

## FRENCH DOCUMENTS

### “MEMOIR OF THE POSITION OF THE FRENCH AND ENGLISH IN AMERICA”

*“Memoir respecting, first, the position of the English and French in North America; secondly, what is absolutely necessary to send there so as to be able to at least attempt some defense. [January, 1759.]*

“The English have had in North America, during the last campaign, sixty-three thousand men, 23,000 of whom were troops from Old England. They had sent some more there since, and their latest papers announce the departure of ten thousand Scotch from the New World.

“They have in their Colonies the greatest abundance of provisions, horses, oxen, munitions of war, Indian goods, and more that 350 leagues of coast open to succors from Europe.

“Their troops are at present distributed in winter quarters as follows: At Louisbourg and Halifax, on the banks of the Hudson river, on the Mohawk river, at the head of Oneida lake, on the banks of the Ohio and its tributaries, thereby announcing the plan of attacking us simultaneously by the river St. Lawrence, Lake Champlain and Lake Ontario.

“Eight French battalions which will hardly number, at the opening of the campaign, 3,400 men, twelve hundred troops of the Marine, at most, five or six thousand militia. Such are our forces. The Indians cannot be included in the account. English presents, our poverty, our prodigious inferiority – what motivates to abate their ardor! Besides, being independent, never making two expeditions consecutively, even should the first have resulted only in raising one scalp; ill qualified for defense; afraid of death; what benefit can be expected to be derived from them?

“No stronghold in the country; Niagara, the most tenable of the whole, cannot, if properly attacked, hold out more than three weeks. Shell alone will force Carillon to surrender; a small, narrow, right angle, inasmuch as its longest side is 54 toises and the small one 39, without casements; besides, all the other bicoques, which are called forts, are scarcely proof against a sudden assault. I do not expect even Mont-Real and Quebec, if the foot of their walls be once reached.

“We are in want of provisions; that is to say, by carefully economizing the little we have, it will be hardly possible to enter upon the campaign and subsist throughout its first month.

“We are in want of powder to such a degree, that is the English come to Quebec, there is not six days’ supply for the cannon. Almost all the guns are iron, and bad. Mortars are wanting, and still more so, shell, of the caliber of those we have.

“For the service of all the forts and of several bodies of troops, scattered over more than five hundred leagues of country, there are in the whole Colony only two Engineers, without any draughtsman, eighty artillery officers, five of whom are from France, eighty-six gunners, including 4 sergeants and 10 cadets; these last are useless in a service of urgency, not a single man having the remotest idea of mines; not a mechanic of any sort whatever.

“Goods, to trade with the Indians, are almost entirely wanting.

“Under these circumstances, ’tis evident that France, should she send ten thousand men, with munitions of war, and provisions proportionate to such a force, and the actual necessities of the Colony, would not place herself again there on anything near a level with the enemy.

“But this expedition would require at least one hundred sail, and such a fleet would run the risk, either from the danger of unfortunate encounters, or forcible delay from ice, of not arriving at all, or of arriving too late, and find the campaign already opened and the Colony perhaps invaded.

“It appears then, that this armament cannot be thought of, and we must confine ourselves to treating Canada as a desperate disease is treated, in which the sick man is supported by cordials until he either sink of a crisis save him; that is to say to send thither only what is absolutely necessary so as to be able to try and make a defence.

“Now what is absolutely necessary?

“1<sup>st</sup>, Provisions; to freight ships with them on account of the King; to encourage the contractor, who fits out, in this way very considerable armaments in order that his ships may have crews; to send *poudre alimentaire* tested at the Invalides.

“2<sup>nd</sup>, Munitions of war; a train of artillery; Artillerists and Engineers. In the first place, the largest quantity of powder possible, nine and twelve-inch mortars, and the greatest quantity possible of shells of the same caliber; all the ships ought to be ballasted with them. In the second place a train of field artillery,

and to work them a detachment with the troops of the Line, composed of four Engineers and two draftsmen, fifty gunners, fifty bombardiers, four sergeants included, thirty workmen, wheelrights, joiners, carpenters, and smiths, including 5 sergeants or corporals, with an overseer of workmen, twenty miners, including two sergeants and two corporeals, with one overseer of miners; observing that the two aforesaid overseers be junior officers to those detached from the Royal corps in 1757 for Canada. In the third place a great number of guns, flints, and powder horns, which save half the consumption.

“3<sup>rd</sup>, Indian goods. Some must be sent and in considerable quantity. These articles are extremely necessary, if it be desirable to preserve any Indians.

“4<sup>th</sup>, Recruits visit: First, at least one thousand with their arms and eighteen months provisions, secondly, some miquelets, troops of no use in Europe in the present war, and who will render the greatest service in Canada. Thirdly, one hundred deserters of these nations, who, in that case, will join us in great numbers.”

INSTRUCTIONS FROM M. DE VAUDREUIL, GOVERNOR OF CANADA TO M. DE LIGNERIS,  
COMMANDANT OF THE GARRISON AT FORT MACHAULT.

MONTREAL, 23d March, 1759.

“MONSIEUR: I have to instruct you to remain at Fort Machault and continue to service the French and trusty Indian Scouts to watch the movements of the English. Continue to support the nations and exercise all vigilance in preventing them from being persuaded from their friendship and alliance by English intrigue. Represent the Inroquios, Chaonanons and Loups of Kanaouagon, that your forces will soon be largely increased, and that then you will descend the Beautiful river, and drive the English from its borders. Indian goods will be forwarded you from time to time for the purpose of continuing their assistance in our cause and stimulating the enthusiasm of the young men.

“The change of the English from extreme suavity towards the Indians to that of the greatest threats, will naturally make a deep impression upon them all along the Beautiful river, and they must conclude therefrom that the principal object of the English is to deceive them. You should avail yourself of every opportunity to persuade them that if they are not under the protection of the French, they will soon be reduced to slavery, and probably something worse, that therefore it is for their own interest to despise and reject all proposals of neutrality or friendship from the English; to be inseparable from the French, and to be more ardent than ever to fight for the French in the united effort to drive away the English from their lands.

“Leave nothing unsaid to all the Nations on the Beautiful river that it is for their own interest to assist in placing a check upon the ambition of the English. I am glad to learn you have prevailed upon the Loups to assemble again at Cachecachekei, and that they have promised to again strike the English when you form the next expedition down the Beautiful river. As soon as advices and further instructions are received from M. Berryer preparations will be immediately made to augment the forces under your command for the purpose of forming the proposed expedition down the Beautiful river, and capturing the English and their fort on the Mananguailée.\*

“The English have designs against Niagara, and we are compelled to make such disposition of our resources as will best protect our interests under all emergencies. For the present I have ordered M. Pouchot to retain under his command three hundred Canadian troops which I had designed for service on the Beautiful river, and if he finds it necessary, he will call to his assistance all the forces from Detroit and the other posts, whom I have ordered to rendezvous at Presqu’isle.

I have fully acquainted M. Berryer with the improvements you have made upon Fort Machault since the abandonment of Duquesne, and of its present strength and character, but if you are attacked by too large a force against which a successful defence can be made, I would instruct you to fall back successively upon La Boeuf and Presqu’isle, and so completely destroy the works as to leave nothing behind you that will be available to the enemy.†

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\* Monongahela.

† Some doubts have heretofore existed in the minds of a number of men who have formerly investigated this subject to some extent, as to whether the French built two forts at Venango, or whether what was afterwards known as Fort Venango was built by the English. This evidently settles the matter beyond dispute that the French did not build a new fort at Venango in 1758-59, on their return from Duquesne, but that they simply improved and strengthened Fort Machault.

“ I would have you manoeuver so as to annoy the enemy and keep him continually before you, and I would remind you that if the Indians of the Beautiful river remain faithful to the French, and act in consequence, you will not fail to afford the English an abundance of work. You cannot do better than to impress strongly on those Indians the critical position they would be placed in, abandoned to themselves, had they no help to expect, except from the English, who would not treat them any better than they had treated the Abenakis.

“M. Pouchot will, with pleasure, embrace the opportunity of corresponding with you, and according as circumstances will be favorable, will render all the aid in his power for the expedition to descend the Beautiful river and recover our lost Duquesne. That is to say, if Niagara be not menaced, he will reunite under your orders not only the forces and succors which will rendezvous at Presqu’isle, the three hundred Canadians which I have destined for you, but in addition, all the forces and other assistance M. Pouchot will have in his power to forward to you.

“I am with most profound respect,

“Your humble and obedient Servant,”

“VAUDREUIL.”

#### LETTER OF M. DE VAUDREUIL TO M. BERRYER

MONTREAL, 30<sup>th</sup> March, 1759

“MY LORD: – M. de Ligneris has not ceased having French and Indian scouts to watch the English. M. de la Valtrie informs him that the English were building a small fort on the river Manangualee, a little above Fort Duquesne.

“He learned at the same time by some Delaware Indians, who are beginning to become familiar with the English, and go frequently to see them, that 2@300 men were to remain at the fort during the winter.

“That General Forbes had returned with his army to Loyal Hannon, where he had stationed a strong garrison to support that of Manangualee.

“That the remainder of his army was to be sent to winter quarters in different provinces.

“That it was asserted that this General was to return this year to Europe.

“It would not be difficult, my Lord, to drive the English from their fort on the Manangualee or to take them, were there plenty of men and provisions, but M. de Ligneris is in want of both to such a degree that he will have considerable difficulty to pass the winter.

“The Iroquois, Chaouanons and Loups of Kanaouagon, far from responding favorably to M. de Ligneris’ invitation to go and attack the English, continue to solicit him to vacate Fort Machault and to retire to Presqu’isle, continually representing to him that he has too few men to resist the English, who were assuredly to come and attack him this winter.

“He obtained, however, from those Indians, [a promise] that they would go to the English only with a view to learn their plans against the French, to inform him thereof; they likewise promised him to summon them to withdraw very speedily to the other side of the mountains.

“But there is reason to presume that the Indians would wish that there were neither French nor English at the Beautiful river, and that they are heartily tired of war.

“What confirms me in this idea is, the Council the English held on the 26<sup>th</sup> of November, at Cachechekiki.

“The English have had recourse to the most effecting and most pressing language; they requested the Indians to forget the past; to renew the alliance of their ancestors with them; to let them settle their differences with the French, and to recall their young men who are with the latter.

“To enforce this proposition they told those Indians that they had closed the Canada river, consequently the French could not give them any assistance; that the King of France had already twice sued for peace, which had always been refused by the English; they requested the Indians to communicate their words to the nations who are in alliance with them.

“The Delawares have answered the English anew, that being allies of many different nations, a reply could not be given immediately to their speech; and that they should not become impatient if the answer was a long time coming, as their relations were at a distance.

“Moreover, if the English were desirous that their speech should be listened to, they must retire to the other side of the mountains, and leave the Indians their lands free; otherwise no alliance would be entered into with them.

“At another council held with the same Indians at the Forks, by the English, the latter consented to retire home, not to make any settlement on the Beautiful river, and that they would all depart within eight days.

“M. de Ligneris placed no confidence in the promises the English mad the Indians.

“In fact, their language changes very fast. The Canaouagon Indians told M. de Ligneris, on their return from the English, that the latter were to come with a considerable force and attack him in the month of February.

“What gave rise to the suspicion that such was their design, was, the arrival of 120 men at their fort on the River Manangailée, where they were in immediate expectation of 300 more.

“Were M. de Ligneris in a situation to make a movement to drive away the English, the Nations on the beautiful river would not oppose it directly; if they saw that we were in a condition to dispense with their services, I doubt not many would join him, notwithstanding their conferences with the English.

“The latter have been again summoned by those Indians to retire to their own country, but entirely forgetting their first language, the English have assured that they should not leave the Beautiful river; that it belonged to them from its source to its mouth.

“That positive answer from the English has rendered M. de Ligneris only more vigilant in observing their movements, more especially as some Indians have reported to him that the English are building a great many bateaux at the fort up the Mananguailée, and in the River Attiqué.

“These preparations having given offense to our Indians, they demanded an explanation thereof from the English; but the latter curtly answered, that they were preparing to go to Fort Machault, that they would have 6,000 men at the end of March, to drive off the French.

“M. de Ligneris has left nothing unsaid to persuade the Nations on the Beautiful river, that is was for their own interest to place limits on the ambition of the English; he has prevailed on the Loups to assemble again at Cachecachekei; the latter have assured him they were taking that course only to have a better opportunity of striking the English; if he organized any expedition and of more easily joining the French on the beautiful river, supposing it were in the spring, in sufficient numbers to drive the English thence.

“I have written M. de Ligneris that the change of the English from extreme suavity to the greatest threats, must have naturally made the deepest impressions on the Indians of the Beautiful river, who must conclude therefrom that the principal object of the English is to deceive them, and that if they were not under the protection of the French, they would be very soon reduced into slavery, and probably to something worse; that therefore it is in their own interest to sovereignly despise all proposals of neutrality; to be inseparable from the French, and to be more ardent than ever to fight the English.

“I recommend him also to impress strongly on those Indians the critical position they would be placed in, abandoned to themselves, had they no help to expect, except from the English, who would not treat them any better than they had treated the Abenakis.

“As I am aware of the designs of the English against Niagara I wrote M. de Ligneris that, supposing that place to be really besieged, M. Pouchot will retain under his orders 300 Canadians whom I had designed for the Beautiful river, and that, according as he will find it necessary, he will call to his assistance all the forces from Detroit and other posts, whom I have ordered to rendezvous at Prisqu’isle.

“Under these circumstance, I recommend to him, in relation to the straits he should find himself reduced to, and in regard to his situation, to manoeuvre so as to have the enemy continually before him, I observed to him that, if the Indians of the Beautiful river remain faithful to the French, and act in consequence, he will not fail to afford the work of our enemies.

“That in other respects, he will fall back on the river au Boeuf and successively on Presqu’isle, paying attention to what position he will find himself in, to play with and set snares for the enemies, according as they advance, to be, so that none of his bateaux fall into the hands of the English. I likewise notify him that M. Pouchot will, with pleasure, embrace the opportunity of corresponding with him, and that according as circumstances will be favorable, that is to say, if Niagara be not menaced, that he would reunite under his orders not only the forces and succors which will rendezvous at Prisqu’isle, the 300 Canadians that I have destined for him, but in addition, all the forces and other assistance M. Pouchot will have it ins his power to forward to him.

“I am, with the most profound respect, my Lord.

“Your most humble and most obedient servant,

“VAUDREUIL.”

“MONTREAL, 9<sup>th</sup> April 1759.

“SIR: – May I flatter myself that you will be pleased to permit me to have the honor of communicating to you the events which have transpired in the Colony since the end of Autumn?

“We obtain some new advantages on the Beautiful river, at the close of the month of October. The English repaired in force, on the 23d of November, to within three leagues of Fort Duquesne, which was abandoned, after having marched out of, and burnt it; the artillery has been sent to Illinois, by Descending the Beautiful river which empties into the Ouis, the latter flowing into the Mississippi, which is ascended thirty leagues to reach the Fort of the Illinois; and the garrison retreated to Fort Machault, where it still remained on the 8<sup>th</sup> of March, according to intelligence received on the day before yesterday; it has orders to continue there. Should the English march thither, as is probable, it will fall back on Niagara, always vacating and burning the posts, not one which is tenable. M. Pouchot, who is going to command at the latter fort, and has already arrived a La Présentation, will have, for the defence of the frontier, as considerable a body of troops as the scantiness of our means and of our resources will permit. Scarcity of provisions and the bad position of Fort Duquesne have compelled is abandonment. The consequences may become unfortunate, if the Indians pronounce in favor of the English. Although they hesitate, they appear still attached to us; ’tis to be hoped that they will remain at least neutral. M. de Ligneris, commands at Fort Machault, writes that the English are constructing forts at Attigue and Royal Hannon; that the Indians are become very familiar with them; he flatters himself however, that he will induce them to strike, if he receive reinforcements capable of controlling them, the greatest part of them are on the way.

“Various obstacles have prevented the reëstablishment, at Fort Frontenac. During the winter two sloops have been built three leagues above Le Presentation – a work which might have been, and would have been essential to have done in the month of September in order to endeavor to retain possession of Lake Ontario, the loss of which is to be apprehended through the destruction of Frontenac and the reconstruction of Chouaguen, at which the English are, perhaps, already busy. They have a considerable force in that quarter, and threaten to come and burn our sloops and La Présentation. M. de Pouchot, who has set out on the ice to secure the post against a coup de main, writes that the sloops will be launched without delay, and that he is going to begin an entrenchment. Last week one hundred bateaux went to hi with reinforcements, rigging and everything he may stand in need of; as soon as the sloops will be equipped and armed, he will embark with the troops destined for Niagara. He has two parties out in search of news of the enemy, whose designs are unknown to us.

“Our enemies have not made their appearance at Carillon in the beginning of the winter, but came there last month to the number of 350, surprised fifteen workmen who were in the woods, killed four and captured seven of them, after which they took a plan of the intrenchemnts and of the fort. Some Indians and volunteers went in pursuit, killed some of their men and took one prisoner, who says that troops are arriving daily at Fort Lydius, where immense preparations are making to come early and besieges Carillon; we on our part are expecting them there, and that they will attack us by the beautiful river, Lake Onthorio and Quebec; we have but few troops to oppose them; such is our position. ’Tis to be hoped that the news from France will render it better, that we shall be as fortunate as in the last campaign, and that no mistakes will be made similar to that of having allowed Fort Frontenac to be taken, which with a little foresight, might easily have been preserved.

“Distress has been nigh as severe this winter as the last. Although the arrival last simmer of provisions has been immense, the administration and management have been so bad, that the supply is not abundant. Not knowing the fate of my letter, your employment of which does not give me any uneasiness, I can not prudently inform you of what remains to be said. How many things to be related on this head, which I hope to have the honor of explaining to you *viva voce*.

“The winter has been one of the coldest; the river broke up some days ago and begins to be navigable; the ice has backed up to such an extraordinary degree and with such violence, as to throw down a house.

“Our destination for the campaign about to open is not yet decided. Our generals, who unfortunately, do not always determine it, and are not consulted on the measures to be adopted, cannot learn where they will require us; I believe they would wish to be able to multiply us and send us everywhere. There will be work to do for everybody apparently in more than one quarter. Nothing is wanting to the glory of the Marquis de Montcalm and the reputation of the troops, but the achieving of good business this year. Notwithstanding the critical state of the Colony, prudence and science on the part of the General, and good will on the part of the troops, are alone required; there is reason to expect that they will be forthcoming.

“You will find my letter long sir; counting on the continuance of the indulgence with which you have frequently honored me, I have entered into all the details I thought you would be glad to be informed of. I greatly desire that they may have the good fortune of pleasing you, and that will contribute to make me deserving of your protection, which constitutes all my ambitions. I hope to have the honor of soliciting it personally this year. Though pretty well recovered from my wound, I require to go and take baths, not being in a condition to do much on horseback or afoot. I propose demanding permission to leave at the end of the campaign, which I should regret not making, and hope that you will be pleased to grant me your approbation.

“I have the honor to be with respect, sir,

“Your most humble and

“Most obedient servant,

“MALARTIC.”

The following letters of George Corghan and Colonel Hugh Mercer, to Governor Denny, of Pennsylvania, found in the archives, are documents of great interest on account of the intelligence they convey to the extent of the French preparations at Venango, during the summer of 1759, to make their contemplated attack on Fort Pitt, the number and character of the forces they had collected at Fort Machault for that purpose, and the nature of their efforts to retain the assistance of the Indians:

“GEO CROGHAN TO GOV. DENNY, 1759.

PITTSBURGH, July 15<sup>th</sup>, 1759.

“HONORED SIR,

“The 13<sup>th</sup> of this Inst, at 6 o’clock in the Evening, arrived here two Spies I had sent to Vanango, to know the truth of the Intelligence we had received from several Indians, of the French being on their march from Priskisle to Venango with a large Body of Troops, composed of French and Indians, to attack this place, & that they has with them a Train of Artillery; they say, that when they arrived at Venango, they see there about Seven hundred French, & four hundred Indians; that on the 9<sup>th</sup> of this month there arrived there two hundred Indians, the next day about the same number, and the day following about One hundred and fifty more, then the Commandant told the Indians he would speak to them the next day, as fast as the Indians came, the French Officers were employed, Clothing and fitting them out for the Expedition, and by the 11<sup>th</sup>, at night, the whole were Clothed; at 10 o’clock the next morning the whole met in Council, when the French Command’t gave the Indians thanks for joining him & desired them to prepare themselves for he intended to set off for to attack this place the next Day, then threw down the War Belt; there was two Six Nation Indians in the Council, who had came there the Night before, one of which got up and made a Speech to all the Indians, telling them their Father was in too great a hurry \* desired them to consider some time on what they were going to do, & then delivered the Indians a large Bunch of String Wampum; this threw them into some confusion, and before they recovered out of it, two Indians arrived with a Packet of Letters, which, as soon as the Commander had opened & read, he spoke to the Indians, told them he had bad News, that a great Army of English and Sr Wm. Johnson, with the Six N’ns & a great number of other Indians were on their march to attack Niagara; that it was a place of great Consequence both to them and their Children; that he should lay by thoughts of going down the River till he had drove the English from Niagara, and desired them to be strong and support their Father, & then gave orders for the Battoes there to go up the River, and turn the other Battoes back that were coming down. Our spies say they see but three canon; that the French expected in the Battoes that was to have been there that Night five more, and that about 30 Battoes set off while they were there, and a great many Indians were tying up their Bundles, and some set off; they are of opinion that the French will endeavor to divide them, leaving some of them behind to annoy the Road; that 19 Woyondotts, the whole that was with the French, had set home; that the 13<sup>th</sup>, in the morning, some of the Party that had attacked Ligonier came there, that they had got neither Prisoners of Scalps, that they said they had one man killed and one wounded; that the Ind’s the French had with them consisted of twelve different Nations.

“Our spies also say, that they had engaged three Shawnese who had quit the French, to stay and see what they would do, and then set off for there with the News.

“I am sending of fresh spies to watch their motions. Coll. Mercer will send you a Copy of the Conference we held with the Indians at this place, by which your Honor will be able to judge of their dispositions towards us, which I think are as favourable as can be expected considering we have neither

Troops of Provisions here, for these several days have had neither Flower, Meat or Salt, except some Milk Cows which some Country people brought here to sell their Milk; we have as many left as will serve us two days, and then we must begin upon our Horses, but we have some hopes of a Convoy's arriving here in a day or two, as we have intelligence from Venango that a large Body of Troops, with a great number of loaded Horses and Cattle, were seen by some of their spies five days agoe on this side of the Allegheny Hill.

"I should be obliged to your Honor for sending me a draught of the boundary line settled with the Indians at the Treaty of Easton, that I may have it in my power to prevent any disputes from arising hereafter, as the Indians here look upon their having a right with the Six Nations in these Lands.

"I am, with Esteem,

"Your Honours Most obedient humble servt,

"GEO. CROGHAN."

[Vol. 3 Pennsylvania Archives.]

COL. HUGH MERCER TO GOV. DENNY, 1759.

PITTSBURGH, 17<sup>th</sup> July 1759.

"SIR:

"My last to your Honor was of the 7<sup>th</sup>; in it I mention'd a Conference to be held with Indians; their impatience to return home urged it on contrary to my inclination, before the General's Arrival. The Minutes are inclos'd for your perusal. The Indians appear highly satisfied, and since have given proof of greater zeal and fidelity in our interests that I could have expected. The greatly superior force which the Enemy had unexpectedly collected at Venango, justly alarmed them, especially as they saw our low circumstances as to Men & Provisions; part of the Garrison being employ'd in escorts, and not a Days supply belonging to the Garrison when it was in the Enemies power to have invested us. The first Intelligence of the Enemies design we had from Priscile, the 11<sup>th</sup>, the next from the Delawares, above Venango, the 13<sup>th</sup>, both which I immediately communicated to the Genl. – the 15<sup>th</sup>, we had the following accounts from the Six Nation Indians sent to spy at Venango, who left this place the 7<sup>th</sup>. They found at Venango 700 French & 400 Indians, the Commanding Officer told them he expected 600 more Indians, that as soon as they arrived he would come and drive us from this Place. Next day 200 Indians came to Venango, & the same number the next day, and the third. They were all fitted off for the Expedition by the 11<sup>th</sup>, at night, & 3 Pieces of Cannon brought from Le Beuff, the other's expected every hour, with a great many Battoes loaded with Provisions. In the morning of the 12<sup>th</sup>, a Grand Council was held, in which the Comm'r thanked the Indians for attending them, threw down the War Belt & told them he sett off next day. The Indians consented but were somewhat disconcerted by one of the Six Nations, who gave the Wampum, telling them to consider what they do, and not to be in too great a hurry; Soon after Messengers arrived with a Packet for the Officer who held the Council, at which he and the other Officers appeared much concerned, and at last he told the Indians: Children, I have received bad News, the English are gone against Niagara; we must give over thoughts of going down the River, till we have cleared that place of the Enemy. If it should be taken our Road to you is stopt up, and you must become poor.

"Orders were immediately given to proceed with the Artillery, Provisions, &c., up French Creek, which the spies saw set off, and the Indians making up their Bundles to follow.

"They reckon there were upwards of 1000 Indians, collected from different Nations at Venango.

"Half the Party that attack'd Ligonier was returned without Prisoner of Scalp; they had, by their own account, one Indian Killed & one Wounded.

"22 Wyandotts are just arrived, probably of those collected at Venango.

"Since the Conference we have, in conjunction with the Delawares, sent Messengers with Belts to all the Nations in the French Interest, to inform them of what their Chiefs had agreed to here; and this, with the Enemies embarrassed situations, we expect may Break off numbers from them.

"I am, Sir

"Your Honors most

"Obedient humble Servt.,

"HUGH MERCER."

INTELLIGENCE ENCLOSED IN LETTERS FROM COL. MERCER TO GOV.  
DENNY, OF PENNSYLVANIA, ON THE SITUATION AT VENANGO.

PITTSBURGH, August 4<sup>th</sup>, 1759.

“By two of my Spies, who returned this Day from Venango, I am informed that the French at Venango are in the utmost Confusion, on account brought by some Indians, of the news from Niagara, who say the English landed in sight of the Fort, without interruption, intrenched themselves, and raised Batteries; that the French and Indians made Sally, and were repulsed, with the Loss of Twenty-Eight officers killed and taken; a great number of Soldiers killed and taken, and twelve Indians killed. Among the Prisoners is Nr. Delinery,\* who Commanded at this Place, shot through the thick of the Thygh. What Number of the English and Six Nations were Killed, they could not tell; that the place had not surrendered when they came away; but is the Opinion of all the Indians, that the English are in Possession of it by this, as the Commanding Officer of Niagara sent Letters by these Indians, to the Commanding Officer at Presque Isle, to acquaint him that he should be obliged to deliver up the place in a few Days, and as Sir Wm. Johnson threatened to cross the Lakes with the Six Nations, and cut off the Settlements at Detroit, with orders for all the Women and Children, with their Effects, to be removed to the Head of Scioto, that they might be ready, upon the first Notice of the Six Nations crossing the Lakes, to remove to their Settlements down the Mississippi.

“Forty-Five Indians arrived here this Day, amongst which were two Delawares sent from Tuskerawas to acquaint me that there are forty Indians of the Twightwees and Kushkushkee Nations on their way here, sent by their Chiefs to know in what manner the Peace was settled between us and the Western Indians, that they might know how to act. The two Messengers tell me I may expect them in two Days.

“The 5<sup>th</sup>. Two Shawanese came here from Presque Isle, and Confirm the Intelligence brought by my two Spies yesterday, with the addition that the Indians who brought the Intelligence from Niagara to Presque Isle, say the French attempted several times to drive our People out of the Trenches; that great numbers were killed on both Sides, but most of the French; that most of the French Officers that were on this river were killed or taken, particularly the blind Captain (called so by the Indians be his being blind in one Eye), who Commanded at Venango, killed, one Neverville, a great Partisan, who sued to go frequently with the Indians from this Place, against the Frontier Settlements of Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia, Killed; that when they left Presque Isle the French every moment expected to hear of the Surrender of Niagara to the English.”

PITTSBURGH, the 12<sup>th</sup> August, 1759.

“DEAR SIR:

“We have at last got rid of our neighbors at Venango, who to render their memory grateful among the Indians, made a virtue of necessity, and they could not carry off, very liberally distributed among their Friends.

Croghan's Letter contains all the particulars of our Conquest at Niagara come to hand as yet, and of the Enemies abandoning their Posts in the Ohio.

“Like true Frenchmen they went off with a gasconade, telling the Indians, tho' they must run away at present, yet this River would be in their Possession before the End of the Year. We can now talk to our new Allies in a proper Stile, as their Services are not Necessary, tho' the Consistency of our Plan in bringing them entirely over to the British Interest, ought to be preserved by treating them with great kindness, but suffering none of their insults.”

“August 12<sup>th</sup>. – Two Shawonese came here from Meguck, and inform me that the Cherokees has lately sent three speeches to their Nation acquainting them that they intended to make War on the English, desiring them to assist them in the War, and to send the Speeches to all the Nations to the Sun Setting, inviting them to take up the Hatchet and join with them; but as their Nation had promised me at the Late Conference, whenever they heard any bad news, to acquaint me with it, before they determined upon anything, that they were sent to acquaint me with this, and to know how they would have me Act in regard to these Speeches.

“In the Evening, a Delaware Indian informed me that nine Indians of their Nation, from Venango, had been on the road below Ligonier, and taken an Englishman Prisoner, but that he had made his escape from them in the Night.

“13<sup>th</sup>. – By two Indians who have arrived here this morning from Niagara, I have the following intelligence: That on the fifth, the French made a Sally from the Fort and took possession of it. That



during the Siege, Deliniery, who formerly commanded on this River, was shot through the thigh and taken Prisoner, the Officer that Commanded the Fort at Niagara taken. The Officer that Commanded the Troops from Di Troit killed, the Priest killed, all the rest of the officers killed and taken except four who ran away during the action on the Fifth. That the French Indians often attempted to speak to the Six Nations, but as the Six Nations constantly kept hallooing to them, threatening to put every Indian they found with the French to Death, they were afraid to stay, so that they had no opportunity of speaking to them, for which reason they can give no account of what Number of the English and Six Nations were killed.

“That the French at Presque Isle had sent away all their Stores to Detroit, and was waiting when they came by for the French from Beuf River and Venango to join them, to set off for Detroit. That on a Indian Path leading from Presque Isle to a Delaware Town they met a Frenchman and some Indians, who informed them that the French set off from Venango the Day before, which is six days ago.

“Seven o’clock in the Evening those Indians came here from Venango, and Confirm the above Intelligence of the English taking Niagara the fifth Instant by Storm, and say the Indians from over the Lakes are very much displeased with the Six Nations, as they had a number of people killed at Niagara; That the French had burnt their Forts at Venango, Presque Isle, and La Beuf, and gone over the Lakes; that the French at Venango, before they set off, gave the Indians living nigh there Large Presents of goods, laced Coats and Hatts, and told them they were obliged to run away, but they expected to be in Possession of this River before next Spring. They were obliged to Burn everything they had, and destroy their Battoes, as the Water was so low they could not get up the Creek with them.”

It will seem by Croghan’s letter that the entire number of the forces concentrated at Venango consisted of about seven hundred French and nine hundred and fifty Indians. Col. Mercer’s letter, based upon the information of his spies, reckoned there were “upwards of one thousand Indians, collected from the twelve different nations, at Venango.”

Earlier in the spring, as some of the preceeding documents show, the force was much smaller, but they had been forwarded to this point from Presque Isle, Le Beuf, and even Detroit and other western garrisons them in the possession of the French. From Kaskaskia, Illinois, which had been under the command of Monsieur D’ Aubray, were brought a force and munitions comprising four hundred men and 200,000 pounds of flour. The difficult route by which these were brought, by the Commander is thus described: “Cut off from the route of the Ohio (or Allegheny) by the abandonment of Fort Duquesne, he Proceeded with his force down the Mississippi and up the Ohio to the Wabash; thence up that river to the portage of Fort Miami, of Fort Wayne, and carried his stores over to the Maumee, passed down that river and along the shore of Lake Erie to Presque Isle, and carried again his stores to the portage of Le Beuf; thence descended French Creek to Venango.

From orders issued to M. De Ligneris by M. De Vaudreuil, the Governor of Canada, we learn that it was the design of the French that the force at Fort Machault should be much larger, and that the accumulation at this point would have been affected much sooner, but for the straitened circumstances in which they found themselves throughout North America in the spring of 1759. As we have already stated, the English had sent over such large re-inforcements the year previous, and the united efforts of the Colonists had raised an army of such proportions, that the French were totally unable to put in the field a force of sufficient strength to cope with their adversaries. This, coupled with the disaffection of some of the Indian nations who had been in alliance with them, made their situation all along the line from Canada to the Mississippi indeed precarious. The Governor of Canada was calling for more troops from France, but the powerful English navy, the patrolling every sea, rendered the transportation of French soldiers across the ocean an extremely hazardous undertaking. Yet, notwithstanding all these adverse circumstances, nothing could exceed the zeal, activity, boldness, and determination with which the French prosecuted their purpose to maintain their foothold and recover their lost ground. A formidable descent of the forces concentrated at Venango down the Allegheny was determined upon, and Fort Pitt was daily expecting the threatened attack. In addition to the force already gathered, Indians were arriving daily in considerable numbers. Artillery, military stores, and provisions were being brought forward from Le Boeuf, Presque Isle, and other places, and everything was nearly in readiness for a powerful attack upon the fort at the head of the Ohio, and eclipse the formidable expedition down the Allegheny of Contrecoeur five years previous.

But the investment of Niagara by Sir William Johnson, the threatened prospect of which had for some time given the French great cause of uneasiness, put a sudden change upon the hostile array and warlike scenes at Venango. While Fort Machault was the most advanced post on the frontier, Niagara was the key to the French position, and its capture would jeopardize all their other possessions from Canada and the

Upper Lakes to the Ohio. Consequently the scene at Venango was suddenly changed from that of martial display and sanguine preparations to the utmost confusion and *abandon*. In all haste they prepared to turn their forces toward Niagara precipitating rush to its relief, and desert Venango forever. In consequence of the water in the stream being so low, they were unable to transport by boats the military stores, provisions, and other goods which they had accumulated, and to convey them by land in such haste was impossible. Hence the great mass of their efforts had to be either destroyed or given to the Indians. In the language of Dr. Eaton, 'presents were distributed with a lavish hand to the Indians. Grim warriors were seen strutting about in laced coats and hats, without other clothing, and dusky maidens, gorgeous in French calico, red blankets, worn shawlwise, and gaudy with immense strings of beads.'

All the property that was of no use to the Indians, including the canoes and bateaus that were to convey the expedition in the contemplated assault on Fort Pitt, was gathered together in the Fort and set on fire. The artillery, and all that could not be reduced to ashes, was securely buried, and but little of it was ever afterward found of any value, save as relics. Bits of melted glass, burned iron, coarse glass beads that had been designed to trade to the Indians, curiously wrought scalping knives and trinkets of a kindred nature which were frequently found on the spot by early settlers, bore evidence of the fort's destruction by fire. After the lapse of one hundred years an old gun was exhumed from its resting place, and it is generally supposed that an old well, within the limits of the fort, is still the slumbering place of a number of others.

Fort Machault was entirely destroyed, and all that existed of its strength and value was forever gone.

After hold sway along the borders of the Allegheny and its tributaries for a period extending over ten years, the French were forced to yield to the inevitable; their dream of extended empire was suddenly dispelled, and they abandoned their claim, never again to assert power in these hills and valleys. The wilderness that had been so quickly transformed into the pomp and parade of the European camp, no longer resounded with the echoes and shouts of the French soldiers, but resumed its normal condition, after their retreating footsteps, and knew them no more forever.