

**THE FRONTIER
POLICY OF
PENNSYLVANIA**

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CHAPTER I.

INDIAN POLICY.

1682-1800.

William Penn's ideas of justice and humanity permitted but one Indian policy. His natural benevolence and the principles of his sect demanded a just and friendly treatment. Before leaving England he forwarded to those Indians dwelling in his province a letter expressing his friendly attitude toward them and his hope that he and they would always live together as neighbors and friends. He instructed his commissioners to be careful not to offend them, to court their good will, and let them know that the Christians had come to settle among them on terms of friendship. (1)

The Quaker's treatment of the Indians was always characterized by fairness and honor. In Pennsylvania alone could an Indian get satisfaction from a white man, for here only was the testimony of an Indian accepted against a white. In matters of trade the provincial government tried faithfully to guard the Indian against exploitation by the white man. In treaties, for the first fifty years at least, only open and honorable means were used to gain a point. And not only abstract justice, but friendly and kindly intercourse were encouraged. Penn learned their language in order that he might be able to converse with them more freely, and later sent his son to dwell among them that he might understand their language and customs. (2) The relationship between the Indians and the Quakers was, therefore, most cordial and friendly. Penn himself was a frequent visitor among them, partaking of their venison, hominy, and roasted acorns; and to their great delight, participating in their athletic exercises. The Indians responded at once to this treatment; and the early settlers found them

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- (1) *Memoirs of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania*, II, Part I, 218, Penn's Instructions to his Commissioners to settle the Province: "Be tender of offending the Indians, and hearken by honest Spyes, if you can hear yt any body inveigles ye Indians not to sell, or to stand off, and raise the value upon you. You cannot want those yt will inform you, but to soften them to mee and the people, lett them know yt you are come to sit down Lovingly among them."
- (2) FRANKLIN, BENJAMIN, *Historical Review of Pennsylvania*, 97.

ever ready to provide food, assistance, or protection if it lay within their power. Former intercourse had taught them somewhat of the white man's injustice and insatiable desire for land, but they were still in a frame of mind to appreciate fair treatment and to return it in kind.

Penn attempted to carry his ideas of equality into the court room. The white man and the Indian were given the same legal standing and by written agreement between them were to be punished by the same laws. (1) If an Indian wronged a white man, the plaintiff was not allowed to take the law into his own hands. He must appeal to the nearest magistrate, who would then take up the affair with the chief of the Indian who had committed the wrong. If satisfaction was not obtained, proceedings were instituted against the Indian in the same manner as in the case of a white offender. If a white man wronged an Indian, he incurred the same penalty that was inflicted upon those who wronged a Christian. In such cases the Indian chief would complain to the governor. If investigation seemed to warrant it, the culprit was tried; and if found guilty, punished.

An attempt was made to have cases which involved both races tried by juries of six whites and six Indians, (2) but this was found impracticable and soon abandoned. A case was tried in the county in which the crime was committed, but in 1744 it was provided that all Indians accused of capital crimes committed within the province in places distant from the inhabitants should thereafter be tried in the County of Philadelphia before the justices of the supreme court or of the courts of Oyer and Terminer, and the expenses to be paid by the province as a whole and not by any particular county. These plans on the whole worked very satisfactorily, but neither whites nor Indians were always scrupulous about observing them. They were often inclined to take the law into their own hands, thus causing complications during which border warfare sometimes seemed certain.

The Quakers also aimed, as far as possible, to preserve peace between the various tribes. About 1719 a disagreement occurred between the northern and southern Indians.

- (1) MYERS, A. C., *Narratives of early Pennsylvania*, 276, reprinting Penn's *Further Account*: "If any of them break our laws they submit to be punished by them, and to this they have tyed themselves by an obligation under their hands."
- (2) *Ibid*, 236, reprinting Penn's Letter to the Free Society of Traders "We have agreed in all differences between us six of each side shall end the matter: Don't abuse them but let them have justice and you win them."

The governor, in order to prevent evil consequences, went to Virginia where he arranged terms of settlement with the governor of that colony. After he returned, he held a treaty with several Indian tribes and prevailed upon them to accept the compromise. The Pennsylvania Indians were not to hunt in the mountains south of the Potomac and the southern Indians were not to come north of that river. (1)

Many treaties were made with the Indians during the early period of Pennsylvania's history. Any one who glances through the Colonial Records will see what a great percentage of time must have been given up to Indian affairs. Penn himself is said to have made treaties personally with nineteen different tribes. The most of these were confirmations of friendship or treaties for the purchase of land. At times, however, they involved the regulation of trade and intercourse or even the question of frontier defense.

A treaty of this latter type was that made with the Susquehanna Indians in 1701. (2) According to its terms neither side was to do the other any wrong or injury. Indians who came into the neighborhood of the white settlements were to behave themselves regularly according to the laws of the Christians. The Indians were not to aid or abet the enemies of the whites or believe any evil rumors concerning them, but report the same to the governor. They were not to allow any strange Indians to settle on the west side of the Susquehanna or about the Potomac without the governor's permission. All traders were to be approved and licensed by the government. The Indians were to deal with Pennsylvania traders only.

Until 1722 Indian expenses were inconsiderable, being limited to fifty pounds a year. (3) Great caution was always exercised in allowing more. In this year, however, a bill for 230 pounds was allowed to defray the expenses of Governor Keith's journey to Albany and the cost of the presents made to the Indians at that time. (4) From 1722 to 1727 no Indian expenses were paid from the provincial treasury. But in this latter year the assembly contested a bill for seventy pounds, one half of which was finally paid by the public and the remainder by the proprietors. (5) In 1728 the assembly requested Governor Gordon to hold a treaty with the Indians, the costs of which they promised

(1) PROUD, ROBERT, *History of Pennsylvania*, II, 198, 131.

(2) *Pennsylvania Archives*, 1st series, I, 144.

(3) *Pennsylvania Statutes at Large*, II, 230.

(4) *Votes and Proceedings of the House of Representatives of the Province of Pennsylvania*, IV, 194.

(5) *Pa. Arch.*, 1st ser., I, 198.

to pay. After this, expenses mounted rapidly higher and higher until in 1750 over one thousand pounds per year were being expended in this manner. (1)

As soon as Indian expenses became appreciable, a quarrel began between the assembly and the proprietors concerning their payment. The assembly argued that all former grants for this purpose had been considered as free gifts of the people and that they did not commit the government to a continuation of the policy. As long as treaties had been made primarily for the maintenance of friendly intercourse, no objections had been raised; but now it was becoming apparent that they were only the forerunners of land purchases, and for this reason the assembly maintained that the proprietors should bear a share of the expense. (2) The Penns objected on the grounds that they were already bearing their fair share of Indian expenses in other ways, such as paying interpreters and making purchases of land from which the inhabitants derived great benefit. They considered that they were no more obliged to contribute to the public treasury than the governors of other colonies. (3) The assembly, however, still argued that as the Penns were absolute proprietors of the soil, they should at least bear the expenses of treaties for the purchase of lands. Those for the maintenance of friendship might still be held at the expense of the public. But treaties of friendship and those of purchase were so inextricably bound together that it was found impossible to draw a dividing line between them. The assembly then resolved that the surest way out of the difficulty would be to request the proprietors to agree upon a certain proportion of all treaty expenses which would be assumed by them. (4) The contest had not yet been decided

(1) *Votes of Assembly*, IV, 195.

(2) FRANKLIN, *Review*, 82. "But when it appeared, as in Course of Time was unavoidable, that a Treaty and a Purchase went on together; that the former was a Shoeing Horn for the latter, that the Governor only made the compliments, and the Assembly the Presents, & it could not but appear also, that there must be somewhat unfair in a Procedure where one paid all the cost, and the other engrossed all the Profit: and that it was high Time to put some Stop to a Practice so injurious to their Understandings."

(3) *Ibid*, 97.

(4) *Votes of Assembly*, IV, 104. Resolve of Assembly: "That the Proprietaries Interests are so constantly intermixt with those of the Province in all Treaties with our Indian Allies, that we apprehend the surest Way to prevent Dissatisfactions on all Sides, will be to request the Proprietaries—(to agree upon a proportionate part to be paid by them)—as in justice they ought to do."

when the outbreak of the French and Indian War brought it to a close.

The chief objective of the Quaker's Indian policy was the maintenance of friendship. To this end his energy and his money were freely expended; for as long as the good will of the Indians could be retained, the frontier difficulties which vexed the other colonies would be greatly lessened, if not entirely avoided. It was, in his estimation, much better to prevent than to cure. The attitude of the assembly is briefly stated in one of their arguments against the acceptance of the proprietary proposal to build a fort at the forks of the Ohio River. "We have," they say, "seriously considered the offer made by our proprietaries toward building such a House; but as we have always found that sincere, upright Dealing with the Indians, a friendly Treatment of them on all occasions and particularly in relieving their necessities at proper Times by suitable Presents, have been the best means of securing their Friendship, we could wish our Proprietaries had rather thought fit to join with us in the Expense of those presents, the Effects of which have at all Times so manifestly advanced their Interest with the security of our frontier Settlements." (1)

As is shown by this extract, the making of presents was the method in which the greatest faith was placed. It was this that caused the great increase in Indian expenses during the restless years from 1730 to 1750. As the Indians were found to be slipping away from the English interest, the number and value of the presents were gradually increased in a vain attempt to hold them true. It was for the purpose of carrying such a present that Conrad Weiser made his journey to the Ohio in 1748. In the following year George Croghan was sent with a small gift to the Twightwees, in company with Alexander Montour, the interpreter. On their way they met Christopher Gist who had been sent by the governor of Virginia to summon the Indians to meet at Logstown the next spring, to receive a present from the king. (2) This, then, was the customary method of bidding for the Indian's favor.

While Croghan was at the Twightwee town delivering the present and the governor's message, several chiefs of the tribes living on the Wabash River appeared and asked to be admitted into the chain of friendship with the English and the Iroquois. Croghan, considering that such an alliance would be of great advantage to the colony and extend

(1) *Colonial Records*, V, 547.

(2) O'CALLAGHAN, E. B., *New York Colonial Documents*, VII, 628.

the English interest among the Indians, granted the request; concluded treaties of friendship with them; and made each a small present. But on his return the assembly, with their usual jealousy of any attempt to anticipate in any way their action in money matters, repudiated his action and condemned him for bringing an additional expense upon the government. They seemed to lack entirely any appreciation of the situation into which the province was rapidly plunging, for at this most critical point they refused to extend their interest by the very policy which they considered most effective in gaining and holding the Indian's friendship.

Presents were also made at times to console them for losses which they had suffered in the English interest, such as the death of several Twightwee warriors in defending some English traders against the French. Money was also raised sometimes to placate them when they had become incensed on account of injuries. This was done in 1768 after the murder of ten Indians by a frontier settler named Frederick Stump. (1)

Private satisfaction was made to them in the same way. In 1794 a young man named Robertson killed an Indian in Western Pennsylvania by striking him with a club. The father of the murderer sent an agent to deal with the Indians. When the latter appeared, all the Indians of the neighborhood collected about him. His offer of about one hundred dollars to pay for the man who had been killed was considered highly satisfactory, and some of the Indians even seemed disappointed that it was not their relative who had been killed, as they were missing a share of so large an indemnity. (2)

Considerable sums, too, were paid at various times to provide for the wants of friendly Indians, particularly when these wants had arisen on account of their attitude toward the English. In 1755, for example, five thousand pounds were voted by the assembly to be expended by seven commissioners for the relief and supplying of settlers and friendly Indians who had been driven from their homes by attacks upon the frontier. (3)

Assistance against their enemies was never held out as an enticement for the Indians to ally themselves with the provincial government. Such would have been inconsistent with the Quaker's principles. But during the French and Indian War it was found necessary to erect houses at Wy-

(1) *Pa. Arch.*, 4th ser., III, 380.

(2) *Pa. Arch.*, 2nd ser., VI, 738.

(3) *Statutes at Large*, V, 211.