculated that the Indians had given tracts of land to trader Thomas McKee, who had married a Shamokin woman, but he reported as certain that Shikellamy, Shamokin Indians, Delawares, and Nanticokes had all “levyd large Contributions” from neighboring colonial farmers. Years later, an indebted Andrew Montour, emulating what seemed to be a customary practice, also tried to attract Euro-American tenants. Some Indians living around Shamokin, aware of the value Euro-Americans placed on their lands, accepted white settlers as tenants as a way of making them dependent upon Native landlords. Eighteenth-century land records confirm that such relationships existed. One squatter named William Smith, who settled below Shamokin in the 1740s, claimed that his improvement was made “with the consent of the Indians.” The relationships that some settlers and Indians were forging on the frontier clearly represented a threat to both the colony’s land policy and the social order as the authorities saw it.<sup>38</sup>

In May 1750, Pennsylvania took forceful action to circumvent any challenges to their authority. Acting on the complaints Canasatego had made in 1749, Governor Hamilton sent Peters and Weiser west of the Susquehanna to eject squatters “on the Lands beyond Kittochtinny [Blue] Moun-





tains, not purchased of the Indians.” Peters, Weiser, and eight Cumberland County magistrates assembled at George Croghan’s trading post at Aughwick. Five Shamokin Indians also accompanied them as observers.<sup>39</sup> Peters conducted the 1750 expedition as a quasi-military operation to suppress a “set of Scoundrels.” Thomas Penn later commended the “Hussar Spirit” that Peters had displayed, which was “nothing less than which will do with these People.” For the latter half of May 1750, the magistrates scoured the mountain valleys of the Juniata watershed, ejecting squatters, arresting a few of them, and burning log cabins. Although Peters’s report listed neither the total numbers of people living in each household nor squatters in the areas the expedition left untouched, the number of households he counted still astounded officials: five stood along the Juniata, eleven along Sherman’s Creek, eighteen along the Path Valley (including one occupied by “Abraham Slach,” probably the “Abraham Schlechl” whom Scaroyady defended two years earlier), four along Aughwick Creek, and twenty-three in the Great Cove.<sup>40</sup>

Most of the trespassers “had nothing to say for themselves but craved Mercy.” They readily confessed to Peters that they had “no Right or Authority” to settle there. The provincial secretary magnanimously informed the evictees that “they might go directly on any Part of the two Millions of Acres lately purchased of the Indians” in 1749 and offered large families the chance to live rent-free on his manors until they could support themselves. Magistrates entered the trespassers into recognizance for £100 and into bonds to the proprietors for £500. Then, after “great deliberation” the authorities decided to burn the empty log cabins: “Mr. Weiser also giving it as his firm Opinion, that if all the Cabbins were left standing, the [Shamokin] Indians would conceive such a contemptible Opinion of the Government, that they would come themselves in the Winter, murder the People, and set their Houses on Fire.” After removing their personal belongings, the indebted squatters painfully watched their labor and improvements go up in smoke.<sup>41</sup>

Although historians often stereotype squatters as outlaws prone to violence, the vast majority acquiesced to the magistrates and acknowledged that they were intruding on Indian lands. Although some squatters who lived near the border—perhaps hoping to play off Maryland and Pennsylvania—petitioned Maryland officials for warrants for their lands, nothing ever came of their proposal.<sup>42</sup> Apparently only one violent incident marred the expedition. On 24 May, Peters, Weiser, and the magistrates approached

Andrew Lycon's log cabin located along the Juniata. A band of unidentified Indians had "fixed their Tent on [Lycon's] Plantation" the night before—another indication of the frequent social interactions between Natives and squatters. Lycon resisted the authorities and "presented a loaded Gun to the Magistrates and the Sheriff, said, he would shoot the first Man that dared to come nigher." This outburst gave the Indians "great Offence," and members of Shikellamy's family who were present insisted that the authorities burn Lycon's cabin, "or they would burn it themselves." Lycon was "disarmed, convicted, and committed to the Custody of the Sheriff" and "carried to Gaol." Such actions effectively extended the province's legal system into the interior: although the unpurchased lands remained outside of Pennsylvania's jurisdiction, squatters were bound to appear before Cumberland County courts.<sup>43</sup>

Peters's official report on the sixty-one squatter households he counted—incomplete as it is—provides a revealing glimpse of frontier families and their lifelong quests for land and security. Contrary to historians' image of transient and rootless wanderers, most of these squatters persisted on the frontier, despite proprietary expeditions and later Indian wars. Of the sixty-one households ejected in 1750, at least forty-three remained in the area in the 1750s and the 1760s. In theory, proprietors cringed at the idea of allowing squatters to claim land rights based upon their "illegal" improvements. But in the end, most returned to their claims and gained some tenuous hold on land—if they were not killed in the Seven Years' War or, as was Charles Stuart, in Pontiac's War. Very few of these inhabitants ever succeeded in gaining letters patent, but many filed applications to have their lands surveyed (which conveyed a modicum of legal title) and even issued caveats against one other. Others evidently secured lands elsewhere. Peters, for example, gave verbal guarantees to many settlers that they would have preemption rights when the government purchased the lands west of the Susquehanna so long as they agreed to proprietary terms. Among those who took advantage of the offer was William White, who warranted 100 acres of land in territory purchased from the Six Nations (but not from its Indian occupants) at the Albany Treaty of 1754. In 1782, White's widow Mary still occupied their original tract in what became Cumberland County; she owned an additional 280 acres of land and a few livestock. In such ways colonial legal titles replaced informal arrangements between Indians and Euro-Americans.<sup>44</sup>

The results of squatters' lifelong quests for land and commitment to



property rights suggest that their friendly relations with Indians may have been short-term accommodations in order to master the “wilderness” and the Indians. One dispossessed settler named Peter Falconer, in Peters’s words, believed that otherwise “it would be impossible that Peace could have Subsisted long” between Indians and settlers.<sup>45</sup> Still, the squatters’ relationship with the proprietors, land speculators, interpreters, and colonial agents doubling as Indian diplomats who were determined to use treaties to extract land concessions was just as ambivalent. Proprietors’ land purchases in 1749 and 1754 and again in 1768 preempted both Native and colonial inhabitants’ claims. At Albany in 1754, for example, the Pennsylvania delegation, primarily Peters and Weiser, orchestrated a deceitful land deal with the Iroquois for a vast area west of the Susquehanna River extending clear to the Ohio country. Proprietor Thomas Penn ordered that the Juniata Valley be settled “as fast as possible” with colonists who could pay for land and quitrents. The Albany Purchase may have alienated both the Six Nations and the Ohio Indians more than settlers’ encroachments. When the Seven Years’ War began, Indian war parties from the Ohio country specifically targeted settlements in the disputed Albany Purchase, including the Great Cove Valley where Charles Stuart lived. A Delaware war party also targeted Andrew Lycon’s homestead in 1756—another indication that Natives did not forget their dispossessors. Lycon was mortally wounded in combat after he and his neighbors killed a few of the warriors: “one of the Indians killed was Tom Hickman, and Tom Hayes, all Delawares, and well known in [those] Parts.”<sup>46</sup>

Although the proprietors failed to evict the squatters, their efforts to do so fulfilled vital legal and diplomatic functions that paid off in the short term with much more clarity than the murky resolutions of jurisdictional controversies over individual murders and rapes discussed in previous chapters. First, the provincial government asserted jurisdiction over frontier lands whose boundaries were disputed with Maryland, Virginia, and Connecticut.<sup>47</sup> Second, Pennsylvania employed its strong ties to the Six Nations to graft Iroquois claims and influence onto Delawares’, Shawnees’, or Susquehanna Indians’ territories. The colony’s land purchases from the Six Nations extinguished Indian title, ended squatter occupancy, and secured the areas from other colonial competitors, epitomizing what Dorothy Jones has termed “colonialism by treaty” or the exploitation of intercultural diplomacy to acquire land. Third, provincial expeditions against squatters extended the province’s legal system into the interior.

Fourth, removing illegal settlers cleared the way for surveyors, land speculators, and legal settlers who could purchase land and pay quitrents. The dispossession of Native peoples created repetitive crises for Indian and proprietary negotiators and helped to ensure a level of intercultural warfare that dwarfed the sporadic violence that had plagued the tense relations between the squatters and Indians who had previously shared the land.<sup>48</sup>

Illegal settlement became an imperial crisis in the 1760s when such British officials as Thomas Gage and William Johnson struggled to secure the new empire that Britain had won from the French. The crisis became so serious that by 1768 the Pennsylvania Assembly enacted the death penalty for individuals convicted of settling on Indians' lands. Despite such draconian measures, colonists from Virginia, Maryland, and Pennsylvania breached the Appalachian barrier and settled on the Ohio Indians' lands in the Monongahela Valley, particularly along Redstone Creek. From an imperial perspective, uncontrollable illegal settlement and chronic racial violence in the trans-Appalachian west jeopardized the entire edifice of empire in North America. After nearly a decade of warfare, many settlers who went west despised Indians and demanded revenge. The worst nightmare of British officials was the possibility that settlers' encroachments and their frequent murders of Indians would lead the colonies into a war with a powerful pan-Indian confederacy. As subsequent chapters show, imperial officials, ordinary colonists, and Native peoples struggled to establish firm legal and racial boundaries throughout the 1760s. Both the Proclamation Line of 1763 and the Paxton massacre symbolized how Pennsylvania's permeable eighteenth-century frontiers were becoming rigid racially defined borders.

Yet even as Pennsylvania became the "dark and bloody ground" of the late eighteenth century, older patterns persisted. In 1765, as the violence of the Seven Years' War and Pontiac's War had barely begun to subside, a group of squatters planted corn alongside an Indian named Mohawk Peter, his Euro-American wife, and their family. And in 1768, Native Americans again resisted a proprietary expedition to eject trespassers, fearing that the squatters' removal portended a British attack on the Indians.<sup>49</sup> These were fleeting vestiges of a formerly common world of everyday relationships between ordinary people on the frontier. Native dispossession was not simply a function of greater numbers of Euro-American farmers invading an Indian neighborhood. Euro-American and Indian settlers coexisted in river



valleys, negotiating land use, possession, and boundaries, and they formed temporary alliances based on hospitable social and economic relationships. Euro-American farmers occasionally lived as Indians' tenants without provincial legal title to the land. Perceiving those relationships as a threat to their interests, the proprietors aggressively asserted colonial jurisdiction over the disputed areas. Their egregious land purchases from the Six Nations resulted in dispossession of the resident Natives and some Euro-American squatters and fueled Indians' desires for retribution. The triangular contest involving squatters, Indians, and proprietors reveals how complex, ambivalent, and contingent stories of life on eighteenth-century American frontiers could be.