

Victory at Kittanning? Reevaluating the Impact of Armstrong's Raid on the Seven Years' War in Pennsylvania

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Victory at Kittanning? Reevaluating the Impact of Armstrong's Raid on the Seven Years' War in Pennsylvania

N SEPTEMBER 8, 1756, Lieutenant Colonel John Armstrong led 307 men from the Second Battalion of the Pennsylvania Regiment in a daring raid against Kittanning, an important Delaware Indian village situated along the Allegheny River approximately forty miles upriver from the forks of the Ohio. During a fierce engagement, Armstrong's force burned the eastern portion of Kittanning and several surrounding cornfields, destroyed a significant cache of gunpowder and ammunition, and killed several Delaware warriors, including the notorious war leader Captain Jacobs. The assault was hailed as a grand success by Pennsylvania authorities and Armstrong was honored as a conquering hero, yet 250 years later, historians are uncertain what to make of the attack on Kittanning. For example, Fred Anderson's magisterial Crucible of War, widely hailed as the definitive account of the Seven Years' War in North America, notes that Armstrong's raid was "the only successful Anglo-American offensive to be mounted in America in 1756," but in the same breath concedes that the alleged victory "cost the Pennsylvanians more lives than it took and probably aggravated the

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situation on the province's frontier."1

Even among those accounts that offer a more definitive take of the importance of Armstrong's raid, there is no consensus of opinion. Favorable interpretations conclude that the raid on Kittanning was "a measured success," whose significance is not found in the battle itself, but rather in its impact upon the Seven Years' War in Pennsylvania. One avenue of reasoning along this line of thought emphasizes that the success of the Kittanning raid lies "in its effect upon the people of the province," because in the aftermath of the attack "the Indians' confidence was badly shaken and they did not resume their warfare with the old vigor and effectiveness."2 One variation even asserts that "the Kittanning raid had a lasting effect on the Delawares" and credits Armstrong's attack as directly responsible for the emergence of a political faction among the Delawares, led by Tamagua (the Beaver), that sought to make peace with the British and their colonists.³ A related contention, although one that does not emphasize the impact upon the province's native enemies, suggests that the attack on Kittanning did "immediately raise the morale of the Pennsylvania backcountry," which in effect ultimately provided "a clear victory for British America in general and for the Commonwealth in particular." This argument rests upon the interpretive foundation that Armstrong's raid "for morale purposes . . . was a tremendous success, boosting spirits throughout the frontier."4 The Kittanning raid is not

- ¹ Fred Anderson, Crucible of War: The Seven Years' War and the Fate of Empire in British North America, 1754–1766 (New York, 2000), 163. Anderson devotes only two paragraphs among the book's 746 pages of text to Armstrong's campaign and its aftermath, despite his lead-in assertion that the raid was the only successful military endeavor of 1756 mounted by the British or their colonists.
- ² William A. Hunter, "Victory at Kittanning," *Pennsylvania History* 23 (1956): 405–7. Hunter, a historian with the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, began the modern debate fifty years ago during the two hundredth anniversary of Armstrong's Raid. His article provides a fairly balanced account of the raid and its aftermath, although his final assertions seem to run astray of his own admission that "the attack on Kittanning, as our informants describe it, and the immediately subsequent incidents on the frontier and in Indian country, as we have traced them, may seem an inadequate basis for the common interpretation of the expedition as great victory."
- ³ Michael N. McConnell, A Country Between: The Upper Ohio Valley and Its Peoples, 1724–1774 (Lincoln, NE, 1992), 126. McConnell asserts that "the Pennsylvanians' success, which included the killing of Captain Jacobs, stunned the Indians" and suggests that the Delawares were unable to recover militarily after the raid on Kittanning.
- ⁴ James P. Myers Jr., "Pennsylvania's Awakening: The Kittanning Raid of 1756," Pennsylvania History 66 (1999): 399; Samuel J. Newland, The Pennsylvania Militia: Defending the Commonwealth and the Nation, 1669–1870 (Annville, PA, 2002), 84. Myers and Newland both qualify their conclusions: "the expedition's ultimate military achievement remains a subject of some debate" (Myers); and "the raid by no means meant the end of the Delaware threat in western

without its critics, although they are fewer in number and more restrained in their assertions. Detractors tend to reverse the assertions of Kittanning's supporters, arguing that "the attack set Kittanning's residents to flight and the townsite was abandoned, but the raids against Pennsylvania only grew worse." However, they support their central assertion that the raid "only served to strengthen Indian morale" and that "long term futility of the punitive expedition soon became evident" with very little direct evidence. More convincing are criticisms of the military side of the battle at Kittanning, which stress that "the Kittanning expedition . . . proved that the colonies remained incapable of undertaking serious offensive measures against the Indians."

Thus, while the raid on Kittanning continues to be heralded in popular culture and memory as an important and glorious aspect of the Pennsylvania experience during the Seven Years' War, historians remain divided over its significance. Many questions remain unanswered or underexamined. Was Armstrong's raid an important military accomplishment, as its proponents suggest, or was it only "a Phyrric victory," proof positive despite its popularly that Pennsylvania was "unable to wage war effectively?"8 More importantly, what impact did the attack on Kittanning have on the course of the Seven Years' War in Pennsylvania? Did the raid in fact blunt Delaware attacks against the Pennsylvania frontier and give rise to a peace faction, or did the attack lead to even greater levels of violence and destruction? And did Armstrong's attack buov the fighting spirit of Pennsylvania and spur the colony's frontier residents to a more vigorous defense of their homes and property, or was the attack only a minor detour on Pennsylvania's tumultuous road of discord and despair?

This essay reexamines not only the Kittanning campaign itself, but also the events and conditions that preceded and followed the attack. Placed within the larger context of the Seven Years' War in Pennsylvania,

Pennsylvania" (Newland). Neither author, however, allows these considerations to sway his opinion about the Kittanning raid's uplifting effect on Pennsylvania's frontier population.

⁵ Eric Hinderaker, Elusive Empires: Constructing Colonialism in the Ohio Valley, 1673–1800 (New York, 1997), 142

⁶ J. Martin West, ed., War for Empire in Western Pennsylvania (Ligonier, PA, 1993), 41; Stephen F. Auth, The Ten Years' War: Indian-White Relations in Pennsylvania, 1755–1765 (New York, 1989), 37.

⁷ Matthew C. Ward, Breaking the Backcountry: The Seven Years' War in Virginia and Pennsylvania, 1754–1765 (Pittsburgh, 2003), 107.

⁸ Ward, Breaking the Backcountry, 107.

Armstrong's raid on Kittanning cannot be considered a victory on any meaningful level. A balanced examination of the battle of Kittanning. based on accounts from Armstrong, his men, captives, traders, and French observers, reveals that the attack failed to achieve several key objectives. including the redemption of nearly one hundred prisoners held at Kittanning and the destruction of the Delawares' military capacity. Indeed. statistical analysis of the raids against the Pennsylvania frontier during the war demonstrates that Delaware military activities actually increased after the Kittanning raid, contrary to the assertions of many historians who contend that the attack seriously undermined the Delawares' ability to wage war against Pennsylvania. Nor can the attack on Kittanning be credited with forcing a dramatic political shift toward peace among the Delawares, since there appears to have been a small but sustainable peace faction active within Delaware society from the inception of the war. Moreover, there is no evidence that Armstrong's raid produced an upsurge in enthusiasm or hope among Pennsylvania's badly beleaguered frontier population, as the backcountry continued to endure attacks after the raid and increasingly came to vent its frustration and anger not at enemy Indians, but rather at colonial authorities and British soldiers whom the frontier populace held accountable for their suffering.

To adequately position the Kittanning raid within the larger context of the Seven Years' War in Pennsylvania, it is first necessary to examine the events that led up to the attack. As is well known, in the wake of General Edward Braddock's disastrous defeat in June 1755, native war parties aggressively raided settlements along the Pennsylvania frontier. Especially active in these attacks were the Algonquian-speaking peoples living along the Allegheny and upper Ohio River watersheds, referred to here as the western Delaware Indians to differentiate them from Delaware groups still situated along the Susquehanna River. Displaced by the colonization of eastern Pennsylvania over the first half of the eighteenth century, many Delawares peacefully negotiated the transfer of their lands and migrated to the Susquehanna River region. However, some Delaware groups, seeking a greater measure of stability and security, began moving further west as early as the 1720s. Traveling in families and small groups, the migrants left behind familiar homes and lives and crossed the mountains to settle along the Allegheny River, where they sought to rebuild their communities far from Pennsylvania's colonists. As the westward migration continued through the 1730s and into the 1740s, the center of the Delawares' new

world became Kittanning, whose name translates as "at the great stream." Kittanning was not a single village, but rather a cluster of small settlements that dotted either side of the Alleghenv River some forty miles upstream from the confluence of the Allegheny and Monongahela rivers (modern Pittsburgh). As early as 1731, a pair of traders named Davenport and LeTort reported that there were fifty families of Delawares at Kittanning, and by 1755 estimates placed the total population of the settlement between three and four hundred, including men, women, and children, scattered among seven distinct clusters of lodges. Although Kittanning was the western Delawares' largest settlement, their population was not concentrated there. Along the Allegheny River and its tributaries, the Delawares spread out and established numerous smaller settlements, including important centers at Kuskuskies (modern New Castle) on the Shenango River, Saucunk (modern Beaver Falls) on the lower Beaver River, and Venango (modern Franklin) at the confluence of the Alleghenv River and French Creek. It is difficult to estimate the total population of the western Delawares on the eve of the Seven Years' War, but Pennsylvania traders guessed that the western Delawares could muster upwards of five hundred fighting men from their various towns and villages, a number that marks the Delaware presence in western Pennsylvania as quite formidable.9

The western Delawares soon learned, however, that they had not completely isolated themselves from the pressures and plagues that accompanied European colonization. Colonial explorers and traders followed the Delawares west to Kittanning, where they were often welcomed by Delaware leaders who sought to maintain vital economic ties to European manufactured products. But even as the western Delawares strove to maintain their commercial relationships with eastern suppliers, colonial traders looked beyond the Allegheny region to the vastness of the Ohio Country. The numbers of traders west of the Appalachian Mountains increased rapidly, and by the mid-1740s interest in the forks of the Ohio River brought land speculators, such as the Ohio Country of Virginia, and the first white settlers to the region. In addition, escalating English interest in the Ohio Country soon attracted French officials in Canada, who sought to protect their lucrative trading interests in the

⁹ Pennsylvania Archives, 9 ser., 120 vols. (Philadelphia and Harrisburg, 1852–1935), 1st ser., 1:299, 301–2; McConnell, Country Between, 5–26; Daniel P. Barr, "A Road for Warriors': The Western Delawares and the Seven Years' War," Pennsylvania History 73 (2006): 3–5.

region. Thus, within a generation of their removal from the Susquehanna region, the western Delawares again found themselves in occupation of contested ground. However, if speculators and settlers expected the western Delawares to passively cede territory along the Allegheny, as their predecessors had done in eastern Pennsylvania, they quickly discovered that these Delawares had a far different mindset. Embittered by their experience of removal from eastern Pennsylvania and emboldened by their disdain for Pennsylvania colonial authorities and accommodating eastern Delaware leaders, the western Delawares had collectively forged a determination to protect their new homelands and resist further migration to the west. The Delaware position was clear and precise: traders and the commerce they represented were welcome, speculators and settlers were not.¹⁰

As the pace of events accelerated toward war in the early 1750s, the western Delawares found their position increasingly hard to maintain. The French invasion of the Allegheny watershed in 1753, intended to block British intrusion in the Ohio Country and intimidate interior native nations into maintaining economic fidelity with France, was a major blow. Divisions quickly emerged within western Delaware political circles. Delawares whose villages lay along the French invasion route counseled accommodation, if only temporary, with the French. Other Delaware leaders, whose villages were perhaps more insulated from the direct French threat along the Allegheny River, advocated striking the French before they could consolidate their presence in the region. Still others hoped that diplomacy might resolve the crisis. Western Delaware leaders faced a difficult choice, one that seemingly would involve them in a war on one side or another.

Traditionally, Delaware society did not function as a political nation, but instead village and regional leaders made key decisions. Yet during this time of crisis, Shingas, an important spokesman whom Pennsylvania authorities referred to as king of the western Delawares, seems to have wielded considerable influence. A nephew of the former eastern Delaware king Allumapees (Sassoonan), Shingas had migrated west in the 1740s after the Pennsylvania government refused to recognize his older brother Pisquetomen as the rightful successor to Allumapees. In 1752 Shingas was named king of the western Delawares by Tanaghrisson, a Seneca who

¹⁰ McConnell, Country Between, 5–46; William A. Hunter, "Traders on the Ohio: 1730," Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine 35 (1952): 85–89; Paul A. W. Wallace, Indians in Pennsylvania, rev. ed. (Harrisburg, 1993), 108–41; Barr, "Road for Warriors," 5–13.

served as half-king, or viceroy, over the Iroquois League's supposedly dependent peoples living in the Allegheny region. The measure likely was in reaction to the authority and prestige already vested in Shingas among the western Delawares, but after the half-king's pronouncement colonial authorities recognized Shingas as a man of considerable importance along the Alleghenv frontier. Initially opposed to an alliance with the French, Shingas sought instead to reach an accord with the British. In June 1755. Shingas led a Delaware military delegation to Cumberland, Maryland, to negotiate with Major General Edward Braddock, whose formidable army was slowly advancing toward a showdown with the French for possession of the Ohio Country. Shingas hoped to parlay Delaware military assistance against the French into a British promise to guarantee Delaware territorial claims in western Pennsylvania. But negotiations fell apart after Braddock informed Shingas that he intended to see western Delaware lands incorporated into the British colonies. Enraged by Braddock's arrogant assertion that "no savage shall inherit the land," Shingas and his warriors withdrew from the British camp, but not before warning Braddock that "if they might not have liberty to live on the land, they would not fight for it." There would be no alliance between the Delawares and the British. 11

Caught between two colliding European imperial powers, the western Delawares chose to wait and watch. But after Braddock's disastrous defeat at the hands of the French and their Great Lakes Indian allies, the Delawares saw little alternative but to seek accommodation with the victorious French. Many Delawares considered the French as much of a threat to their security as the land-hungry British colonials, but Braddock's imperious proclamation severely undermined support for further negotiations with the British. Delaware leaders believed they could overcome the French in time, and they feared that British victory at the forks of the Ohio would have disastrous consequences for their communities in the region. Thus, the Delawares entered into an uneasy alliance with the French and embarked upon a parallel war with the shared objective of keeping the British and their colonists out of the Ohio Country. Once that goal was accomplished, the Delawares believed that "we may do afterwards what we please with the French, for we have [them] as it

¹¹ Samuel Hazard, ed., *The Colonial Records of Pennsylvania*, 16 vols. (Harrisburg, 1838–53), 6:398–99; Beverly W. Bond Jr., ed., "The Captivity of Charles Stuart, 1755–57," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 13 (1926–27): 63–64; Sylvester K. Stevens and Donald H. Kent, eds., *Wilderness Chronicles of Northwestern Pennsylvania* (Harrisburg, 1941), 47; Barr, "Road for Warriors," 14–19.

were in a sheep den, and may cut them [off] any time." The Delaware spokesman Ackowanothic laid bare his peoples' intentions: the western Delawares cultivated the French alliance in order to defeat the British, who were "such a numerous people," but all the while he maintained "we can drive away the French when we please." 12

While their immediate objectives paralleled those of the French, the western Delawares recognized that military might alone was unlikely to permanently restrain the multitudes of Pennsylvania settlers from pouring over the mountains. Remembering the Pennsylvania government's fondness for contracts and treaties—the 1737 Walking Purchase fraud still evoked deep bitterness—western Delaware leaders waged war with an eve to their peoples' future. Central to their military strategy was a desire to obtain a political settlement from the Pennsylvania government that would guarantee Delaware land claims in the Allegheny Valley. The Delawares understood that such concessions could be obtained through the focused application of war, and their subsequent actions during the conflict display a clear intention to utilize warfare as a leveraging tool to obtain the political outcome they desired. In short, the western Delawares sought to terrorize Pennsylvania into negotiating a formal treaty that would protect Delaware lands against all future colonial encroachments. To accomplish this objective, Delaware war parties targeted the frontier population of Pennsylvania, the very people who inhabited what was once Delaware land and who would pour over the mountains into the Allegheny region if not sufficiently convinced to remain where they were. By unleashing widespread destruction along the frontier, the western Delawares hoped to compel Pennsylvania officials to seek peace in order to halt the suffering of the backcountry population.¹³

¹² Pennsylvania Archives, 1st ser., 3:147; Colonial Records of Pennsylvania, 6:588–89, 659, 683; Bond, ed., "Captivity of Charles Stuart," 63–64; "Deposition of John Craig," Penn Manuscripts: Indian Affairs, 2:78, Historical Society of Pennsylvania; E. B. O'Callaghan, ed., Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York (Albany, NY, 1857), 10:423; James Sullivan, et al., eds., The Papers of Sir William Johnson, 14 vols. (Albany, NY, 1921–65), 2:439; Reuben Gold Thwaites, ed., Early Western Journals, 1748–1765 (Lewisburg, PA, 1998), 85–87; Paul A. W. Wallace, Conrad Weiser, 1696–1760: Friend of Colonist and Mohawk (Philadelphia, 1945), 530; McConnell, Country Between, 119–21; Matthew C. Ward, "Fighting the 'Old Women': Indian Strategy on the Virginia and Pennsylvania Frontier, 1754–1758," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography 103 (1995): 300–301.

¹³ Daniel P. Barr, "'This Land is Ours and Not Yours': The Western Delawares and the Seven Years' War in the Upper Ohio Valley, 1755–1758," in *The Boundaries Between Us: Natives and Newcomers along the Frontiers of the Old Northwest Territory, 1750–1850*, ed. Barr (Kent, OH, 2006), 25–40.

While some French officials recognized that the Delawares were following their own course in the war, the attacks coincided rather neatly with French military designs to block the expansion of the British colonies into the Ohio Country. Indeed, Governor Vaudreuil of New France believed that "nothing is more calculated to disgust the people of those colonies and to make them desire the return of peace," and he thus instructed his military commanders to provide western Delaware warriors with the weapons and ammunition they needed to attack the Pennsylvania frontier. But the French-Delaware accord was no more than an alliance of mutual convenience in which each side used the other to further its own agenda.¹⁴

The isolation of backcountry farms and scant defenses along the Pennsylvania frontier afforded Delaware parties with easy, accessible targets. Throughout the years of conflict, which stretched from the summer of 1755 to the fall of 1758, western Delaware warriors seized upon the vulnerable state of the Pennsylvania frontier to devastate backcountry settlements. They took hundreds of women and children as captives, looted and ransacked farms and homesteads, and slaughtered or led off livestock to western Delaware villages. Moreover, Delaware warriors employed terror tactics long associated with European conventions of warfare. They often mutilated the bodies of dead settlers and then left them prominently displayed for other residents to discover. At Penn's Creek in October 1755, Delaware warriors roasted the lower half of a man and then arranged his body in a sitting position with two tomahawks protruding from his head. A woman was found with her breasts cut off and propped up by a long stake that had been driven through her body. Such mutilations were part of a psychological terror campaign designed to intimidate and dishearten the Pennsylvanians, not at all unlike the tactics employed by the English colonists during wars against native peoples in Virginia and New England. 15

The objective of the attacks was to create such suffering and fear along the frontier that the backcountry population would pressure the

¹⁴ Sullivan et al., eds., *Papers of Sir William Johnson*, 10:413; Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empire, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region*, 1650–1815 (Cambridge, 1991), 244; Ward, "Fighting the 'Old Women," 299–300.

¹⁵ Pennsylvania Archives, 1st ser., 3:633; C. Hale Sipe, The Indian Wars of Pennsylvania, 2nd ed. (Harrisburg, 1931), 204–16; Ward, "Fighting the 'Old Women," 308–9. For reports of the various Indian raids against the Pennsylvania frontier, see volumes 6–7 of the Colonial Records of Pennsylvania, the June 1755–October 1758 issues of the Pennsylvania Gazette, and Sipe, Indian Wars of Pennsylvania, 230–303.

Pennsylvania government to make peace. In this regard, the western Delawares were aided by the failure of Pennsylvania authorities to stem the onslaught. The Pennsylvania government struggled to defend the frontier against Indian warriors who, according to one observer, "lurk in the woods until they have an opportunity of surprising unguarded settlers." As western Delaware warriors devastated the backcountry, terror and paranoia gripped entire communities. "You cannot form no just idea of the distressed and distracted condition of our out inhabitants," commented one local official, "unless your eyes [have] seen and your ears heard their cries." Indeed, frontier residents testified to their reluctance to venture outside of their homes or tend to their fields lest they be caught unaware by "Shingas the terrible." One beleaguered victim, who had just experienced a raid, informed his father that "I'm in so much horror and confusion I scarce know what I am writing." Not surprisingly, backcountry inhabitants fled by the thousands as the frontier rapidly retreated eastward under the strain of Delaware raids. Pennsylvania officials were horrified to learn that large stretches of the frontier "have been entirely deserted . . . [and] the houses and improvements reduced to ashes." In York County, where there had been "three thousand men fit to bear arms" prior to the war, by late 1756 "they did not now amount to one hundred." Although likely an exaggeration, such reports attest to the desperate situation on the Pennsylvania frontier, where the populations of the western counties dropped significantly as settlers fled up to one hundred or more miles east to escape the attacks. 16

The Pennsylvania government was befuddled by the western Delaware onslaught. Provincial authorities recognized the severity of the situation, but seemed incapable of taking any meaningful action. Political divisions in the Pennsylvania Assembly handicapped efforts to facilitate frontier defense, as the war divided men of power and influence who could not agree on how best to respond to the western Delawares' aggression or come to terms about how public defenses should be financed. The Pennsylvania Assembly was wracked by internal discord between Quakers, who controlled a majority of seats in the assembly; the governor and a proprietary party in the assembly, who defended the Penn family's lands against taxation; and a growing antiproprietary faction headed by Benjamin Franklin, who was committed to defending Pennsylvania's

¹⁶ Colonial Records of Pennsylvania, 6:705, 767–68; Report of the Commission to Locate the Site of the Frontier Forts of Pennsylvania ([Harrisburg], 1896), 1:610. For an excellent overview of the raids and their effect on Pennsylvania society, see Ward, Breaking the Backcountry, 36–90.

frontier but sought to force the Penns to pay their fair share for defense. The necessities of the war and the machinations of Thomas Penn and his supporters forced many Quakers out of the assembly in 1756, but they remained influential and active in many circles of power. Moreover, the vacuum left by the Quakers' departure from the assembly was quickly filled by Franklin and the antiproprietary faction, who held up numerous funding bills earmarked for defense until Governor William Denny reluctantly betrayed his masters in the Penn family and committed proprietary funds to the war effort. Even with a tense agreement on funding in place, all three major political factions in Pennsylvania continued to use the war as an opportunity to destroy one another, leaving defense of the frontier on a very poor footing.¹⁷

In addition, the colony was woefully unprepared militarily to meet the challenges posed by the war. Pennsylvania had no laws providing for the raising of troops or even for the formation of militia for defense. With the withdrawal of many Quakers from political office in 1756, Pennsylvania finally raised a volunteer provincial regiment, but it was hardly an effective fighting force. The regiment was badly undermanned, and those volunteers who did serve in the regiment came from the lesser elements of society—landless tenants, poor artisans, debtors, recent immigrants, or in some cases, indentured servants—who enlisted not out of patriotic zeal or a desire to assist their beleaguered border brethren, but rather because paid military service represented an improvement, however slight, over their present condition. Yet they were seldom paid, owing in part to the continuing invective debates in the assembly over revenue, and many provincial soldiers deserted. Early efforts to enforce discipline, including the adoption of the British army's Mutiny Act, a harsh code of punishment that carried the death penalty for desertion, were scuttled by the government. political battles dominating the Pennsylvania Antiproprietary factions in the assembly feared that adoption of the Mutiny Act might lead to the creation of a conscripted, formal army that could provide an advantage to proprietary interests, who might gain control over the military and utilize it as a police force to suppress political dissent in the province.18

¹⁷ Francis Jennings, Empire of Fortune: Crowns, Colonies, and Tribes in the Seven Years' War in America (New York, 1988), 223–43; Ward, Breaking the Backcountry, 125–29.

¹⁸ R. S. Stephenson, "Pennsylvania Provincial Soldiers in the Seven Years' War," *Pennsylvania History* 62 (1995): 196–212; Matthew C. Ward, "An Army of Servants: The Pennsylvania Regiment during the Seven Years' War," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 119 (1995): 75–93;

Financial and military difficulties prevented Pennsylvania from retaliating directly against the western Delawares for much of the war. Instead the colony's leaders adopted a defensive posture, putting their faith in the erection of forts along the frontier, believing they would provide a barrier against the raids. The multitude of structures built in the colony during the war varied wildly in design and form. There were a few substantial earth and log forts, such as Fort Augusta on the Susquehanna River, but most were small wooden county forts or individual private forts, which were little more than stockaded homesteads. Frontiersmen-turnedsoldiers garrisoned most of the forts. There were too few provincial soldiers to sufficiently man the posts, forcing backcountry residents to look after their own defense. Left to their own devices, these part-time soldiers, dubbed rangers, patrolled the regions between forts in an effort to intercept Delaware war parties before they could reach the settlements. Their success rate was poor. Very seldom did the rangers actually intercept an incoming war party before it hit its mark. The rangers' inability to acquire accurate information concerning the location and movement of the Indians severely limited their effectiveness, and the frontier posts were too distant from one another to allow for effective coverage by the patrols. "Skulking Indians keep around us every day," reported a Pennsylvania ranger leader, "[we] discover their fresh tracks but cannot come up with them."19

The spectacular destruction of Fort Granville in late July 1756 underscored the dismal failure of the province's defensive measures. Constructed as part of a line of four forts intended to anchor colonial defenses west of the Susquehanna River, the fort was garrisoned by a company of seventy-five men raised in Cumberland County, originally under the command of Captain James Burd. A reorganization of the Pennsylvania Regiment in May 1756 saw Burd replaced as commander by Captain Edward Ward, with Lieutenant Edward Armstrong, the brother

Ward, *Breaking the Backcountry*, 112, 127. The Mutiny Act was finally adopted for Pennsylvania forces in November 1756, after Armstrong's expedition, but by this time Pennsylvania had essentially given up on launching further offensives without British military support.

¹⁹ James Hyndshaw to Conrad Weiser, May 31, 1757, Conrad Weiser Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania; Louis M. Waddell, "Defending the Long Perimeter: Forts on the Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia Frontier, 1755–1765," *Pennsylvania History* 62 (1995): 184–88; Matthew C. Ward, "The European Method of Warring Is Not Practiced Here': The Failure of British Military Policy in the Ohio Valley, 1755–1759," *War in History* 4 (1997): 258–60. For a detailed examination of the forts constructed by Pennsylvania during this period, see William A. Hunter, *Forts on the Pennsylvania Frontier*, 1753–1758 (1960; repr., Lewisburg, PA, 1999), 214–543.

of Lieutenant Colonel John Armstrong, as second in command at Fort Granville, On July 30, Captain Ward marched the majority of the garrison to Sherman's Valley to protect the inhabitants as they harvested their crops, leaving only twenty-four men under Lieutenant Armstrong to maintain the fort. Later that day, a mixed force of Delawares and French, numbering between fifty-five and one hundred, attacked the fort. The assault lasted through the night and into the next morning, with the Indians unable to penetrate the fort's defenses or cause much damage. However, daylight on July 31 brought the discovery of a small ravine that ran from the bank of the Juniata to within thirty or forty feet of the fort. The Indians advanced up the ravine, using the cover it provided to hurl pine knots and other combustible material against the walls of Fort Granville, eventually creating a pile of brush that the attackers ignited into a bonfire at the base of the wall. The logs of the stockade wall soon caught fire and in time burned a large hole through to the inside. Lieutenant Edward Armstrong, along with another member of the garrison, was shot and killed as he tried to extinguish the blaze and repair the breach. With the death of their commander, the remaining defenders accepted a Delaware offer of mercy if they surrendered. The gates were opened, and the fort's thirty-one inhabitants, which included twenty-two soldiers, three women, and six children, were immediately taken captive. The Delawares pillaged the fort and, after collecting their captives and plunder, left Fort Granville to burn in their wake.²⁰

The Delawares who attacked Fort Granville were from Kittanning and they followed a war leader named Tewea, who was rapidly gaining a reputation for his martial skill. Tewea was a recent migrant to the Allegheny communities, having been identified only a few years before as an important leader at the mixed Delaware-Shawnee village of Ohesson, which once stood very close to Fort Granville at the site of present-day Lewistown. In 1754, Tewea reportedly sold land near Ohesson to Robert Buchanon, an Indian trader with whom the Delaware leader had good relations. But when Buchanon invited more white colonists to settle the land, Tewea angrily destroyed Ohesson and moved west with his followers to Kittanning. Tewea's attack on Fort Granville, which stood so close to

²⁰ Pennsylvania Archives, 1st ser., 2:536; 5th ser., 1:62, 70; Shippen Family Papers, 2:31, Historical Society of Pennsylvania; Pennsylvania Gazette, Aug. 5 and 19, 1756; Stanislaus Murray Hamilton, ed., Letters to Washington and Accompanying Papers (Boston, 1898), 1:327–28; Report of the Commission to Locate the Site of the Frontier Forts of Pennsylvania, 1:605–7; Hunter, Forts on the Pennsylvania Frontier, 383–91.

the ashes of his former home, should not be viewed as coincidental. It is likely the Delaware leader sought revenge for the loss of his homelands, and his personal vendetta meshed neatly with the western Delawares' goals of spreading terror along the Pennsylvania frontier. Tewea, known locally in the Juniata Valley as Pokety, succeeded in making his other English name, Captain Jacobs, a synonym for fear and frustration along the frontier.²¹

The destruction of Fort Granville underscored the ability of Delaware warriors to strike at any time and any place along the Pennsylvania frontier. Backcountry inhabitants quickly became angry with their elected officials, whom they blamed for failing to protect them. Their anger was well justified. During the war, nearly one thousand Pennsylvanians were killed or captured, with thousands of uncounted others forced into refugee camps in the east. Understandably, the frontier inhabitants demanded either protection or retaliation. The failure of the Pennsylvania government to secure either only fed their rage. In an early expression of the parochial mentality that would take root along the Pennsylvania frontier, backcountry residents blamed their suffering on "the negligence and insensibility of the administration, to whose inactivity there are so many sacrifices." Twice their rage boiled over into a state of near rebellion. During the fall of 1755, a mob of nearly seven hundred people descended on Philadelphia and demanded protection for their families. In April 1756, residents of Cumberland County gathered to make a second march on Philadelphia, although they eventually disbanded before reaching the citv.22

The mounting popular pressure finally forced the colonial government of Pennsylvania to seek retaliation. In consultation with Governor Robert Hunter Morris, Lieutenant Colonel John Armstrong, commander of the Second Battalion of the Pennsylvania Regiment, drew up plans for a campaign against Kittanning. Armstrong was a former surveyor for the Penn family and a proprietary supporter, factors that likely influenced his selection as commander of an offensive operation whose success could benefit the standing of the proprietary faction in the continuing political

²¹ [Franklin Ellis and A. N. Hungerford, eds.], History of That Part of the Susquehanna and Juniata Valleys, Embraced in the Counties of Mifflin, Juniata, Perry, Union and Snyder (Philadelphia, 1886), 492; Report of the Commission to Locate the Site of the Frontier Forts of Pennsylvania, 1:607–8; C. Hale Sipe, The Indian Chiefs of Pennsylvania (Butler, PA, [1927]), 269.

²² Pennsylvania Archives, 4th ser., 2:552; Pennsylvania Gazette, Apr. 15, 1756; Penn Manuscripts: Indian Affairs, 2:52; Ward, "Fighting the 'Old Women," 313–18.

battles in the Pennsylvania Assembly. On a more personal level, John Armstrong may have been motivated by a desire to avenge the death of his brother, Edward Armstrong, who had been killed in the defense of Fort Granville. In either case, Armstrong correctly identified Kittanning as the base of operations for western Delawares' war efforts and therefore an important military target. Armstrong based his plans largely on the reports of John Baker, a former English captive at Kittanning, Baker advised Armstrong on the layout of the village and the strength of its defenses, and he would later serve as the expedition's guide. With the approval of the Pennsylvania government, Armstrong assembled approximately three hundred men from the garrisons of the Cumberland County forts and assembled his strike force at Fort Shirley, On August 30, the main column began its march west and soon connected with the Kittanning Trail, a part of the Frankstown Path used by Indian traders to reach the Delaware villages along the Allegheny River. Over the next nine days, Armstrong moved his small army forward cautiously but securely, as the Pennsylvanians encountered no major obstacles and remained undetected by the Indians.²³

On the night of September 7, Armstrong's column closed to within striking distance of Kittanning. Upon discovery of a campfire ringed by a few Indians several miles southeast of the village, Armstrong detached a company of twelve men under Lieutenant James Hogg to shadow the Indians at the fire, with instructions to attack at dawn. Leaving their horses, bedrolls, and other supplies along a nearby hill, Armstrong and the main body of Pennsylvanians advanced through the moonlit darkness to within sight of Kittanning. The attack commenced at dawn. Armstrong ordered several companies to execute a flanking movement along a steep ridge east of the town. While they moved north along the hill, Armstrong ordered his remaining captains to approach the town from the south, using cornfields to cover their advance. By all accounts, the Delawares were taken by surprise. Many Indians fled as Armstrong's men advanced through the surrounding cornfields and began firing on the village, but others, led by Captain Jacobs, rallied the warriors and returned fire from the cover of their lodges and log cabins. The fighting soon focused on Captain Jacob's two-story log house, where the action

²³ Colonial Records of Pennsylvania, 7:230–33; William Denny to Thomas Penn, Nov. 4, 1756, Penn Manuscripts: Official Correspondence, 8:197, Historical Society of Pennsylvania; Archibald Loudon, ed., A Selection of Some of the Most Interesting Narratives of Outrages, Committed by the Indians in their Wars with the White People (1808; repr., Lewisburg, PA, 2001), 2:161.

became quite intense. Armstrong was shot through the shoulder, a musket ball shattered Captain Hugh Mercer's arm, and several other Pennsylvanians fell victim to the western Delawares' barrage. Armstrong later related that Captain Jacobs "seldom missed of wounding or killing" some of our people." In an effort to break the determined Delaware resistance. Armstrong ordered his men to burn the Indians' houses. The smoke and flames made it more difficult for the Delawares to maintain their positions, and several explosions rocked the village as stores of gunpowder and ammunition, recently obtained from the French, caught fire and detonated. Several Indians were shot down by soldiers as they tried to flee the blaze, and others died in the suppowder blasts, including one particularly large explosion that sent "the leg and thigh of an Indian with a child of three or four years old ... [to] such a height that they appeared as nothing and fell in the adjacent cornfield." Captain Jacobs remained defiant to the end, refusing offers of surrender and challenging the Pennsylvanians to burn him out, screaming that "he could eat fire." After the flames reached the second floor of his burning cabin, however, Captain Jacobs, with his wife and son, desperately tried to escape by jumping from the upper-story windows. They were caught and shot dead by Armstrong's men as they tried to escape into the fields.²⁴

After the death of Captain Jacobs, Armstrong retired to the ridge east of Kittanning to seek medical attention. The hill had become a rallying point for wounded and disoriented soldiers, but much to Armstrong's dismay, he found the hill also occupied by the companies he had sent north to flank the village, who had failed to cut off Delawares retreating from the attack. Even worse, Armstrong's out-of-position troops reported that Delawares from the west bank, where Shingas maintained his camp, were crossing the river and advancing, supported by a large party of French troops from Fort Duquesne. A small number of French soldiers had arrived at Kittanning the morning of the attack, but unbeknown to Armstrong, the French remained on the west bank and played only a small role in the battle, helping Shingas's warriors to evacuate women, children, and prisoners to safety several miles within the forests west of the river. Nonetheless, wearied by six hours of hard fighting and fearful of a Delaware-French counterattack, Armstrong gave the order to retreat.

²⁴ Pennsylvania Archives, 1st ser., 2:769–70; Colonial Records of Pennsylvania, 7:381–82; Thomas Barton to Thomas Penn, Feb. 28, 1757, Penn Manuscripts: Official Correspondence, 8:239; Loudon, ed., Narratives, 2:162–63; Hunter, "Victory at Kittanning," 384–89.

The withdrawal was chaotic. Leaving behind their blankets and supplies. Armstrong and the main body of troops gathered their horses and quickly outpaced Hugh Mercer's company, which became entangled with the remnants of Lieutenant Hogg's detachment. Hogg had attacked the campsite outside Kittanning at dawn, as ordered, but quickly found himself in a fierce fight with a much larger party of Delawares than had been expected. The Battle of Blanket Hill, as it became known, quickly turned against the Pennsylvanians. Hogg was mortally wounded, five of his men were killed, and the survivors collided with Mercer's company as they retreated. Attacking Delawares from the west bank camps added to the overall confusion of the retreat, scattering Pennsylvanians in all directions. The majority of Armstrong's column moved with great haste, reaching Fort Lyttleton on September 12, just four days after the attack, although Pennsylvanians from his expedition turned up over the next few days and weeks at locations ranging from Fort Cumberland in Maryland to Fort Augusta at the forks of the Susquehanna River. Perhaps the most dramatic ordeal was that of Hugh Mercer, who did not arrive at Fort Lyttleton until ten days later, having endured a desperate trek through the wilderness without food or shelter, subsisting on dried clams and a rattlesnake he killed in the forest.²⁵

In trying to assess the impact and importance of Armstrong's attack on Kittanning, we must first assess whether the raid merits designation as a military victory for Pennsylvania. Pennsylvania officials praised the operation as a grand military success, an interpretation echoed by many historians and embraced in popular culture, but close scrutiny of the surviving contemporary accounts reveals very mixed results. There can be no question that numerous combatants on both sides died during the battle. Exact casualty figures, however, remain in dispute. Armstrong attacked Kittanning with a force of three hundred men. By comparison, contemporary estimates agree that there were between eighty and one hundred Delaware warriors in the village. Overall, Armstrong's force outnumbered the Delaware defenders three-to-one, and since at least a portion of the Delawares were in Shingas's camp on the west bank of the Allegheny, the Pennsylvanians' advantage was even greater at the point of attack. Yet this numerical superiority does not seem to have translated into military

²⁵ Pennsylvania Archives, 1st ser., 2:771–74, 3:93–95, 147–48; 2nd ser., 7:401–12; Colonial Records of Pennsylvania, 7:531; Pennsylvania Gazette, Oct. 7, 1756; Barton to Penn, Feb. 28, 1757, Penn Manuscripts: Official Correspondence; Loudon, ed., Narratives, 2:182–84; Hunter, "Victory at Kittanning," 390, 394–99.

success. Armstrong reported his casualties as seventeen killed, thirteen wounded, and nineteen missing in action. Many of those listed as missing. including Captain Mercer's company, eventually reached the Pennsylvania settlements safely, although at least two of the missing were killed and two others were taken captive by the Delawares. Armstrong guessed that "there cannot be less than thirty or forty killed" among the Delawares, although he admitted that "on beginning our march back we had about a dozen scalps . . . but now find that four or five of the scalps are missing." Provincial Secretary Richard Peters, a staunch proprietary supporter, did not accept Armstrong's estimates. Peters increased the figure to fifty dead Delawares, although most other contemporary reports place the number far lower. In his remembrances, Hugh Gibson, a captive among the Delawares at Kittanning, claimed that only fourteen Indians were killed during the raid, while two different French accounts count only seven Delawares killed. Lawrence Burck, a white trader married to a Delaware woman and a frequent visitor to Kittanning, claimed that the Delawares had seven men and two women killed. Based on the evidence, it is very likely that the Delawares suffered fewer casualties than the Pennsylvanians, despite being vastly outnumbered. Moreover, although Armstrong's men did burn the eastern portion of the village, they were forced to flee the field of battle and their supplies were captured by the Delawares. Thus, neither side emerged with a clear military advantage. The battle was at best a draw.²⁶

There is more than one way to define victory, however, and much of the praise for Armstrong's raid dwells on the death of Captain Jacobs, the destroyer of Fort Granville and a scourge of the Pennsylvania frontier. His death was without question the highlight of Armstrong's attack. But while Captain Jacobs was an able and energetic war leader, he was hardly irreplaceable. Indeed, not long after the 1758 Treaty of Easton brought a reprieve to the frontier, a Delaware known as Doctor John became involved in a heated discussion at the home of Pennsylvania trader Peter Tittel in Carlisle. He warned Tittel and fellow colonist Thomas Evans not to think the Delawares had been defeated, for although "the white people had killed his Captain Jacobs, . . . there was another greater than Captain Jacobs still alive." Doctor John referred to a target of far greater

²⁶ Pennsylvania Archives, 1st ser., 2:773–75; Colonial Records of Pennsylvania, 6:781–82, 7:242–43; Richard Peters to Thomas Penn, Oct. 30, 1756, and William Denny to Thomas Penn, Nov. 4, 1756, Penn Manuscripts: Official Correspondence, 8:181, 197; Hunter, "Victory at Kittanning," 392–94.

military value, the western Delaware king Shingas, who had escaped the battle unharmed. Shingas and his followers made their camp on the western bank on the Allegheny River and were thus insulated from the initial surprise of Armstrong's attack. It was these warriors, however, who spirited away most of the English captives to a safe location in the forest and, after crossing the Allegheny above Kittanning, attacked Armstrong's retreating column with great effect. All other factors notwithstanding, the failure to capture or kill Shingas, who had a seven hundred–dollar bounty on his head, severely detracts from Armstrong's success, as the Pennsylvanians missed an opportunity to eliminate the main tormentor of the frontier.²⁷

Lastly, Armstrong's raid falls short when measured against one of the principal military objectives defined by the lieutenant colonel himself. In his "Scheme of an Expedition to Kittanning," Armstrong cited the report of John Baker, a provincial soldier who had been taken captive by the Delawares, who claimed that there were more than one hundred white captives held at Kittanning. Armstrong asked "ought not an attack be made as early as possible on this town . . . with an endeavor to recover prisoners?" But the raid succeeded in freeing just eleven prisoners, and four of these—a woman, a boy, and two small girls—were lost in the Pennsylvanians' frantic retreat from Kittanning. This brings the number of redeemed persons down to no more than seven, not an insignificant number but not one that supports description of Armstrong's raid as a great success when measured against the stated objective of freeing prisoners held by the western Delawares. In addition, the Delawares recaptured a woman and a man during the Pennsylvanians' retreat, then tortured them to death amidst the smoldering remains of Kittanning, further blunting any claim that the raid succeeded in meaningful prisoner redemption.²⁸

From a strictly military perspective, Armstrong's raid hardly qualifies as a victory, but that does not necessarily mean that the attack did not have an impact on the western Delawares' ability to raid the Pennsylvania frontier. Did the attack on Kittanning, as some historians have suggested, weaken the western Delawares and dampen their enthusiasm for the war? Perhaps the most intriguing method of measuring the impact of

²⁷ Wallace, Conrad Weiser, 566.

²⁸ Pennsylvania Archives, 1st ser., 2:773–75; 2nd ser., 7:401–12; Loudon, ed., Narratives, 2:182–83; Hunter, "Victory at Kittanning," 385, 399–403.

Armstrong's attack is through an examination of the casualty figures for the individual raids. Based on a quantitative analysis of reports printed in the Pennsylvania Gazette and/or published in the Pennsylvania Archives series, there were at least seventy-eight separate raids against the Pennsylvania frontier between the defeat of Braddock's army in July 1755 and Armstrong's attack on Kittanning in September 1756. The raids left 484 Pennsylvanians dead and saw another 202 captured over this fifteenmonth period. By comparison, during the fifteen months after Armstrong's raid, which takes us to end of 1757, there were eighty-eight individual raids, resulting in 228 inhabitants killed and 173 captured. Thus, the overall number of raids increased after the attack on Kittanning, although the number of casualties declined. However, the brutality of the conflict appears to have remained unaffected. Just over two months after Armstrong's raid, in November 1756, a party of armed Pennsylvanians found ten dead settlers at seven different locations throughout Cumberland County. Among these were two men found dead near their ransacked farms. The first's "brains were beat out, had two cuts in his breasts, was shot in the back, and otherwise cruelly used," while the second's "brains were beat out, his mouth much mangled, one of his eyes cut out, and one of his ears gashed, and [he] had two knives lying on his breasts." Yet another man was discovered "terribly mangled . . . as is supposed with his own gun barrel, which we found sticking out of his skull." If that scene was not gruesome enough, there were in addition "an ax, two scythes, and several arrows sticking in him."29

Numbers often tell only part of a story, so what exactly can be learned from these figures? Was Armstrong's raid responsible for the decline in casualties along the Pennsylvania frontier? It is unlikely, as there were a number of extenuating factors that more directly affected the casualty toll. After the raids of 1756, thousands of Pennsylvanians fled the frontier and crowded into eastern cities and refugee camps, leaving a smaller target pool for Delaware raiders. Indeed, a French officer at Fort Duquesne bragged to his superiors that Delaware raiding parties could travel two hundred miles to the east through abandoned settlements without finding a single inhabitant. Additionally, there were far more fortified homesteads

²⁹ Pennsylvania Gazette, Nov. 20, 1756. The numbers presented here are gleaned from the excellent quantitative analysis found in Matthew C. Ward, "La Guerre Sauvage: The Seven Years' War on the Virginia and Pennsylvania Frontier" (PhD diss., College of William and Mary, 1992), 421–52. While some raids may have slipped past Ward's careful collation, his statistics nonetheless provide an excellent representative sample of the raids and their impact along the Pennsylvania frontier.

and blockhouses dotting the frontier in 1757 than there had been in 1756. By the end of 1757 there were at least twenty provincial forts and nearly fifty nonmilitary forts along the Pennsylvania frontier, affording those backcountry inhabitants who remained more places of refuge to ride out an attack. Other considerations lend additional credence to the theory that western Delaware military capacity was not diminished in the wake of Armstrong's attack. The Susquehanna Delawares, who were responsible for approximately thirty-six of the seventy-eight (46 percent) examined raids prior to Armstrong's campaign, had largely withdrawn their warriors from the frontier in 1757 as they negotiated peace with the Pennsylvania government. 30 Thus, the eighty-eight raids made after Armstrong's attack were primarily the work of the western Delawares, which suggests that they more than doubled their military activities (from forty-two raids to eighty-eight) in the wake of the assault on Kittanning. The pace of the raids declined rather sharply toward the end of 1757, but here again there are extenuating factors that offer an explanation for this shift. During the autumn of 1757 there was an outbreak of smallpox in Cumberland County, Pennsylvania, one of the main theaters of the war. The western Delawares were only too well aware of the ravaging effects of smallpox. and the outbreak may help explain why raids against the county dropped off precipitously late in 1757. After September 1, there were only three recorded attacks against Cumberland County, which resulted in just eight persons being taken captive. Additional proof that the western Delawares were able and willing to fight beyond 1757 can be found in their participation in the attacks on advance units of General John Forbes's army, which in 1758 was marching through Pennsylvania to capture Fort Duquesne. That autumn the western Delawares helped defeat an advance column of Forbes's army led by Major James Grant near Fort Duquesne and then participated in an attack on Forbes's forward camp at Loyalhanna. More than 350 British and colonial soldiers were killed or captured during these two battles, which occurred after many Frenchallied Great Lakes Indians had withdrawn from Pennsylvania. Clearly, the western Delawares were still very able to fight, a strong indication that Armstrong's raid had not adversely affected their military capabilities.³¹

³⁰ Figures cited here assume that all raids in Northampton and Berks counties from July 1755 to September 1755 were perpetrated by the Susquehanna Delawares.

³¹ Pennsylvania Gazette, Sept. 8, 1757; "List of Killed & Wounded at Fort Duquesne," Sept. 14, 1758, Military notebook no. 7, and Thomas Lloyd to James Burd, Oct. 8 and 19, 1757, vol. 3,

Yet what of the peace faction headed by Tamagua that seems to have risen to prominence after the raid on Kittanning? Did Armstrong's raid provide a basis for a shift in western Delaware politics toward peace? A definitive answer is elusive, but the answer appears to be no. Indeed. Tamagua's inclination toward peace predated the onset of hostilities and was more reflective of his beliefs about diplomacy and the role of the Delawares on the Pennsylvania frontier than a dramatic reaction to the attack on Kittanning. Two years prior to Armstrong's raid, in September 1754, Tamagua had led a western Delaware delegation east to George Croghan's Auchwick plantation to seek Iroquois assistance in forestalling war with the French or British. "We have hitherto followed your directions and lived very easy under your protection, and no high wind did blow to make us uneasy," remarked Tamaqua, "but now things seem to take another turn and high wind is rising. We desire you, therefore, Uncle, to have your eyes open and be watchful over us, your cousins, as you always have been heretofore." Tamaqua sought to avoid open warfare with any colonial group, and instead wanted to revive the Delawares' traditional status of "women," a designation bestowed upon the Delawares by the Iroquois League after they allegedly conquered the Delawares in the seventeenth century. Being designated as "women" implied that the Delawares were not warriors, but rather Iroquois-sponsored negotiators who applied diplomacy to conflict resolution rather than military force. It is unlikely Tamaqua truly saw the western Delawares as subservient to the Iroquois; rather his appeal more likely derived from his desire to avoid a potentially costly war, a conflict whose outcome even the most farsighted leaders could not see clearly. His position did not change during the war, as Tamagua's name is noticeably absent among those western Delawares cited by colonial records as war leaders.³²

It is also important to note that Tamaqua's role in the peace process has perhaps been overstated. Although Tamaqua appears as the western Delaware leader most receptive to peace, he was neither the lead negotiator—that was Pisquetomen—nor the principal speaker for the western Delawares in their dealings with Forbes's primary diplomat, Christian Frederick Post. During Post's negotiations with the western Delawares in 1758, it was Shingas, not Tamaqua, who set the terms and conditions by

Shippen Family Papers; Sullivan et al., eds., Papers of Sir William Johnson, 10:486; Hunter, Forts on the Pennsylvania Frontier, 214–564; Ward, Breaking the Backcountry, 149–56, 174–76.

³² Colonial Records of Pennsylvania, 6:140, 150-60, 181; McConnell, Country Between, 102-3.

which his people would embrace peace with the British and their colonists, informing Post that, although he supported a peace settlement, the western Delawares would not agree to terms unless their demands for territorial autonomy were met. Shingas also made it clear that the approach of Forbes's army displeased the western Delawares and weakened the appeal of peace. "You come with good news and fine speeches . . . ," the Delaware leader explained, "[but] we do not readily believe you. If you had brought the news of peace before your army had begun to march, it would have caused a great deal more good." Thus, Shingas was a more dominant presence in the peace process than Tamagua, despite the latter's enthusiasm and activism on behalf of peace. Indeed, Tamagua did not become "king," or principal spokesmen, for the western Delawares until after the confirmation of the 1758 Treaty of Easton, which brought a tentative peace to the Pennsylvania frontier that corresponded with the withdrawal of Shingas, the renowned war leader, from the forefront of Delaware society.³³

The last question investigated here—did Armstrong's raid bring hope to the backcountry population of Pennsylvania—is the most difficult to assess. The splendid promotion of the campaign in Philadelphia would on the surface imply that it was a spectacularly influential triumph. Pennsylvania authorities needed a victory, and they put on a proud face in making the Kittanning raid a public celebration. Upon his return, John Armstrong was feted as a conquering hero. In addition to the famous commemorative medals awarded to Armstrong and his officers, the lieutenant colonel received over six hundred pounds in expenses and bounties for the death of Captain Jacobs and other Delaware warriors. In Philadelphia, Armstrong was even praised in verse. The September 30, 1756, edition of the *Pennsylvania Gazette* carried a lengthy poetic tribute to the attack on Kittanning, which included the following stanzas:

... let PENNSYLVANIA wake,
And on the Foes her Terrors shake,
Their gloomy Troops defy;
For lo! her smoaking Farms and Plains,
Her Captive Youths and murder'd Swains,
For Vengeance louder cry. . . .

³³ "The Journal of Christian Frederick Post, From Philadelphia to the Ohio . . . ," *Early Western Journals*, ed. Thwaites, 221–22; Ward, *Breaking the Backcountry*, 174–76.

Rouze, rouze at once, and boldly chase from their deep Haunts the savage Race, Till they confess you Men. Let other Armstrongs grace the Field, Let other Slaves before them yield, And tremble round Du Quesne.

Almost twenty years later, Armstrong was awarded a land grant within Appleby Manor, the proprietary land grant laid out at Kittanning. Armstrong named his tract Victory.³⁴

Much of the celebration surrounding Armstrong's raid appears to have been the work of the Pennsylvania proprietary faction, which was still trying to destroy the last vestiges of Quaker political influence while also confronting an increasingly virulent rebellion of antiproprietary forces in the assembly. The head of the proprietary family, Thomas Penn, for years had been engineering efforts in London to have the crown formally bar Quakers from political office in Pennsylvania, a condition that might also seriously weaken their status and influence in Pennsylvania colonial society. Promulgation of a successful strike against the Delawares would have provided Penn with much-needed ammunition to brand the Ouakers with responsibility for the suffering on the frontier because of their reluctance to use violent measures against the Indians. Moreover, Penn and his supporters may have hoped that a grand display of public pageantry might derail mounting criticism of the Penn family's refusal to allow its considerable landholdings in Pennsylvania to be taxed to support the war effort. The antiproprietary forces aggressively cited the Penns' parsimonious position as a betrayal of the ideals of founder William Penn and repeatedly called for the removal of the proprietorship altogether. At best, the proprietary faction achieved mixed results. Quaker influence in Pennsylvania politics largely flared out after the war, but the antiproprietary faction emboldened its stance, even sending Benjamin Franklin to London in 1757 to counter the activities of Thomas Penn and to urge the British government to adopt Pennsylvania as a royal colony, a measure that would divest the Penn family of its claim and destroy the foundation of the troublesome proprietary faction.³⁵

Pennsylvania's proprietary supporters interpreted Armstrong's raid on

³⁴ Pennsylvania Gazette, Feb. 17, 1757.

³⁵ Robert L. D. Davidson, War Comes to Quaker Pennsylvania, 1682–1756 (New York, 1957), 166–96; Jennings, Empire of Fortune, 326–34; Ward, Breaking the Backcountry, 128–29.

Kittanning as an important turning point in the war, but did the attack have any measurable effect on morale in the colony as some historians contend? At its outset, Governor Robert Hunter Morris believed the expedition "will be of great use to the public, as it will raise the spirits of the people and serve to remove that dread and panic which has seized the generality." But the triumphant celebration of the raid proved to be more propaganda than proof of its redeeming effects. Following the raid on Kittanning, Pennsylvania's backcountry inhabitants remained angry and antagonistic as a result of continuing tension and fear along the frontier. The process of seeking shelter in the many provincial and private frontier forts provided some protection, but space inside the structures was limited and resources were stretched thin. In April 1757, Robert Armstrong illustrated the mentality of the frontier inhabitants when he refused to allow his neighbors to obtain shelter in his fortified homestead. "It is much contrary to my interest," he explained to provincial captain James Burd, "besides I look upon it to be hard usage to bring families with their stocks upon my plantation." Such attitudes were born of a desperation fueled by the continued inability of the Pennsylvania government to defend the frontier.³⁶

The Indian raids continued, but there were no subsequent attempts by Pennsylvania to again strike into Indian country. Instead, continuing political battles in the Pennsylvania Assembly scuttled defense efforts, while supply shortages and delinquent pay led to mass desertions from the Pennsylvania Regiment. Some Pennsylvania officials pinned their hopes on British intervention, but it would not be until 1758 that political turnover in London and British victories to the north transformed the landscape of the war to allow British troops to intercede in Pennsylvania's deadly Indian war. In the interim, the backcountry population was again left without adequate protection from attack. Indeed, shortly after the attack on Kittanning, the Pennsylvania Regiment abandoned and destroyed Fort Shirley, which had been built to safeguard Cumberland County's western reaches, because "the fort [was] untenable and of no further use, the inhabitants of Sherman's Valley having entirely abandoned their plantations." ³⁷

³⁶ Robert Armstrong to James Burd, Apr. 18, 1757, Edward Shippen Thompson Family Papers, box 1, folder 3, Pennsylvania State Archives.

³⁷ William Denny to Thomas Penn, Nov. 4, 1756, Penn Manuscripts: Official Correspondence; Hunter, Forts on the Pennsylvania Frontier, 402–5; Ward, "La Guerre Sauvage," 220–24; Ward, Breaking the Backcountry, 106.

The frontier population's frustration with Pennsylvania authorities transferred easily into a lack of cooperation with the British army. Throughout the war against the western Delawares, many backcountry people blamed the British army equally with the Pennsylvania government for failing to adequately defend their homes and families. Indeed, in August 1756 the residents of York County forwarded a petition to the Pennsylvania Assembly demanding that the small detachment of British soldiers at Carlisle "go against the enemy to avenge our bleeding cause." That sentiment did not change after Armstrong's raid on Kittanning. In December 1756, while metropolitan Philadelphians were still giddy with excitement over Armstrong's supposed success, a country farmer attempted to assault the recently arrived Colonel Henry Bouquet as he rode at the head of a British battalion in parade formation. "A farmer rogue mounted on a nag lashed at me with his whip," remarked an astonished Bouquet. Although Bouquet related that the man "was at once beaten up and taken to jail," the colonel marveled at the attitude of the "riffraff" public, especially since he confessed that the attempted attack "was the third incident of this kind to occur." Even in 1758, as Forbes's army traveled through Pennsylvania on its mission to bring closure to the war, the resentment of the backcountry population continued to run very high. In May 1758, authorities in York County arrested several of Forbes's soldiers after a brawl with local farmers, then staunchly insisted that the troops stand trial despite pleas from the army that every available soldier was needed for the campaign against Fort Duquesne. And everywhere the backcountry population exhibited a near total lack of cooperation with an army that claimed it had come to rescue them. Frontier farmers refused to quarter troops in their barns and sheds, withheld badly needed supplies, resisted the impressment of grain and produce, and generally hindered the war effort in almost every manner imaginable. Their actions were hardly consistent with a Pennsylvania population suddenly emboldened and uplifted by Armstrong's raid. Indeed, the unease of the backcountry implies that the attack on Kittanning, despite all its fanfare, was little more than a hollow victory, which either had been quickly forgotten or which had done very little to bolster the frontier residents' spirits in the first place.38

³⁸ Colonial Records of Pennsylvania, 7:234; Henry Bouquet to John Young, Dec. 15, 1756, and George Stevenson to Henry Bouquet, May 30, 1758, in *The Papers of Henry Bouquet* (Harrisburg, 1972), ed. Sylvester K. Stevens et al., 1:37, 398; Ward, "*La Guerre Sauvage*," 366–83.

What then is the significance of the Kittanning raid? Certainly Armstrong struck a blow for Pennsylvania, which given the parameters of the conflict was a considerable accomplishment. Indeed, marching three hundred men more than 150 miles through the Pennsylvania wilderness for nine days, without disillusionment or despair scuttling the operation, and then arriving undetected to launch a surprise attack on Kittanning was an heroic accomplishment. Moreover, Armstrong's force fared far better than a comparable expedition mounted earlier in 1756 by Virginia. With his colony's frontiers withering under the onslaught of Indian attacks, Virginia governor Robert Dinwiddie ordered an assault against Shawnee villages in the Ohio Country. In February, Colonel Andrew Lewis set out with roughly three hundred frontier militia, but in comparison to Armstrong's attack on Kittanning, the Virginians' effort was pathetic. The expedition limped from one difficulty to another. Heavy rain and inclement weather made the march very difficult, inadequate supplies and food soured the ardor of the troops, and disputes over command hobbled the offensive. Within a month, the militia mutinied. Most deserted and returned to their homes, until Lewis, with too few soldiers to continue the campaign, also abandoned the offensive. The Virginians never got close to a Shawnee village. A similar attempt by Maryland colonial troops in April 1756 was perhaps even more pitiful. After advancing only twenty-three miles from Fort Cumberland in western Maryland, the Marylanders fell into an ambush. Among the dead left behind by the fleeing militia was the expedition's leader, the noted frontiersman Thomas Cresap.³⁹

Thus, Armstrong's Kittanning raid should be understood and valued for what it was: a valiant effort by a badly beleaguered Pennsylvania to gain a measure of retaliation in a war that was beyond the colony's ability to master. Indeed, the campaign's revered position in Pennsylvania historical memory owes more to its public promotion in 1756 than to the success of the raid itself. Armstrong's attack did not alter the balance sheet of the war, as Delaware attacks against the Pennsylvania backcountry did not decrease or abate in its wake. Nor is it likely that the attack induced the sudden rise of a peace faction within western Delaware politics, as

³⁹ Robert Dinwiddie to William Preston and John Smith, Dec. 15, 1755, and Dinwiddie to Andrew Lewis, Jan. 15, 1756, in *The Official Records of Robert Dinwiddie, Lieutenant Governor of the Colony of Virginia, 1751–1758*, ed. R. A. Brock (Richmond, VA, 1884), 2:295–96, 319–20; Diary of the Sandy Creek Expedition, William Preston Papers, Lyman C. Draper Manuscript Collection, 1QQ:96–122, Wisconsin Historical Society; Ward, *Breaking the Backcountry*, 104–6.

Tamaqua's antiwar stance was apparent before the war began. That it surfaced again in 1758 as the western Delawares neared the realization of their military and political objectives cannot be tied to Armstrong's raid. Moreover, the destruction of Kittanning did not produce widespread, measurable satisfaction or hope among the backcountry population. Frontier families continued to face Indian attacks after the Kittanning raid, and their anger over the inability of the Pennsylvania government to provide security easily transferred into a discernable lack of cooperation with British soldiers who were trying, at least indirectly, to end the suffering of the backcountry. The Reverend Thomas Barton, writing to Thomas Penn in February 1757, perhaps evaluated the importance of Armstrong's campaign as succinctly as any:

Alas! I fear the approaching spring will again make us tremble. We have a great deal to do, and but little done. Though killing a few Indians and burning their huts at the Kittanning is an action not very considerable in itself, it is the best that has yet appeared for this province.⁴⁰

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⁴⁰ Thomas Barton to Thomas Penn, Feb. 28, 1757, Penn Manuscripts: Official Correspondence.