To Feed the Empire: Pennsylvania Settlement Schemes, the Walking Purchase, and Visions of British Political Economy

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To MRSEAH participants:

Having shelved it during graduate school, I’m just now returning to this project with the aim of submitting it as a stand-alone article. While the Walking Purchase and the development of Pennsylvania’s frontier play a role in my first book manuscript, this piece takes a pretty different vantage and methodology, one that is also admittedly far more traditionally “high political” than my usual work. You’ll find that, even as the piece ostensibly centers on Pennsylvania’s backcountry and relations with its Indigenous neighbors (the Lenni Lenape, but also the Iroquois), its focus also turns to the intersections of British imperial and Pennsylvania provincial policy.

My argument in a nutshell is this: To explain the transformation of Pennsylvania’s frontier development schemes in the late 1720s and 1730s—a transformation loudly punctuated by the Walking Purchase of 1737—we need to look beyond the ends of Pennsylvania (and the mid-Atlantic) in order to reconstruct the provincial colony’s place within the larger British Atlantic Empire. The reorientation away from Indian trade and towards expansive agricultural settlement, and from localized Indigenous relations and towards Iroquois preferment, came out of a particular geopolitical moment. The renewal of Anglo-French rivalry, combined with the political successes of the West Indian sugar lobby and the burst of Protestant immigration to North America, provoked a major reconceptualization of Britain’s continental colonies. In the midst of an increasingly conservative imperial political turn, Pennsylvania became envisioned as the provider of foodstuffs, a self-proclaimed “bread colony” that would support British imperial interests in the Caribbean through the provisioning of slave plantations, and that would encourage British imperial interests on the continent by erecting a demographic wall to French encroachments. It’s from that vantage, then, that I suggest we view the transition from the last gasps of the holy experiment to settler colonialism: as an attempt to reconcile provincial interests with the strong currents of the Empire.

This is still very much a work-in-progress, so I welcome any and all suggestions. I’m especially interested in gauging what additional context needs to be added—whether that be on British politics, the sugar debates, indigenous affairs—and what sections readers feel need to be fleshed out or the arguments tightened. Thanks to all for taking the time to read the piece. I look forward to the event.

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To Feed the Empire: Pennsylvania Settlement Schemes, the Walking Purchase, and Visions of British Political Economy

“We have seen with our Eyes a Deed signed by nine of your Ancestors above fifty Years ago for this very Land, and a Release Sign'd not many Years since by some of your selves and Chiefs now living to the Number of 15 or Upwards. But how came you to take upon you to Sell Land at all? We Conquer'd You, we made Women of you, you know you are Women, and can no more sell Land than Women. Nor is it fit you should have the Power of Selling Lands since you would abuse it. This Land that you Claim is gone through Your Guts.”

Nearly five years after the fraudulent sale of land upon the forks of the Delaware River that forcibly dispossessed the Lenni Lenape, Canassatego of the Onondaga Iroquois addressed Lenape representatives. He had been called to speak at the council by the Pennsylvania government, and used the opportunity to invoke more than the sale itself. Canassatego restated, and then reaffirmed, the political posturing and definitions of territorial sovereignty used to first legitimate the acquisition in 1737. In the wake of the Walking Purchase, it was the policies of James Logan and Thomas Penn, rather than any legacy of the holy experiment, that hung heavy.

The dramatic turn away from William Penn’s vision of governance is not a story can be adequately explained through a tightly focused lens on Pennsylvania and local Indigenous relations. The transformation of Pennsylvania’s frontier development schemes in the late 1720s and 1730s—a transformation loudly punctuated by the Walking Purchase of 1737—requires a deeper understanding of Pennsylvania’s place within the British Atlantic empire, and of its place within far-reaching conversations about trade, economy, and politics.

In 1735, William Penn's sons produced a draft or falsified deed purporting to have been signed in the 1680s. In the supposed deed, Lenape Indians promised to sell a tract beginning at the meeting of the Delaware and Lehigh Rivers, and extending as far west as a man could walk.

in a day and a half. Confronted with the document, Lenape leaders resisted; Pennsylvania officials soon called in the Iroquois to back their claims; and the walk was finally agreed to in order to set the bounds of the cession. What took place in 1737 was far from an amble through the woods. Three runners set off along previously cut trails as fast as they could in three different directions. Two didn’t complete the run, but the third did, finishing seventy miles from the starting point. A perpendicular line was drawn another seventy miles, and a triangular set of land then declared part of Pennsylvania. It was one of the most public and dramatic land swindles in American history.²

The circumstances of the Walk and the dramatic turn of Pennsylvania’s land and Indian policies have rightly been painted as a major tipping point in mid-Atlantic history and Euro-Indigenous relations. But the construction of the Walking Purchase was not only part of a turn in North America. It was part of a turn in the British Empire. By taking a broader vantage—to not only Pennsylvania and the Mid-Atlantic, but also to Nova Scotia, South Carolina, the West Indies, French Canada, and London—Pennsylvania’s transformation looks less isolated and more inevitable.

Ever since Francis Jennings, accounts of the transformation of Pennsylvania’s frontier and of the Walking Purchase have overwhelmingly employed one of two causal explanations. Each explanation starts with the same basic premise: Large numbers of immigrants—Germanic and Ulster Irish—suddenly flooded Pennsylvania in the 1720s and 1730s. On premise number two, these schools diverge: By one dominant account, these immigrants fought, cried, squatted, and rallied until Logan, the Penn family, and the Philadelphia Quaker establishment had no

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choice but to construct a deal to open up more land for settlement. The other school, led by Jennings, is much more cynical: Logan and the Penn family each sought personal financial gain and opportunistically pursued land speculation to further that aim.3

What none of these accounts have seemed to ask, however, is why Pennsylvania confronted a sudden flood of immigrants in the 1720s and 1730s. They constrict their inquiries almost so as to define the symptoms as the causes.

Why, then, did Germans and Irish appear on Delaware and Pennsylvania shores? Why was there a massive flood of immigration into the provincial colony?

Large numbers of Palatine and Ulster immigrants swept across Pennsylvania because ship contractors—who were in close conversation with members of the London Board of Trade—brought them there. Immigrants poured into the colony because ship contractors—who were in conversation with a Walpolean Whig London Board of Trade, a board itself decidedly invested in establishing large settlements of immigrants on colonial frontiers—brought them there. Massive waves of immigrants arrived in Pennsylvania because ship contractors—who at the urging of the Walpolean Board of Trade, a Ministry that envisioned large immigrant populations along its colonial frontiers in order to grow grain to then ship to the Empire’s slave colonies, and large immigrant populations to simultaneously stake down sovereignty near disputed territories of French and Spanish borderlands—brought them there. Immigration to

Pennsylvania in the 1720s and 1730s was not some unhappy accident. It was part of a larger imperial project.

The prevailing historiography has painted the first decades of the Eighteenth Century, particularly the years after the War of Spanish Succession, as a period of declining imperial engagement. In this narrative, policy in London turned towards the Isles, and then to Europe, while colonial affairs in North America operated more or less independently. A growing body of work has sparked a necessary reevaluation from the British vantage, one that suggests that ministers and the public were far from negligent or apathetic to North America in this period. What remains still is its corollary, an evaluation of early-eighteenth-century imperial reach on American shores. Scholarship on early America has taken strides in recent years to incorporate imperial and Atlantic contexts, but this has been largely at the bookends of colonial America, the early settlement projects and the years leading up to the War for Independence. And largely insulated from Atlantic history, scholarship on the frontier still remains largely characterized by the assumption of imperial impotency, neglect, or outright disregard.

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5 The scholarship on indigenous policy and relations has similarly (and perhaps unsurprisingly) remained largely apart from other discussions of political economy. Of course no imperial institution, like the Northern and Southern Superintendencies of Indian Affairs, yet existed. And an entirely imperial perspective from London alone would be just as distorted as an entirely localized perspective. Nonetheless, accounts of colonial indigenous affairs would be served by a greater emphasis on Atlantic or imperial influences. The fur trade literature poses a significant exception to this charge, ranging from the work of Harold Innis’s *The Fur Trade in Canada* and William Eccles’s *The Canadian Frontier*, to recent collections such as *Rethinking the Fur Trade.* Nonetheless, much of even this literature in recent decades has focused on the nineteenth century, and/or has focused on the cultural and social experience of the trade rather than its interaction with (and influence on) other economies and politics.
Eighteenth-century policy makers, however, recognized the important links between what modern scholarship has compartmentalized as geographically distant and topically disparate concerns: West Indian sugar; mid-Atlantic backcountry fortifications; Indigenous relations; immigrant settlement schemes; provincial manufacturing; European diplomacy. For those who sent and answered yearly questionnaires to the Board of Trade, who petitioned the Houses of Parliament, who debated within the Pennsylvania assembly, and who published their views in newspapers, pamphlets and books, these concerns were intimately linked—most concretely by fears and claims of European imperial rivalry, and by visions of British economic production and prosperity. And so intertwined in contemporary views, it is all the more important that we reconstruct them now.

The sudden movement away from Indian trade and towards expansive agriculture in Pennsylvania came out of a particular moment in the late 1720s and early 1730s, a moment in which renewed overt rivalry with the French (formalized in the Treaty of Vienna of 1731), combined with the political successes of the West Indian Sugar Lobby and the burst of Protestant immigration to the North American mainland, provoked a major reconceptualization of Britain’s continental colonies. In the midst of an increasingly conservative, if also contentious, political atmosphere, Pennsylvania became envisioned as the provider of foodstuffs, a self-proclaimed “bread colony”\(^6\) that would support British imperial interests in the Caribbean through the provisioning of slave plantations, and that would encourage British imperial interests on the continent through the creation of a human buffer of farmers, a demographic wall to French

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\(^6\) Pennsylvania’s agent in 1731, Ferdinand John Paris, in his address to the Council of Trade and Plantations declared: “The Brittish Sugar Colonys alone, cannot take off near the provisions which the Bread Colonys export, and the residue must be lost to the Bread Colonys, as not being worth the while to bring to Europe.” [? Mr. Paris] to the Council of Trade and Plantations, 20 December 1731, CO 5/1268, ff. 31-32, Public Record Office (hereafter PRO).
encroachments on the western frontier. It was a broad shift that moved away from political economic formulations of wealth, security, and growth as the products of trade and consumption, and towards conceptions of British imperial power as increasingly territorial.

Pennsylvania’s transformation was by no means the perfect realization of one coherent imperial policy. Rather, the provincial colony found itself tangled within a series of debates—over immigration and populationism, over trade and colonial production, over provincial administration and economic diversity—cast by officials and politicians on both sides of the Atlantic. In the early 1730s, debates over the future of Britain and its colonies consistently situated the French Empire at the very center of discussion (joined periodically by allusions to Spain): French economic success in the West Indies, French insidious machinations in the American interior, French geopolitical alliances in Europe.

These common anxieties afflicted officials, politicians, and polemicists across the ideological spectrum. However, united as they were over their decidedly supposed dire circumstance, two major factions diverged fundamentally on how to best direct the Empire. One school of thought, tied to the establishment government under Robert Walpole, looked to avoid armed conflict by challenging the French commercially, to centralize colonial governance, to closely regulate colonial industries, and to encourage especially the growth of the West Indian sugar plantations. The other, an opposition movement led by Patriot Whigs, called back to the early Whig initiatives of the turn of the century, and encouraged colonial manufacturing, rejected monoculture, defended foreign, and even illicit, trade, and emphasized the wealth-generating power of consumption. These contrasting perspectives, while well demarcated in Parliament and in the larger flurry of pamphlets, newspapers, and books, became more muddled in their realizations. The establishment government maintained control over the Board of Trade and
Parliament through the end of the 1730s, but its colonial projects and declarations of the decade more closely resembled a partial composite of the prevailing conservative program flecked with notable elements of Patriot proposals.

As part of this broader conservative shift, ideas of Indigenous policy and frontier development in the mid-Atlantic moved away from the encouragement of trade and commerce with local peoples, a policy even Logan admitted as a losing game to the French, and towards creating hard lines of settlement. The Pennsylvania peltry trade began to decline over the 1730s as wheat and grain exports rose; Indigenous peoples moved further west and away from Pennsylvanian markets as new townships, counties, and farms sprung up along the edges of the proprietary colony. With this movement away from the peltry trade also came Pennsylvania’s shift further away from localized Indigenous negotiations and towards strengthening ties with the Iroquois confederacy. The proprietary colony’s emphasis on Iroquois power—and the reliance on Iroquois presence and participation at treaties and conferences—came, in part, out of a desire to strengthen connections to the one Indigenous empire understood as a viable buffer to the French. Just as important, the transition to Iroquois-centric policy mimicked broader imperial emphasis towards land acquisition, and towards power as territorially-derived. Iroquois influence and sovereignty was understood as borne not from economic tributaries or out of cultural ties, but from physical conquest of geography. To Pennsylvanian officials—and indeed to others in the Empire—the Iroquois presented the best avenue for the acquisition of other native-held lands.

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7 The excise crisis of 1733 did shake the Walpole regime, and the 1734 general election saw Walpole lose a significant chunk of his majority. Nonetheless, Walpole remained in power until 1741, during which period Thomas Pelham, the Duke of Newcastle, also led the Board of Trade.

8 As Jane Merritt illustrates, “the Iroquois had slowly become less relevant to Indian trade and politics in the region” over the first three decades of the eighteenth century, but still “claimed ownership of Pennsylvania territory based on the assertion that they had conquered the Susquehannocks in the late seventeenth century.” Jane T. Merritt, *At the Crossroads: Indians & Empires on a Mid-Atlantic Frontier, 1700-1763* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press for the Omohundro Institute), 46.
Together, the shifts towards backcountry settlement, and towards increasing Iroquois preferment, would have profound impacts on the future of Pennsylvania’s frontier relations: First, in the immediate displacement of the Lenni Lenape, many of whom would soon after strengthen their ties to the French and would emerge as major enemy combatants in the mid-century; and second, in eroding Pennsylvania’s infrastructure for Indian trade and gift-giving in the upper Ohio Valley. This infrastructure for disbursements would continue to crumble in the decades that followed, leaving only weak foundation by the 1750s, a major obstacle for a British Empire that suddenly looked to rebuild the supply lines of goods and gifts in the midst of the Seven Years’ War.

At first, James Logan—together with the Penns, Lieutenant Governor Patrick Gordon, and Pennsylvania’s London agent, Ferdinand John Paris—appeared to resist most elements of this trend, often in what was claimed as Pennsylvania’s own interests: Logan and others pushed back against the first proposed restrictions of trade with the French and Spanish West Indies; they decried the early major immigration waves of the 1720s; they continued to focus attention on the peltry trade over which Logan presided. However, Logan and his supporters began to tack further towards the prevailing imperial program over a few short years, from roughly 1728 to 1733, moving towards a more conciliatory view of immigration, especially of Palatines; a greater support of agriculture and wheat production; and a comparably more receptive view of trade regulations to the West Indies, especially when compared to the vociferous petitions of New England. Logan’s role in the 1736 Iroquois treaty and the 1737 Walking Purchase—first conceived in the early 1730s⁹—betrayed a major shift in policy and economic priorities that

would scarcely have been imagined a decade before, and which local and personal explanations fail to fully explicate.

Rather than see the Walking Purchase—or, more broadly, the shift in Pennsylvania’s Indigenous policies and land schemes—as a project that emerged from the minds of a few men, or as a knee-jerk response to local demographic, political, and economic pressures, we need to see the transition from the last gasps of the holy experiment to settler colonialism as something that emerged from Logan and others’ attempt to reconcile personal and provincial interests with the political economic currents of the Empire.10 Logan met the realities and visions of a British state that hummed at a feverous pitch of anxiety—anxiety over the European balance of power, anxiety over the Atlantic balance of trade, anxiety over the British balance of politics—and in these unsure waters, looked to chart Pennsylvania’s course within the Atlantic Empire.

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10 The term settler colonialism invokes its own major set of debates but proves appropriate in this case. The transformation of Pennsylvania that began in the late 1720s, marked by massive European immigration, expansive settlement and permanent agriculture, and—most notably—native displacement, fits the classic model. The term also emphasizes the important tensions and distinctions between the settler populations (primarily Scotch-Irish, Germanic, and other European peoples), the Quaker elite of Pennsylvania, and the metropolitan officials of the Empire. Most importantly, in employing a term associated with comparative analysis, it denotes that Pennsylvania’s transformation—while with its own unique actors and circumstances—was far from exceptional. For a recent discussion of both the literature on settler colonialism and the debates over the term, see: John Mack Faragher, “Commentary: Settler colonial studies and the North American frontier,” *Settler Colonial Studies*, 4:2, 181-191.
Pennsylvanian Politics After Penn

After its initial population boom, stagnation characterized Pennsylvania over the first two decades of the eighteenth century. A diversified economy—parts fur trade, tobacco, farming, timber, and shipping—tied early Pennsylvania to London and Ireland, and to markets up and down the Atlantic: Newfoundland, New England, Virginia, and most tightly, the West Indies. The volume of this trade, however, was rather insubstantial. Philadelphia, the heart of Pennsylvania’s economic system, saw little export growth in the years before 1720.

Pennsylvania similarly remained insulated from the major immigration schemes of the 1700s and 1710s. It was its northern neighbor, New York, targeted instead by the 1709 Palatine immigration project of the London Whig government. While the Plan of 1709 came to represent Whig political failure, its initial conception—to encourage immigration from the German Rhineland to the Netherlands and England, and from thence to British North America—envisioned large settlements of immigrants on the frontiers of colonial projects, immigrants

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12 McCusker, 203.
serving at once as body barriers to Indian aggressors and French encroachments, and as a productive labor force that would provide the Royal Navy with ready and inexpensive stores.¹³

The mid-1710s ushered in major changes for both Pennsylvania and the larger British Empire. The accession of George I in 1714, and more so the death of Louis XIV in 1715, dramatically disrupted European alliances. The British ministry, still reeling after the War of Spanish Succession and Treaty of Utrecht, split over preferred policy. Robert Walpole and Charles Townshend urged subsidies in place of war, while James Stanhope and Charles Spencer, the Earl of Sunderland, advocated interventionism. With the support of the new monarch, Stanhope and Sunderland won out, and their treaty of Anglo-French Alliance nearly passed in 1716. A successful treaty of quadruple alliance between Britain, France, Austria, and the Dutch Republic followed in 1718—on the eve of the (aptly named) War of Quadruple Alliance—ushering in a period of formal Anglo-Franco neutrality.¹⁴

It was amidst this dramatic reshuffling of the European balance of power that Pennsylvania experienced its own political crisis. William Penn retreated from active proprietorship over the course of the 1710s, during which period James Logan—as one of the proprietary commissioners—emerged as the most vocal and powerful figure in Pennsylvania politics. Logan also dominated much of Pennsylvania’s economy, and under his tenure, the

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peltry trade had increased tenfold.15 While some traders did operate independently, still many more engaged as part of Logan’s network, utilizing his ties to merchants who carried English goods into Philadelphia and ingratiating themselves into Logan’s personal system of credit.16 Before his death, however, William Penn brought another key figure into the Pennsylvanian political arena, offering Sir William Keith the Deputy Governor’s post. Keith and Logan, as Francis Jennings has illustrated, held vastly different visions of Pennsylvania’s future.17

Shortly before Penn’s death, a questionnaire from the Board of Trade arrived in Philadelphia. It inquired into the state of Pennsylvania’s economy, its external trade, its Indian affairs, and—most pressingly—what information the provincial government had of possible French incursions into the interior. Keith solicited Logan for a memorial on the Indian trade and intelligence of the French, and the compiled response sent back in February of 1719.18 Keith made no indication of the memorial’s joint authorship—although he did note that much of the

15 “In 1713 the skin trade was worth only £168.” By 1714, “its value increased to £1,083, and in 1715 it increased again to £1,485. Value for 1716, a banner year, was £2,641.” Jennings, 266. Jennings’s figures were pulled from Stephen H. Cutcliffe, “Colonial Indian Policy as a Measure of rising Imperialism, New York and Pennsylvania, 1700-1755,” Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine 64:3 (1981), 240-244.
16 Kevin Kenny writes: Logan “also acquired a near monopoly over the fur trade, importing goods from England and selling them on credit to traders who exchanged the goods for Indian pelts. The traders than sold these pelts to Logan, repairing their debt with interest. Logan exported the pelts to Europe and imported more goods for sale to the Indians. Kevin Kenny, Peaceable Kingdom Lost: The Paxton Boys and the Destruction of William Penn’s Holy Experiment (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 23. Jane Merritt similarly explains: Traders “were deeply indebted to James Logan, who endeavored to control the economic life of the colony as much as the political life.” These traders, through Logan, were “financed by Philadelphia mercantile firms or wealthy elites of eastern Pennsylvania.” Merritt, At the Crossroads, 62-63. See also: Francis Jennings, “The Indian Trade of the Susquehanna Valley,” Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society, 110:6 (1966), 406-424.
17 Francis Jennings, The Ambiguous Iroquois Empire: The Covenant Chain Confederation of Indian Tribes with English Colonies from its beginnings to the Lancaster Treaty of 1744 (New York: Norton, 1984), 265-304. My own interpretations of Logan and Keith, and of their visions for Pennsylvania’s economy, do differ on several important points.
18 Deputy-Governor Keith to Mr. Popple, Philadelphia, 16 February 1719, CO 5/1265, f.124, and CO 5/1293, ff. 181-203, PRO.
information came “from the Indian traders,” whose intelligence he would “not pretend to vouch” for—but subsequent correspondences with the Board of Trade revealed Logan’s handiwork.19

The memorial—penned before the dawn of Anglo-French neutrality—situated the British Empire at an important crossroads: the French officials were endeavoring to find and secure a passage between the St Lawrence River Valley and the Mississippi, and French missionaries and coureur de bois worked tirelessly to win over the affections of the Indigenous peoples on the British frontiers. Unless specific recommendations were followed, the British colonies would very well find themselves squeezed back to Atlantic shores. Logan championed the Indian trade as the key to Britain’s future, both as the preferred diplomatic practice of material reciprocity, and as the most “beneficial” and profitable economic venture of the Empire.

The final policy suggestion, however, came not from Logan but from Keith:

The Trade might be easily secured and protected by erecting four small forts, viz. the first upon Lake Erie, near to the abovenamed Indians the Miamis. The second on Lake Ontario, near to the Iroquese. The third on the head or highest fountain of Potowmack River, which divides the Colonies of Virginia and Maryland. And the fourth towards the head of Susquehannah River which runs through Pensilvania unto the Bay of Cheaseapeak.20

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19 In 1731, Gordon sent to the Board of Trade a copy of Logan’s 1718 memorial. “As to the strength of the neighbouring Indians,” Gordon enclosed “a paper drawn up in 1718 by Mr. Logan, a gentleman of good literature and large experience, who having been himself engaged in the Indian trade, from the informations he collected from some who had long and often travelled through Canada, and the country about Missassippi, drew up at the request of Sir Wm. Keith then Governor of this Province an account of the French trade, their routes and their Indians, etc., to be transmitted to your Board in answer to some queries then sent him.” Lt. Governor Gordon to the Council of Trade and Plantations, Philadelphia, 15 March 1731, CO 5/1268, ff. 99, 100-102v., 103, 104v-111, 112v, PRO. See Enclosure 1.

20 Deputy-Governor Keith to Mr. Popple, Philadelphia, 16 February 1719, CO 5/1265, f.124, and CO 5/1293, ff. 181-203, PRO.
It was a dramatic addition to the Quaker’s recommendations. The suggestion to erect forts not only endorsed the militarization of Pennsylvania’s frontier, but also provided an enthusiastically territorial interpretation of Logan’s commercial trade policies. While Logan and others in the peltry market had erected trade houses, these were not yet deep into Indian country and nowhere near the contested region of the Ohio. Keith’s addendum was, in fact, telling of much larger differences between their ideological commitments: Logan envisioned British security as reliant on (fairly yet loosely) regulated trade. For Keith, British security required tangible territorial conquest.

1720 sent another shockwave across the Empire. The South Sea Company bubble burst, provoking the reshuffling of the imperial government. By 1721, Robert Walpole, along with Townshend, emerged at the fore of Parliament, marking the beginning of the long era of Walpolean rule.

Walpole’s Whig government in the immediate wake of the South Sea Bubble was not yet expressly territorial, despite the popular narrative of the colonial literature. For all of Jennings’s and others’ careful reconstruction of local politics and personality conflicts, the common portrayal of metropolitan political factions and imperial relations has been alarmingly distorted. The 1720s set off a period of establishment Whig dominance, but this power was also checked by trans-imperial opposition. For every proposal calling for the close management of trade and suppression of industry, there was a petition for promoting colonial manufactures. Rather than

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21 While Logan was far from the most devout of Quakers, his suggestions and policies always shied away from armament.

“imperialists” and “colonials,” political economic interests divided along more complicated lines. Some were indeed at least partly geographic: the West Indian sugar lobby, for instance, made up a large public interest group. But even that faction enjoyed major support from within England. The deepest schisms, rather, occurred along ideological lines, over different conceptions of wealth accumulation and forms of colonial governance.\(^{23}\)

The friction between Keith and Logan over the 1710s and 1720s is especially illustrative of how contemporary economic debates skewed. Logan’s fur trade activities, by the Jennings account, were part and parcel of Logan’s hunger for land.\(^{24}\) Yet, without reading back Logan’s activities in the late 1720s and 1730s, we find that it was Keith, in fact, who actively promoted land settlement beyond the three counties. Keith’s invitation to the Schoharie Palatines in 1723—immigrants to New York of the original 1709 scheme—brought sizeable numbers of German settlers to the Delaware town of Tulpewihacki.\(^{25}\) While the literature has largely painted Keith as the radical against proprietary interests—stirring up the anti-proprietary members of the Assembly and birthing so-called Keithians, championing increases in paper money, and supporting popular assembly representation—other elements of Keith’s proposals, especially that of frontier forts and expanded geographic settlement, retained a far more conservative edge that betrayed Keith’s Tory roots. And while popular amongst many in the Assembly, Keith and his anti-proprietary posturing resulted in his replacement by Hannah Penn in 1726. Patrick Gordon

\(^{23}\) Rather than accepting the simplistic dichotomy of metropole versus colonies, we need to push back against assumptions of “salutary neglect” and of insurmountable cultural divergence, to instead see the eighteenth-century Atlantic as constituted by major threads of debate and discussion that spanned eastern and western shores. Or put another way, we need to reject the impulse that not only grossly simplifies the complexity of economic debates—but that also teleologically assumes the rupture between metropole and colonies more than a half century in advance.


was appointed Deputy Governor in his stead. Logan and the Penns hoped the change in stewardship would usher in a new period of stability and proprietary advantage.

**Pelts and Palatines**

The period of economic stagnation—as well as any hopes of Pennsylvania’s stability—came to an abrupt end in 1727, as five ships laden with Palatine migrants arrived in Philadelphia harbor. In that year alone, nearly twelve hundred German immigrants disembarked in Pennsylvania, a demographic flood equal to nearly three quarters of the total migration of Germanic peoples between 1700 and 1726.

Logan wrote to John Penn and the other proprietors September 27 to share his fears: “A large Number of Palatines that were expected here this Summer, Just now one large Ship has brought above 400 of them & we are assured there are no less than three more at sea. “At this Rate,” Logan continued, “you will soon have a German Colony here & perhaps such an one as Britain once recd. From Saxony in the 5th Century.” He urged the Penns to alert the London ministry and lay out their concerns, convinced that, were Pennsylvania not a proprietary colony, the Crown would have already “taken care of it by this time.” In October, Logan’s correspondence took on a new panic: “Instead of 3 ships of Palatines […] there are five more

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27 Wokeck, *Trade in Strangers*, 40. See: Table 1: German immigrant voyages to North America, 1683-1775.
29 James Logan to the Proprietors, Philadelphia, 27 September 1727, James Logan Letterbook, Vol. 4, 147, James Logan Papers, Series 1, Subseries a, Logan Family Papers (Collection 379), Historical Society of Pennsylvania. [Hereafter James Logan Papers, *HSP*]
arrived, that is six in the whole with above 1200 of those foreigners.”30 And by November, he alerted John Penn, “we have many thousands of foreigners, mostly Palatines. Many of them are a surly people, divers Papists among them, ye men generally well arm’d.” To make matters worse, still other immigrants came “from the North of Ireland, great numbers yearly. […] Both these sorts sitt frequently down on any spott of vacant Land they can find, without asking questions.”31

Logan had already written to the Duke of Newcastle that previous December with his concerns over German immigration. Posturing the pressures of their influx not as a localized issue but as an imperial one—“the American Provinces being more imediatly under your Grace's care and protection”—Logan invoked Pelham and the Board of Trade’s duty to prevent the “many ill consequences that may attend the transporting here from Holland the great numbers of Palatines that dayly arrive in these parts”32 His plea, ignored by metropolitan officials, referred only to the hundreds of Germans that had arrived since 1723. Unbeknownst to Logan, they also presaged greater troubles ahead.

By April 1728, opposition to the German crush had spread to the Pennsylvania Assembly. A special committee, enlisted to “make enquiry into the behavior of the Palatines,” delivered its report and a general motion made: “The great Importation of Foreignors into this Province of late, who are the Subjects of a foreign Prince, and who keep up amongst themselves a different Language, may, in Time, prove of dangerous Consequence for the Peace of the Province; and thereupon the Question was put, that the great Importation of Foreignors into this Province may be a dangerous Consequence to the Peace and Quit thereof? Carried in the

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32 Lt. Governor Patrick Gordon to the Duke of Newcastle, Philadelphia, 12 December 1726, C.O. 5, 1234. No. 9, PRO.
Affirmative.” The following day, the House presented its resolution to Lieutenant Governor Gordon, “that the further Importation of Foreigners into Pennsylvania, might be of dangerous Consequence to the Peace and Safety of this Province. Of which Resolution, this House thought fit to acquaint the Governor, and to beg his Advice and Assistance in doing what may be thought just and necessary for the Security of his Majesty’s Subjects in Pennsylvania, by preventing, or at least discouraging, the further Importation of Foreigners into this Province.” Soon after, the assembly sent a memorial the Board of Trade, requesting a Parliamentary act to prevent or slow the German immigration. It, like Logan’s plea in 1726, met with no response in London. By the end of 1728, three more Palatine passenger ships arrived in Pennsylvania.

The silence in London to Pennsylvanian petitions and memorials on immigration could have signaled imperial ministerial apathy. The internal records of the Board of Trade, however, reveal just the opposite. By September of 1728, the Board was soliciting—and responding to—correspondence of contractors and agents involved in Palatine transport to Pennsylvania. While their discussions largely concerned a new settlement scheme on the frontiers of South Carolina (schemes that would later provide impetus for the new colony of Georgia), there was no question of the Board’s knowledge or support of German immigration to the North American colonies.

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33 Pennsylvania Archives, 8th Series, Vol 3, 1875-1878.
35 Wokeck, Trade in Strangers, 45.
36 Alured Popple served as the secretary to the Board of Trade during this period. “Mr. Popple to Thomas Missing,” 10 September 1728, C. O. 5, 400. pp. 239, 240; Mr. Lowndes to [? Mr. Popple], 25 September 1728, C.O. 5, 360. ff. 167–168v; Mr. De la Fontaine to Mr. Popple, 29 October 1728, C.O. 5, 360. ff. 163,164,166v, PRO.
37 Puzzlingly—with the exception of brief mention in Rosalind Beiler’s Immigrant and Entrepreneur—none of the major histories of the German migrations to Pennsylvania have examined the Board of Trade’s role in or position to these migrations. This gap in analysis is particularly striking precisely because of the attention these works do pay to governmental backing and politics during the 1709 Palatine migration scheme. Contractors and neulander rarely operated without (at the very least) tacit approval of government officials—their business would hardly be profitable if these migrations were opposed. Even more, many of these contractors approached the Board to request subsidies.
Back in Philadelphia, Logan—unaware still of the Board’s intentions—painted German immigration as the nasty legacy of Keith’s government. Logan’s letters to the Penns recalled the former Lieutenant Governor’s invitation to Schoharie Palatines in 1723—which he believed could only have encouraged their kin still in the Rhineland—and Keith’s renewed invitation in 1725. A note jotted in the Logan’s copy book even postulated that Keith “designed to make some use of his influence with [the Palatines] had he continued in the province”\(^\text{38}\) Logan was at least partly right: Palatine correspondence networks were continually active in the 1720s, as family members already emigrated to North America wrote back home.\(^\text{39}\) The early emigrations from New York may very well have helped spur some additional journeys to Pennsylvania. Immigration of such a magnitude, however, required there to be greater forces at work.

Logan and the Pennsylvania Assembly of 1728 painted the German populations as threats to colonial and British imperial security. These well “arm’d” immigrants threatened the stability of local Indigenous relations, and their loyalties to the British crown, much less to the provincial government, remained uncertain. Earlier ideas of immigrant settlements as buffers to European encroachment—as were expressed in the Plan of 1709—held less imaginative pull in this period of French neutrality. Instead, concerns over immigrant expansion onto lands both native-held and proprietor-claimed dominated Logan and Penn correspondence.

\(^{38}\) Note, From Mrs. Logan’s Copy Book No 5, James Logan Letterbook, 4:147, James Logan Papers.

\(^{39}\) According to Aaron Fogelman, letters sent from North America “were usually intended for general reading before the family, if not the entire village, in the homeland.” Fogelman and Walter Knittle both remark that such correspondence encouraging settlement was widespread. Fogelman and Knittle present the same example: Christopher Saur to his home village (1724) in R.W. Kelsey, ed., “An Early Description of Pennsylvania: letter of Christopher Sower, Written in 1724, Describing Conditions in Philadelphia and Vicinity, and the Sea Voyage from Europe,” Pennsylvanian Magazine of History and Biography, 45 (1921), 243-254. Fogelman, Hopeful Journeys, 32-33; Knittle, Early Eighteenth Century Palatine Emigration, 216-217.
A series of treaties in 1728 addressed land grievances and the recent spate of violence: the first at Conestoga, on May 27, convened by Gordon, Logan and the other Pennsylvania commissioners with the Indians of Conestoga Town; the second in Philadelphia, on June 4, with Sassoonan, other Delaware representatives, and an Iroquois representative, Shikillima. By Francis Jennings’ account, Logan saw the Philadelphia meeting with the Unamis of Tulpewiacki as the perfect moment to declare that “the Palatines had settled at Sassoonan’s Tulpehocken without [his] knowledge,” at the sole, and unsupported, invitation of William Keith. The treaties appeared to reaffirm Pennsylvania’s friendly relations with the local Unami Delaware and Conestoga groups by addressing the problem of immigrant squatters on native land. The same treaties, just as intently, sought to protect the peltry trade. Immigrant squatters not only threatened the native relations that Logan and others had cultivated to further the fur trade—and which the fur trade furthered in a dialectic relationship—but their attempts at homesteading also threatened the environmental resources for pelts.

Land and Lobbies

In 1729, another major wave of immigration hit Pennsylvania. Only 300 Palatines arrived that year, but on their heels were more than 5,500 Ulster Irish who rushed into Philadelphia and

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41 Jennings, not one to shy away from outrage or controversy, holds a far more cynical interpretation of Logan’s intentions. For Jennings, Logan was an able actor, one who had little regard for Indigenous land claims and who pretended only when politically expedient. His tensions with Keith were less ideological than intensely personal. Most importantly, in Jennings’s account, Logan thought of land speculation (and thus eventual native displacement) above all else. His betrayal of Penn’s holy experiment may as well as have been a foregone conclusion. For Jennings portrayal of the 1728 treaties see: Jennings, Ambiguous Empire, 305-306. See council minutes in Pennsylvania Colonial Records, Vol. 3., 316-26.
New Castle. The reception within the Pennsylvania Assembly was less than enthusiastic. On May 10, the House of Representatives proposed an Act to lay a “duty on Forreignors & Irish Servants, &c. imported into this province.” With the approval of Deputy Governor Patrick Gordon, the Act was passed into Law. The massive Irish immigration to Philadelphia had been catalyzed by the perfect cocktail of crisis: three bad harvests in 1726, 1727, and 1728; a credit crisis in the aftermath of Wood’s Half Pence; and poor returns in linen sales in 1729. It was also encouraged by the Board of Trade.

As ships departed Ulster for Pennsylvania, a group within the Board spearheaded plans for new settlement in Nova Scotia. As settlers, they proposed the importation of large numbers of Palatine and Irish. Some of the recommendations echoed the old Whig proposals of 1709—most directly, the role of naturalized immigrants in the production of naval stores. But a major clause was added in January of 1730. The settlers would also be able to purchase land, as individuals,

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42 Another, smaller wave of Scotch-Irish had also arrived the year before. Wokeck, *Trade in Strangers*, 169-171. “The exact number who came to American in these few years of emergency is uncertain, but the *Pennsylvania Gazette* of 6 January 1729/30, claimed that 1,155 arrived in Philadelphia and 4,500 had landed in ‘New Castle Government’—a figure that may be close. Another contemporary listing, ‘Passengers and Servants imported from Ireland from June 1729 to September 1735,’ put the figure for 1729 to 1,865 immigrants to Philadelphia and 3,790 immigrants to Delaware. Both come to a total of 5,655.” Patrick Griffin writes that “in 1729 alone, between five and seven thousand men, women and children—mostly from Ulster and mostly Presbyterian—headed for America, the vast majority to Pennsylvania.” Patrick Griffin, *The People with No Name: Ireland’s Ulster Scots, America’s Scots Irish, and the Creation of a British Atlantic World, 1689-1764* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 95.

43 Colonial Records of Pennsylvania, Volume 3, 381.


for the purpose of agriculture. And they would be settled in disputed territory between both French and British claims.\textsuperscript{46}

Crucial to this scheme were its backers. Pelham and Bladen topped the endorsements, revealing a definite Walpolean commitment to Palatine and Irish settlement in North America. And it was also an immigration scheme with a clear agenda. Settlers were to occupy disputed territory, to protect British claims in the North Atlantic against French incursions, a policy that preempted the end of Anglo-French neutrality by a year. Even more, settlers were expected to “become Planters,” to produce provisions that could then be shipped to other British Atlantic possessions.\textsuperscript{47} Taken as a whole, the Nova Scotia proposals revealed broader establishment Whig plans for immigration and settlement that reoriented from the limited production of naval stores, to an increasingly territorial project that encouraged expansive agriculture. It was a shift that followed other threads of increasing conservatism within the dominant Whig agenda.\textsuperscript{48} Members of the Board of Trade and their fellow Walpolean ministers, in contrast to their plans for Pennsylvania, saw no reason to maintain a quiet secrecy over immigration schemes to the royal colonies of Nova Scotia and South Carolina.\textsuperscript{49}


\textsuperscript{47} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{49} For a detailed account of British imperial settlement schemes along South Carolina and Georgia, see Amy Watson, “\textit{Patriot Empire: The Rise of Party Politics in the British Atlantic, 1716-1748}” (PhD Dissertation, Yale University), 2018.

While immigration fervor swept across much of the Atlantic Empire, the reaction in Pennsylvania and amongst the absentee Proprietors in London remained fearful. And yet, even by 1729, the correspondence between Logan and the Penns carried a heavy sense of resignation. Sometime that fall, the Proprietors wrote to Logan to note that their efforts at stemming immigration from London had been thereto unsuccessful and that the prospects looked dim.

Without external support to prevent the arrivals of still more Germans and Irish—and, even more, in the face of concealed imperial support for German and Irish immigration—the Pennsylvania government would instead have to adapt its policies.

In almost dramatic fashion, it did. Logan wrote to the Penns in November of 1729, to warn that “without any Loss of time,” the Proprietors and commissioners would need to resolve how or whether “to make new Purchases of the Indians, without which [they] may expect a war that would run this Province in the extreameast Confusion, none being worse fitted for it.”

While the correspondence of the preceding years discussed methods of removing settlers and wrangling squatters, it now looked to legitimize their place on the Pennsylvania frontier. Logan’s tack was certainly not one of enthusiastic support—unlike Pelham, Bladen, and others in the London ministry, he did not envision settlers as the means of security, but rather as a potential threat to it—but his policies shifted in their direction nonetheless. The Penns’ response was much in line with Logan’s. “We Can’t Conceive it unreasonable that if they are inclinable to

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50 As to the Palatines, you have often taken notice of to us, wee apprehend have Lately arrived in greater Quantities than may be constant with the welfare of the Country, and therefore, applied ourselves to our Councill to find a proper way to prevent it […] With this resolution we acquainted the Governour, by Capt Stringfellow, to Maryland, the 25th Febry, a Duplicate of which we have since sent by another ship, both wch times we also enclos’d Letters For thee; but as to any other people coming over who are the subjects of the British Crown, we can’t Conceive it any ways practicable to prohibit it.” John, Thomas and Richard Penn to James Logan, c. 1729, Pennsylvania Archives: Series 2, Vol. 7, 138-146.

settle, they should be oblig’d to settle, either Backwards to Sasquehanna or north in ye Country beyond the other settlements.” The concluding note, however, signaled still an important distinction. By stressing that the Irish not be “suffered to settle towards Maryland, on any account,” the Penns and Logan pushed back against ideas of wielding settlement in disputed territory as a means of staking down sovereignty. In part this reflected a different political context: the disputed territory that the Pennsylvania officials referenced was within the British Empire, not between it and another European power. But even two years later, Logan would echo the same refrain in response to proposals to settle Palatines in disputed territory along the Ohio River, and between the French and British empires.

What was also increasingly clear by 1729, and even more so in 1730, were Logan’s—as well as the Penn’s, Gordon’s, and the Pennsylvania Assembly’s—diverging views on the two

53 “Tis said Endeavours have been used this last year to obtain of the Crown a Grant of another Province or large Tract of Land to the West of Virginia and Pennsylvania, and Proposals made to Transport large Numbers of Palatines to Settle it. The Inducement to this Application has probably been an Opinion that those Excellent Lands on Ohio before mentioned lie without the bounds of the Royal Grant of Pennsylvania, but those who have a more certain knowledge of that part of the Country are well Assured that so much of Ohio River as flows between the Latitude of 43 and 40 lie[s] a good way within the Limits of the Said Province. It was truly to be wished that such a project were Practicable for such a Frontier on that part would be highly useful, but as (tis presumed) They must first ask leave of those who will never Grant it, Vizt. The French, who are extremely Jealous of extended Settlements, it would under the present State of Affairs be altogether in Vain to Attempt it.” James Logan, “The State of the British Plantations in America, A Memorial” (1732), in Joseph E. Johnson, “A Quaker Imperialist’s View of the British Colonies in America: 1732,” PMHB, Vol LX (April 1936).

What is all the more important—and contrary to Jennings’ portrayal of Keith and Logan—is that the very proposal which Logan decried was posed by William Keith. “In 1730 and 1731 [Keith] and several other adventurers promoted the establishment of a colony in the western part of Virginia extending to the Mississippi River, which was to be settled at the outset by Swiss and German Protestant families.” R. N. Lokken, “Sir William Keith’s Theory of the British empire,” Historian, 25 (1963): 403–418. Lokken examined documents from: Charles E. Kemper, ed., “Documents Relating to a Proposed Swiss and German Colony in the Western Part of Virginia, from the British Public Record Office,” Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, XXIX (April 1921), 188-190; Ann V. Strickler Milbourne, ed., “Colony West of the Blue Ridge, Proposed by Jacob Stauber and Others, 1731, etc.: Some Additional Documents,” ibid., XXXV (April 1927). 175-180.
major immigrant waves. The hardline sentiments that characterized early reception of the Palatines softened as the Irish attracted greater ire. It was perhaps not a coincidence that the very same day the House imposed Duties on Irish immigrants, it also passed an act founding the County of Lancaster.\textsuperscript{54} Massive naturalization of German immigrants in 1730 passed by Gordon and the assembly stated that many Germans had “contributed to the enlargement of the British Empire, and [had] always behaved themselves religiously and peaceable, and [had] paid due regard and obedience to the Laws, and Government of this Province.”\textsuperscript{55} Gordon, in his private correspondence, was moved much the same, describing the German immigrants as “a very industrious People” who had “been of advantage” to the province.\textsuperscript{56}

In large part, the different views of Ulster and Palatine immigrants held by the Quaker elite and provincial officials reflected dominant stereotypes of the era.\textsuperscript{57} Ulsters were considered unreasonable and wild people, who indiscriminately set up squats on both native and European land holdings. In 1730, a cadre of such “Disorderly People” from the Ulster townships of Donegal and Swatara traveled southward to possess “themselves of all Conestogoe Mannor.”\textsuperscript{58} Logan worked with a local Scotch-Irish minister, as well as the sheriff and magistrates of Lancaster County to remove them, but it became clear to Logan and others that the Ulster populations would pose greater problems to land claims. Communications between Logan and the Penns discussed various methods of both defending Indian towns from trespassing

\textsuperscript{54} An act for “erecting the upper parts of the Province of Pensylvania lying towards Sasquehannah, Conestogoe, Donegal, &c., into a County.” 10 May 1729. \textit{Colonial Records of Pennsylvania}, Volume 3, 382.
\textsuperscript{56} Gordon to Springett and John Penn, 16 May 1729, Penn Papers, Official Correspondence, Vol. 2, f.75, HSP.
\textsuperscript{57} On this, I borrow heavily from Kevin Kenny’s work. Kenny, \textit{Peaceable Kingdom Lost}, 31.
\textsuperscript{58} James Logan to Thomas Penn, 22 December 1730, Penn Papers, Official Correspondence, Vol 2, f.145, HSP.
immigrants, and purchasing lands from native peoples for legal settlement. By November of 1729, Logan was certain that “the 5 Nations claim[ed] all those Lands” about Susquehanna and that their participation—both as defenders and vendors of land—would be required in all future disputes.\(^{59}\) The second prevailing stereotype of the Ulsters held in North America charged the Scotch-Irish with “slovenly and wasteful agriculture, especially when compared to the Germans.”\(^{60}\) This distinction, with its emphasis on farming practices, could not have been more timely.

On January 6 of 1731, Gordon laid before the Pennsylvania council a draft of a speech he had prepared for the House of Representatives. It addressed the state of Pennsylvania’s agriculture—most especially its production of flour and bread. Gordon’s message pushed for improving agricultural practices and proposed that “if besides such Measures as may render the Produce of our Grain more valuable & consequently bring it more into Demand” be found, that all encouragement must be applied so as to keep up Pennsylvania’s trade within the Empire.\(^{61}\) Two months later, Gordon’s report to the Board of Trade detailed the state of the province: Pennsylvania engaged in “no considerable trade” with foreign Plantations; its primary exports to the West Indies were “bread, flour, staves, butter, and some horses” in exchange for molasses, sugar, and rum; the produce of the colony and its “staple commodities” were “wheat and Indian corn for exportation,” “rye, barley, oats and buckwheat enough for home consumption,” and “wheat manufactured into flour and bread” for shipping to the Caribbean.\(^{62}\) Gordon’s portrayal

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60 Kenny, Peaceable Kingdom Lost, 31.
61 “At a Council held at Philadelphia,” 6 January 1731, Colonial Records of Pennsylvania, Vol. 3, 390-392. [Note: all dates have been updated to reflect the New Style Gregorian calendar.]
appears, for the most part, accurate. Unlike New England, Pennsylvania really did engage in far less trade with the French and Spanish West Indies, and wheat production increased steadily from 1730.

Gordon’s emphasis on Pennsylvania as a wheat-exporting colony hinted at another shift within the province: the decline of the fur trade. Despite a spate of regulations attempting to encourage fair trade, it became an unavoidable fact that immigrant settlers and squatters had helped to retard the pelt economy. A memorial from three prominent traders in Logan’s network—Edmund Cartlidge, Jonah Davenport, and Henry Baly—in 1730, complained to Patrick Gordon of “Severall new Traders” and “other Idle fellows Sott up for Trade,” who had cheated local Indians and set the established merchants out of “near two Thousand pounds worth of peltry.”

A series of examinations of Cartlidge, Davenport, and James LeTort the following year revealed another new threat to Pennsylvania’s Indian trade—one that would prove increasingly important to political discussions over the next few years. French traders from Montreal had increased their efforts amongst the Delawares, Shawnees, and Mingoes of Allegheny, and had begun to succeed in turning them towards French-preferential exchange.

The Pennsylvania fur trade was far from defunct, but even immediately after 1730, it would

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63 In 1730, nearly every recorded voyage to and from Philadelphia and the Caribbean was to Antigua, Barbados, Jamaica, and St. Kitts. Richard Pares, *Yankees and Creoles: The trade between North America and the West Indies before the American Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1956), 48-49. Pares gathered these statistics from the *Boston Weekly Newsletter*, 4 March 1730/1. If anything, the Boston newspaper would have been served to downplay New England trade with foreign islands, so this list is at least indicative of Pennsylvania’s comparative intra-imperial activity.

64 “Memorial on Trade with Indians, 1730,” *Pennsylvania Archives*: Series 1, Vol. 1, 261.

make up a significantly smaller portion of Pennsylvania’s exports through the end of the colonial period.  

Gordon’s emphasis on Pennsylvania as a wheat exporter, regardless of its intention, was also a politically savvy move. At the very same moment that Logan, Gordon, and the Penns revised Pennsylvania’s policies of immigrant settlement, other changes were also envisioned for the West Indies. The effects of these would reverberate across the Empire. 

The West Indian Sugar Lobby had grown substantially over the 1720s and secured close ties to Walpole and the establishment government. In early 1731, the petition of “several merchants, planters, and others, trading to, and interested in, his majesty’s sugar colonies in America,” was sent to Parliament. It postured itself amid concerns of the end of Anglo-French alliance, and posed the economic prosperity of the Sugar Islands as a matter of central geopolitical concern. Its solution, to bolster Britain’s Caribbean possessions, was to tightly regulate and restrict North American trade to the foreign West Indies. It specifically sought to prevent the exportation of provisions and stores to the French plantations—who were then encouraged in competition against the British islands—and whose economic prosperity threatened the very existence of the British Caribbean if conflict were ever to break out. The petition was read before the House of Commons on February 23, 1731 and referred to the

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66 Cutcliff, “Colonial Indian Policy as a Measure of Rising Imperialism,” Tables 1 and 2, pp. 240-44
67 “A petition of several merchants, planters, and others, trading to, and interested in, his majesty’s sugar colonies in America, in behalf of themselves, and many others, was presented to the House, and read; complaining, that divers of his Majesty’s subjects, residing within his dominions in America, and elsewhere, have of late years carried on a trade to the foreign sugar colonies in America, from whence they are supplied with sugar, rum, molasses, and their other productions, instead of those from our colonies, as well as with foreign European goods and manufactures, contrary to the intention of the laws in being, and the treaty, made with France in 1686; and, as this new method of trade increases and enriches the colonies of other nations, so it is injurious to the trade of this kingdom, and greatly impoverishes the British sugar colonies.” 23 February 1731, Journal of the House of Commons, XXI, 641-642.
consideration of the committee. A week later, it was ordered in the Commons that the
governments of Pennsylvania and New York should lay before the House a “list of the ships or
vessels” which entered and embarked from their respective ports, and “from and to what ports or
places in Europe and America, for the years 1715 and 1716, 1720 and 1721, 1728 and 1729.”

Then on March 22, less than a week after the Treaty of Vienna that officially ended the
Quadruple Alliance and began the long era of Anglo-Austrian alliance, Sir John Rushout began
the presentation of the committee’s findings. It detailed “extreme” abuses of trade between New
England and the French (and Spanish) West Indies to the detriment of Britain’s own colonies; it
presented foreign trade as illicit, and as contrary to diplomatic policies regarding France (and
Spain to a lesser extent). Presentations before the Commons featured prominent members of the
Sugar Lobby, who passionately argued that the sugar plantations were the most economically
important of all the Empire’s possessions. The memorialists represented some of Walpole’s
closest associates.

By March 1731, a period characterized by fear and anxiety over French activity—activity
in the West Indies, in Europe, and in North America—had begun. Those on every side of debate
would wield this fear and anxiety against political opponents. Fear and anxiety, however, would
also unite questions of British security and prosperity across the Empire’s wide geography as one
common concern.

Sugar and Settlers

Gordon’s report to the Board of Trade in March 1731 addressed the production and
exports of the colony and its interchange with the British West Indies. In its second half, Gordon

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68 5 March 1731, Journal of the House of Commons, XXI, 660.
69 22 March 1731, Journals of the House of Commons, 685-689.
turned his gaze beyond the incorporated Empire, answering the Board’s enquiries into “the strength of the neighbouring Indians” and of the claims of the French and Spanish empires upon British borders.70 When Gordon addressed the Pennsylvania Assembly that August, he again talked of West Indian trade and provincial agriculture, of Indian affairs and the necessity of a treaty with the Iroquois, of the regulation of rum, of French encroachment, and of broad British imperial prosperity as one cohesive address.71 From the perspective of Pennsylvania officials—just as they were to imperial ministers in London—these were intimately linked issues worthy of coherent presentation and confrontation.

Among such wide-ranging concerns, the most pressing during Gordon’s council with the Pennsylvania commissioners was the news of a sugar bill circulating in Parliament. Gordon presented Logan, Isaac Norris, Clement Plumsted, and the others with an abstract touching upon “the Application of the Sugar Islands to His Majesty in Council & the British Parliament for restraining the Trade of the Northern Colonies in America.” With it was also a letter from the newly appointed agent for Pennsylvania in London, Ferdinand John Paris, who detailed the strong support the bill enjoyed in Commons but lacked in the House of Lords.

In the speech that followed to the Pennsylvania Assembly, Gordon declared that the proposed bill and the West Indian sugar lobby behind it threatened to directly impact Pennsylvanian economies. Even as the trade of Pennsylvania “with any of the Forreign Sugar Islands [was] but inconsiderable with respect to that carried on” by the other North American colonies, the regulations could have an unforeseen affect on their “Staple Commodities,” bread

and flour. Gordon then referred the Representatives to the “publick papers” that contained accounts of both the West Indian trade and proposed bill, and asked that members of the assembly prepare “Representations in Behalf of this Country to be laid before His Majesty & the British Parliament” the coming fall.

The sugar debate had provoked a great number of petitions and representations to the Board of Trade and Parliament on behalf of British colonies in America and the West Indies, but the flurry of printed material to which Gordon alluded was truly staggering. Dozens of books and pamphlets published in 1731 addressed the sugar debate. Newsprints in London, and in New

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72 “I need not I hope observe to you of how great Importance this Affair is to the whole Continent of America & tho it may be thought that the Trade of this Place with any of the Forreign Sugar Islands is but inconsiderable with respect to that carried on by our Neighbours, yet when the immediate Consequences of such a Restraint are maturely considered it will be found that the General Trade of this Colony will be most deeply affected by it & the Inconveniences such as must be sensibly felt by all its Inhabitants, and especially the industrious Farmer, for it is evident that if our Neighbours are denied the Vent they have had for their Bread & Flour in the Forreign Colonies & be confined solely to our own the Price of our Staple Commodities will by means thereof be brought exceedingly low.” “At a Council held at Philadelphia,” 4 August 1731, Colonial Records of Pennsylvania, Vol. 1, 401-403.

73 Importance of the sugar colonies to Great-Britain stated: and some objections against the sugar colony bill answer'd : in a letter to a member of the House of Commons (London: Printed for J. Roberts, 1731); The Present State of the British Sugar Colonies Consider'd: In a Letter from a Gentleman of Barbadoes to his Friend in London (London, 1731); Remarks upon a Book, Entituled, The Present State of the Sugar Colonies consider'd (London, 1731); The Case of the British Northern Colonies, December 1731 (Unknown, 1731); A View of the Depredations and Ravages committed by the Spaniards on the British Trade and Navigation (London, 1731); Answers to all the Objections made to the Bill for Supporting the Sugar Colonies (N.p., [1731?]); The Case of the British Sugar-Colonies (N.p., [1731]); John Sharpe, The Case of the British Northern Colonies (N.p., [1731]); The Case of the Provinces of the Massachusetts-Bay and New Hampshire, and the Colonies of Rhoad-Island with Providence Plantations, and Connecticut in new England, with the Province of New Jersey, with Respect to the Bill now depending in the Honourable House of Commons, intituled, A Bill for the better securing and encouraging the Trade of His Majesty’s Sugar Colonies in America ([1731]); The Consequences of the Bill now depending in favour of the Sugar Colonies, impartially considered: In a Letter to a Worthy Member of the Honourable House of Commons, 1731 (N.p., 1731); Fayrer Hall, Considerations on the Bill now depending in Parliament, concerning the British Sugar-Colonies in America. Wherein all the Arguments for the Support of the said Bill are considered. In a Letter to a Member of Parliament (London, 1731); The Dispute between the Northern Colonies and the Sugar Islands, set in a Clear View (N.p., 1731); The Importance of the Sugar Colonies to Great Britain Stated, and some Objections against the Sugar Colony Bill answer’d. In a Letter to a Member of the House of Commons (London, 1731); A Short Answer to an Elaborate Pamphlet, entitled, The Importance of the Sugar Plantations, &c... Shewing, that the Bill now depending for Prohibiting the Commerce carried on between our Northern Colonies, and the foreign Sugar Plantations, tends to the impoverishing and ruin of those Colonies; the
York and Boston, boasted a continuous, seemingly unending supply of reports and opinions. In Philadelphia, the two Pennsylvanian newspapers, *The American Mercury* and *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, each devoted at least one item related to the West Indian sugar trade debates to every issue that summer.74 Printers up and down the eastern seaboard and across the British Isles propelled a pamphlet war obsessed with the relations between the “Northern” (or North American) and “Sugar” (or West Indian) colonies, and of their relations to the imperial ministry.

The debate fissured into two main camps—one purporting to be representative of the Northern Colonies, and the other of the Sugar Islands. Major internal differences between the New England provinces, New York and Pennsylvania, and Maryland, Virginia, and the Carolinas, were obfuscated in the prints, in large part owing to their authorship: the overwhelming majority of “Northern” memorials that actually originated in North America came from within New England.75 But in spite of the regional identities—Northern versus West Indian—the literature fashioned, the two sides of the debate truly came down along more political lines: the Walpoleon establishment, which was tied to the sugar interest, and the largely Patriot Whig opposition championing the New England cause.

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74 For the *American Mercury*, see issues between 17-24 June 1731 and 19-26 August 1731. For the *Pennsylvania Gazette*, see issues between 24 June 1731 and 2 September 1731.

75 In fact, a great many of the “Northern” pamphlets were published in London. Some were the work of colonial agents, but others still were authored by politicians and merchants invested in the foreign trade the Northern cause championed.
By the time news of the sugar bill reached Pennsylvania in 1731, months had passed since the House of Lords struck the bill down. But petitions in support of the West Indian interest still streamed into London, and when the renewed *Act for the better securing and encouraging of His Majesties Sugar Colonies in America* was introduced in early 1732, it received additional support from West Indian merchants, creditors, and affiliated members of Parliament.76

New prints and copies of petitions also streamed into Philadelphia, where Logan and Gordon adapted the Pennsylvanian response.77 Ferdinand John Paris, the new agent in London, refashioned the Pennsylvania presentation in his own manner, promoting the province as “one of the Bread Colonies,” a proposed ancillary to the Sugar Colony bloc.78

By December, the Pennsylvania petition to the King was complete. It coopted the major arguments of the sugar interest in two key ways: first, by arguing that the active promotion of Pennsylvania’s own valuable colonial staple (wheat, rather than sugar) would most positively

76 “Representation of the General Assembly of Barbados to the Council of Trade and Plantations,” 27 August 1731, CO 28/22, ff. 132-133v, PRO. See also enclosures in “Council of Trade to the Duke of Newcastle,” 10 February 1732, CO 5/4, Nos. 49, 49 i.-xxv, PRO:

Enclosure 4, “Representation of […] St. Christophers to the Council of Trade,” 24 September 1731; Enclosure 6, “Reply to the preceding […] on behalf of the Leeward Islands and Jamaica”; Enclosure 7, “Reply […] on behalf of Barbados”; Enclosure 16, “The Case of the British Sugar Colonies” [printed]; Enclosure 17, “Answered to all the objections made to the Bill for supporting the Sugar Colonies” [printed]; Enclosure 18: “Capt. Fayrer Hall’s Evidence before a Committee of the House of Commons” [printed]; Enclosure 19, “Representation of the Assembly of Barbados,” 27 August 1731; Enclosure 20, “Representation of Lt. Governor, Council, and Assembly of Antigua,” Enclosure 22, “Representative of Command in Chief of the Leeward Islands.”

77 On November 24, 1731, the House of Representatives addressed Gordon to declare: “we are fully convinced that if such an Act of Parliament as is pray’d for by the inhabitants of the Sugar Islands should pass, it would be of very ill consequences not only to his Majesty’s Northern Colonies in America, but also to the trade of Great Britain itself. […] We cannot be without just apprehension of the daily encroachments of the French, as well upon our own frontiers, and our Indians, as those of our neighbouring Colonies. This danger no seems very eminent, and tho’ we have not the means in our hands to prevent it.” On November 25, the House desired the Governor to appoint a committee from the council to confer with the Committee of the House and prepare the addresses for the King and both Houses of Parliament. Gordon appointed Logan, along with Isaac Norris & Clement Plumsted, for that purpose. *Colonial Records of Pennsylvania*, 420-422.

78 “[? Mr. Paris] to the Council of Trade and Plantations,” CO 5/1268, ff. 31-32v, PRO.
increase the wealth and money supplies of the Empire; second, by invoking the same fear of French expansionism (in North America, rather than the Caribbean) as a threat to the entirety of the Atlantic imperial project. By the proprietary government’s account, the Sugar Bill promised to not only “decay” British trade, but would “expose [Pennsylvania] to the great Dangers” of a French Empire that already “surrounded” the mid-Atlantic colonies. If the bill should pass, the whole of British North America would fall “Easy prey” to the “Powerfull and watchfull Neighbours the French who now surround us and appear bent on enlarging their Dominions.”

The Pennsylvania petition to the King and Parliament was sent to London along with one more important testament of the provincial interest, Gordon’s letter to the Board of Trade. In it, the Deputy Governor described a growing French threat in the American Interior, a territorial incursion into the Ohio and Mississippi Valleys on the edges of British possessions. “These encroachments, and the daily acquisition of new strength thereby to the French interest, together with their practices on our Indians,” Gordon concluded, “deserve the serious attention or your Right Honble. Board.” Enclosed were the examinations of Indian traders and the minutes of the commissioners of Indian Affairs, all which Gordon (and Logan) hoped would orient ministerial policy towards protecting North American interests. The Pennsylvania response, particularly by comparison to the petitions of its northern neighbors, understood the economic rationale and rhetoric of the prevailing imperial government. Rather than adopt the oppositional arguments—the Patriot petitions in favor of freer trade, of colonial manufacturing, of economic

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81 Also see the copies of the enclosures held by the Hardwick in the British Library for contemporary notes and marginalia. Hardwicke Papers, Add MS 35909, f.43, 44, 45, 46-47, 48-49, The British Library.
diversification—Logan and Gordon fit Pennsylvania into the more conservative schema, even while opposing its bill.

As Logan and Gordon looked eastward to London and the West Indies, they also turned westward towards the edges of Pennsylvania. Tulpehocken, the contested town to which the Schoharie Palatines had emigrated first in 1723, and whose continued contestation had provoked talks with Sassoonan and other Unami Delaware in 1728, was sold to the proprietors in August of 1731. Messages to the Iroquois were sent off in the same period, requesting a conference the following year.

In March of 1732 the renewed Sugar Bill reached the House of Commons. It garnered 110 yeas, with Martin Bladen as the affirmative teller. The noes totaled only 37, with James Oglethorpe—one of the most visible oppositional Tories—as the teller. But once again, the bill was struck down once it reached the House of Lords. A few months later, across the Atlantic, another massive wave of Palatines disembarked in Pennsylvania. Thomas Penn arrived in Philadelphia amongst the throngs in August of 1732, ending the fourteen-year period of proprietor absence. Within the week, Penn joined Logan and others at the Iroquois conference. And before the end of the year, Penn would unearth the “treaty” he would use to validate the most dramatic affront to the initial holy experiment.

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82 Merritt, *At the Crossroads*, 41-42.
83 It is important to remember that Bladen was also one of the key supporters of the Nova Scotia settlement scheme, and a close associate of Walpole.
85 *Journal of the House of Lords*, Volume 24, 64-98.
86 11 ships carried 2,133 German immigrants to Pennsylvania. With the exception of 1738, it was the largest single-year migration. Wokeck, *Trade in Strangers*, 40, 45.
87 “Six days after Penn’s arrival in Pennsylvania, representatives of three of the Iroquois nations came to visit him in Philadelphia. Conrad Weiser and the Oneida leader Shikellamy were ‘appointed as fit & proper Persons to goe between the Six Nations & this government, & to be employed in all Transactions with one another.’” Kenny, *Peaceable Kingdom*, 44; Jennings, *Ambiguous Empire*, 314-316.
88 Richter, *Trade, Land, Power*, 166.
By 1732, there was no question that Logan—along with the Penns and Gordon—had rewritten Pennsylvania’s land and settlement schemes. His hand was, to an extent, forced; however, it was not in the manner that the literature commonly portrays it. It was not by a mob of land-hungry immigrants, but rather by British imperial ministers who encouraged massive immigration to the colonies, British policies that threw Ireland into economic crisis, British sugar lobbyists who provoked the West Indian trade debates, British diplomatic affairs that ended the French alliance, British economic visions that privileged territorial acquisition. It was also forces French and Spanish, West Indian, and even Marylander and New Yorker.  

The third Sugar Bill, by then referred to as the Molasses Act, finally did pass both Houses in 1733. That same year, the outbreak of the War of Polish Succession renewed fears of French military operations in Europe, serving to inflame new suspicions of French American operations. Both events helped to cement the shift towards agricultural settlement. As in 1729 and 1730—after the failed petitions to curb the influx of immigration—Logan and others seemed resigned to adapt to imperial policy.

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89 Another perspective on Pennsylvania’s land settlement schemes during this period turns to the Maryland-Pennsylvania border dispute and the Conojocular War. For a detailed analysis of this dispute and Cresap’s War, see: Patrick Kehoe Spero, “Creating Pennsylvania: The Politics of the Frontier and the State, 1682-1800” (PhD Dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 2009), 116-164.


91 Wheat would continue to grow as an export, just as land settlement would expand. Despite some “fluctuations, exports of wheat, flour and flaxseed from Philadelphia rose more than 50 per cent per capita between 1731 and the middle 1760s.” Lemon, Best Poor Man’s Country, 219-220. Pennsylvania’s wheat productions would eventually be sent to Southern Europe—far from the West Indies—that had little impact on how the market and policies were envisioned in the early 1730s.
Beyond Pennsylvania’s borders, an increasingly slave-centered, territorial empire had emerged. It was never a foregone conclusion that Pennsylvania would expand in the manner it did, or that its policies would encourage large-scale settlement—just as it was never a foregone conclusion that a Whig government would come to embrace what had seemed the very antithesis of its early politics: sugar monoculture and territorial acquisition. But the forces of a conservative-turning ministry, and the political pressures exerted by lobbies elsewhere in the Empire, had a profound effect on seemingly internal Pennsylvania affairs.

In many ways, Pennsylvania and Pennsylvania officials were pushed and molded by outside forces over which they had only limited control. That does not suggest that we should address issues like Pennsylvanian immigration and trade in purely reactive terms. Instead, we need to look outward, to reconstruct the peoples, institutions, policies, and other forces that propelled migrations, that coerced the balance of trade, that subordinated North American markets, that authored and published economic tracts. In the 1720s and 1730s, these were active debates and decisions and policies. And they were debates and decisions and policies that involved more than just the British Empire, but the larger balance of power in Europe and the Atlantic.92

To look for explanations of Pennsylvania’s radical turn beyond provincial borders is not to justify or explain away the false deed wielded by the Penns and Logan to legitimize the treaty in 1737. Nor is it to excuse the misdeeds on the walk itself and the outrages upon the

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92 Anglo-French tensions would reach their breaking point in the mid-century. The British imperial institutional apparatus—the Board of Trade, the Navy, the War Office, the Treasury Office—would also exert far greater influence over North American affairs starting with the Seven Years’ War. Nonetheless, to paint the mid-century as a sudden and dramatic polar shift would be a mistake. While perhaps exerting influence of lesser magnitude than at the height of the 1750s-70s, imperial concerns and political economic threads connected Pennsylvania to other colonial states, and to Britain, in important ways that have been largely overlooked.
Pennsylvania frontiers in the decades that followed. Individual and localized actions still mattered. But the constraints of their circumstances did too. By the time the proprietors and Logan used “their own versions of the past” to dispossess the Lenni Lenape in the Walking Purchase, the transformation of the establishment government and dominant Whig regime was complete: from the professors of trade and manufactures, to the defenders of slave plantations and territorial acquisition. Pennsylvanian frontier policy mapped onto the broader shift of its time.

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93 Merritt, *At the Crossroads*, 46.