

MOVEMENTS OF THE FRENCH ON THE LAKES, AND THE ALLEGHENY AND OHIO RIVERS

The French began to visit the head-waters of the Ohio probably as early as 1739. Detroit was founded by them in 1700-1, and a great military road was constructed from that point to the Ohio in 1739. They called the river "La Belle Riviere," and it was known among some of the Indian tribes as *Oua-bous-ki-guo*. French *voyageurs* and explorers had undoubtedly been familiar with Lake Erie since the early discoveries of La Salle, and probably had established trading-houses and erected fortifications at various points, from Niagara to their settlements on Lake St. Clair and the Detroit river. As early as 1690 they had a trading-post at the head of Lake Erie, on the Maumee, called by them "River a la Roche."

The "Post Vincennes." On the Wabash, about forty miles above its mouth, was founded very early, – 1711-12, – and minor stations were located at various points on those streams. Fort Niagara was permanently built in 1726, and it is claimed by some writers that La Salle erected a stockade at the foot of the big island in the Maumee about 1680.

As early as 1719, the French began actively to erect a line of forts for the purpose of connecting Canada with the Valley of the Mississippi, at both extremities of which they had extensive settlements, and continued their efforts until they succeeded in erecting forts at the most important points. Fully to effect their purposes, and previous to thoroughly exploring the country along the Allegheny and Ohio, they sent out missionaries or agents to conciliate the *Shawnese*, *Delaware*, and other Indians. Their design was to secure, as far as possible, an Indian alliance against the English. Most of the tribes were pretty easily won over. The *Senecas*, and others of the *Iroquois* which were finally induced to occupy a somewhat neutral position. Some of the *Shawnese* chiefs had been taken to the French Governor, at Montreal, with whom, at their return they seemed highly pleased, and various methods were adopted to secure their friendship.

According to colonial records, the French had established trading houses on the Ohio, against the remonstrances of some of the Indians, as early as 1730-32. This statement was also attested by the *Six Nations* at a conference with the English at Philadelphia, in 1732.

In 1743, Pierre Chartier (generally written Peter Cartier), a half-breed trader, and French spy, who had made Philadelphia his chief residence, endeavored to engage the *Shawnee* in a war with the *Six Nations*. Being suspected, he fled to the *Shawnese*, persuaded them to declare for the French, was recompensed with a French commission, and committed numerous depredations. At the head of the four hundred warriors, he waylaid and seized two provincial traders on the Allegheny river, with goods valued at sixteen hundred pounds.

The war which began in 1744 between France and England was severely felt throughout the colonies.

Under proclamation of Governor Thomas, aided very much by the efforts of Dr. Franklin, a militia of Pennsylvania, to the number of twelve thousand, was organized, armed, equipped, and drilled, and the colony put in a good state of defense.

Considerable difficulty was experienced in maintaining amicable relations with the Indians, owing to French influences. Minor skirmishes and petty collisions frequently occurred on the border. The French were extremely busy in their designs, actively working for their own interests, and a war with the savages was imminent. By careful handling, however, and friendly assistance from the *Six Nations*, they were persuaded to attend a general council at Lancaster, held in 1745. This conference with the Indians was attended by agents of the colonies of Pennsylvania, Virginia and Maryland, and all matters of dispute were, for a time, settled. A sum amounting to six hundred pounds was raised and presented to them by these colonies.

But the same year, the *Shawnese*, on the Ohio, began to show symptoms of disaffection to the English, subserviency to the French, and soon after openly assumed a hostile character.

In 1747, the Indians on the banks of the Ohio connected with the *Six Nations*, visited Philadelphia, to tender their homage, and to invite the province to send commissioners to a council fire, at which the neighboring nations were present. Impressed with the importance of such a conference, the council invited the governments of Maryland and Virginia to send their agents, and to unite in preparing a suitable present. On the part of Pennsylvania, goods were provided to the value of one thousand pounds, and Conrad Weiser was selected as envoy. The instructions given to him by this council display pretty fully the provincial policy at this time.

Strong efforts were made by both contending parties to enlist the services of the *Six Nations*, but while they listened respectfully and accepted presents, they politely declined the overtures.

The treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle, signed October 1, 1748, between Great Britain and France, terminated the war, which had given no substantial advantage to the former power. The boundaries between the French and English colonies were not established by this treaty, and this fact alone very soon plunged the two nations in another costly and bloody war.

The celebrated Ohio Company was chartered in the year 1748, about the close of the war. This charter covered a grant of five hundred thousand acres of land on the Ohio, between the Monongahela and the Great Kanawha, and lying principally on the south side of the river, but giving the privilege of taking a considerable tract on the north side.

The company sent out as agent Conrad Weiser, who had been the envoy of the council the year previous, to visit the Indians, in order to prevent the French from occupying the Ohio.

Preparations were now made to survey and colonize their lands, and a cargo of goods for the use of the settlers and for traffic with the Indians was purchased in London, to arrive the next year (1749).

Other companies were also formed for similar purposes. In June, 1749, a grant of eight thousand acres, from the Canada line on the northwest, was made to the Loyal Company, and upon the 29th of October, 1751, another grant of one hundred thousand acres was made to the Greenbriar Company.

In the meantime the French were neither idle nor blind. Foreseeing at once the result of the occupation of this region by Great Britain, they prepared for prompt and vigorous action, and entered upon actual explorations of the regions about the Allegheny and Ohio. They ascertained the geography of the country, and the proximity of English settlements on the south side of the Allegheny mountains. They took active measures to extend their trade among the Indians, well aware that in case of a rupture, the savages would prove useful auxiliaries, or dangerous enemies.* They did all they could to counteract the influence of the Ohio company among the Indians, by trading with them.

The Marquis de la Gallissonière, was now Governor-General of New France (as they called all the country on the western continent claimed by them), having succeeded Admiral de la Jonquiere early in the year 1749. He was an able man, possessing great sagacity, and well calculated to advance the designs of France in laying claim to this new territory. During the summer of that year he organized and fitted out an extensive expedition under the command of Captain Louis Cèloron de Bienville, and numbering about three hundred men, French soldiers, Canadians and friendly Indians. The expedition started from Canada in July, 1749, and proceeded from the south shore of Lake Erie to the head-waters of the Allegheny. They were provided with a number of leaden plates, which they buried at different points along the Allegheny and Ohio, and which was a part of the method or ceremony, in claiming the territory in the name of the King of France. These leaden plates contained inscriptions, and are fully described in a succeeding chapter, giving full account of Cèloron's expedition. It was written for the Magazine of American History by O. H. Marshall, Esq., the eminent historian of Buffalo, N. Y., and fully explains itself.

* One of the first symptoms of the approaching war between France and England, was a dispute about boundaries, as early as 1747. The English extended their claims to the river St. Lawrence, while the French on their part contended for all the country to the westward of the Appalachian mountains. It was not believed at that time, that either intended to insist on the extent of its claims; but it will appear in the sequel that France was extravagant in her pretensions. Perhaps the proximity of settlement, and the reciprocal attempts to corrupt the Indians, and to precipitated them into hostilities with the times, served to inflame the gathering storm, and to hasten its approach.

After the peace of Aix-la-Chapelle, in 1748, the French ministry more attentively examined the strength and resources of Canada and Louisiana. The position of these colonies, stretching from the mouth of the St. Lawrence to that of the Mississippi, with an almost uninterrupted inland water communication between the extremities of both seemed to unfold the means of subduing the English power in America.