YES

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Peaceable Kingdom Lost: The Paxton Boys and the Destruction of William Penn's Holy Experiment

The Paxton Boys struck Conestoga Indiantown at dawn on December 14, 1763. "Fifty-seven Men, from some of our Frontier Townships, who had projected the Destruction of this little Commonwealth," Benjamin Franklin wrote in his *Narrative of the Late Massacres in Lancaster County*, "came, all well-mounted, and armed with Firelocks, Hangers [a kind of short sword] and Hatchets, having travelled through the Country in the Night, to *Conestogoe* Manor." Only six Indians were in the town at the time, "the rest being out among the neighbouring White People, some to sell the Baskets, Brooms and Bowls they manufactured." The Paxton Boys, frontier militiamen on an unauthorized expedition, killed these six and burned their settlement to the ground.

The Conestoga Indians lived on a 500-acre tract near the town of Lancaster, which William Penn had set aside for them seventy years earlier. By 1763 only twenty Conestogas were living there—seven men, five women, and eight children. They survived by raising a little corn, begging at local farms, soliciting food and clothing from the provincial government, and selling their homemade brooms and baskets. Rhoda Barber, born three years after the Paxton Boy massacres, recalled in old age what her family had told her about the Conestogas. They "were entirely peaceable," she wrote, "and seem'd as much afraid of the other Indians as the whites were." Her older brother and sisters used to spend whole days with them and were "so attached to them they could not bear to hear them refus'd anything they ask'd for." The Indians "often spent the night by the kitchen fire of the farms round about" and were "much attached to the white people, calling their children after their favorite neighbours."

Local magistrates removed the remaining fourteen Conestoga Indians to the Lancaster workhouse for their safety, but on December 27 the Paxton Boys rode into that town and finished the job they had started two weeks earlier. Fifty men, "armed as before, dismounting, went directly to the Work-house and by Violence broke open the Door," Franklin observed, "and entered with the utmost Fury in their Countenances." Within a matter of minutes they had slaughtered the fourteen Indians sheltering inside, including the eight children. After the massacres, the Paxton Boys claimed that Conestoga Indiantown was theirs by right of conquest. Some of them tried to settle on the site of the abandoned town, but provincial officials tore down their cabins and drove them off. The Paxton Boys did not succeed in their goal of seizing land, but by annihilating the Conestoga Indians they repudiated the utopian vision laid down by William Penn when he founded Pennsylvania eighty years before.

Inspired by Quaker principles of compassion and tolerance, Penn saw his colony as a "holy experiment" in which Christians and Indians could live together in harmony. He referred to this ideal society as the "Peaceable Kingdom." The nineteenth-century Quaker artist Edward Hicks produced a series of allegorical paintings of the Peaceable Kingdom, juxtaposing a theme from the Book of Isaiah with Penn's meetings with the Delaware Indians. In pursuit of this harmonious vision, Penn treated the Indians in his province with unusual respect and decency. The Conestogas called him "Onas" and the Delawares knew him as "Miquon"; both words mean "feather," referring to the mysterious new quill pen wielded at treaty negotiations. The Conestogas conferred the name Onas on Penn's children and grandchildren as well, in the hope that they might embody his benign spirit.

Yet for all Penn's decency, his holy experiment rested firmly on colonialist foundations. There would have been no Pennsylvania, after all, had he not received a gift of 29 million acres from Charles II in 1681—a gift that made him the largest individual landlord in the British Empire. Within his immense charter, Penn purchased land from Indians fairly and openly. But he did not do so simply out of benevolence. He needed to free the land of prior titles so that he could sell it to settlers and begin to recoup the vast expenses incurred in setting up his colony. As an English landlord, Penn naturally believed that land could be privately owned by individuals and that its occupants could permanently relinquish their title in return for money or goods. This idea ran counter to the ethos of Pennsylvania's Indians, who held their land in tribal trusts rather than as individuals and used it to sustain life rather than to make a profit. Indians often sold the same piece of land on multiple occasions, transferring rights of use and occupancy rather than absolute ownership. Penn wanted harmony with Indians, but he also needed to own their land outright. His holy experiment, therefore, never properly took root. But it left an enduring legacy: Pennsylvania did not fight its first war against Indians until the 1750s, when the Delawares and Shawnees, driven ever westward as they lost their land, launched devastating attacks on the province.

William Penn's holy experiment, already in decline by the time of his death in 1718, disintegrated gradually over the next few decades and collapsed during the Indian wars of the 1750s and 1760s. His son Thomas reverted to Anglicanism, casting off the Quaker faith that sustained his father's humane benevolence. Thomas Penn and his brothers continued to negotiate with Indians, but, unhampered by religious scruples, they did not hesitate to use fraud and intimidation. In 1737 they swindled the Delawares out of a tract of land almost as big as Rhode Island in a sordid transaction known as the "Walking Purchase." Although William Penn's legacy ensured that relations with Indians were at first more harmonious in Pennsylvania than in other American colonies, the eventual outcome was everywhere the same: expropriation, conquest, and extermination. The colony moved from the false dawn of Penn's holy experiment, through the avarice and subterfuge of his sons, to the carnage of the French and Indian War and the ruthless brutality of the Paxton Boys. By the end of 1763, with the annihilation of the Conestoga Indians, what was left of the Peaceable Kingdom had broken down entirely.

The Paxton Boys were Pennsylvania's most aggressive colonialists. Very little is known about them as individuals, but their general profile is clear. They lived in the hill country of northwestern Lancaster County and across the Susquehanna River in Cumberland County. Contemporaries referred to the region as the "frontier," and it was the first to be attacked during Indian wars. Some of the Paxton Boys were squatters, others farmed small plots of low-quality land; all of them hated Indians, and they detested the provincial government for failing to protect them during wartime. Those who were American-born—the great majority—were the children of settlers who came to Pennsylvania from the northern Irish province of Ulster. Contemporary accounts agree that all of them were Presbyterians.

On both sides of the Atlantic, Ulster Presbyterians served as a military and cultural buffer between zones of perceived civility and barbarity, separating Anglicans from Catholics in Ireland and eastern elites from Indians in the American colonies. What they wanted above all else was personal security and land to call their own. Ulster settlers began to arrive in Pennsylvania at the beginning of the eighteenth century, intruding on unpurchased Indian lands as squatters, to the consternation of the provincial government. As squatters they immediately came into conflict with the Penn family, who were simultaneously the rulers and landlords of the province. As early as 1730, a generation before the Paxton Boys, a group of Ulster squatters temporarily occupied Conestoga Manor, declaring that it was "against the Laws of God and Nature that so much Land Should lie idle while so many Christians wanted it to labour on and raise their Bread."

Idle land, hungry Christians, and the "Laws of God and Nature"—these were the words used to justify the dispossession of Indians in the eighteenth century. Together they gave rise to a powerful argument on the relationship between private property and colonialism. The English political philosopher John Locke stated the case cogently in 1690. God had given the earth "to mankind in common," Locke believed, but private property emerged when men applied their labor to nature. By rendering land more productive they gave it value, which properly belonged to the individuals who did the work. Making land productive was not just an opportunity for individual enrichment; it was also a religious obligation. "God, when he gave the world in common to all mankind, commanded man also to labour, and the penury of his condition required it of him," Locke explained. "God and his reason commanded him to subdue the earth, *i.e.* improve it for the benefit of life, and therein lay out something upon it that was his own, his labour."

But what about those who did not wish to "subdue" the land and did not see it as a commodity to be exploited? What, in other words, of the Indians in the "wild woods and uncultivated waste of *America*," as Locke put it, "left to nature, without any improvement, tillage or husbandry"? European settlers had the opportunity to seize this "waste" land for themselves; indeed, they were morally obliged to do so, provided they respected the property rights of other colonists. William Penn found this idea anathema. He had roo much respect for Indians to treat them in this way, and he protected their interests as well as his own by decreeing that settlers could acquire land only through his government rather than by direct purchase or seizure. For the Paxton Boys, on the other hand, the idea of seizing Indian land made perfect sense. They were not in the habit of reading John Locke in their spare time; their actions were driven not by political theory but by a desperate desire for land and safety during wartime. They scorned the property rights of other colonists, from the proprietary government downward.

The Paxton Boys used violence as their sale tactic. Locke, by contrast, had argued that violence toward Indians was unnecessary because English claims to American land already rested on impregnable economic and religious grounds. For the same reason, Indians deserved no compensation for idle land lost to industrious settlers. In practice this model of peaceful dispossession never worked; it was a smokescreen for forcing Indians off the land. The Paxton Boys pushed the logic of displacement to its most brutal extreme. Nobody was arrested or prosecuted after the massacres, which encouraged other settlers to behave in similar ways. The result was wave after wave of violence on the frontier, culminating in total war against Indians during the American Revolution. The Paxton Boys' brutality was anomalous as late as 1763, in Pennsylvania at least; by the time of the American Revolution, it had become commonplace.

During the Revolution waging total war against Indians became an act of patriotism. The anti-Indian campaigns of the Revolutionary War enacted the brutal logic of the Paxton Boys on a devastating scale. Now the violence was systematic rather than sporadic. In 1779 General John Sullivan led an expedition up the Susquehanna River to Iroquoia, where he waged a scorched-earth campaign against the Six Nations, destroying forty Iroquois villages, including the sacred ceremonial center of Onondaga. Pennsylvania militiamen similarly devastated the Ohio country. At the end of the war Britain transferred to the United States most of North America east of the Mississippi and south of Canada. Because four of the Iroquois nations had fought on the British side, the Iroquois confederacy forfeited all territory to which it laid claim. The United States assumed sovereignty over this vast expanse of Indian land by right of conquest.

A few years before the Revolution the Penn family gave exclusive use of the farm at Conestoga Indiantown to an Anglican minister named Thomas Barton as a reward for his years of service to the proprietary interest. Barton had outspokenly defended the Paxton Boys in a pamphlet published directly after the massacres, yet he had no sympathy for the idea that Conestoga Indiantown rightfully belonged to them. The Paxton Boys, he noted, "took possession of this Farm—built Cabbins and settled upon it under the ridiculous notion of a *right by Conquest*." Yet this "ridiculous notion" was fast becoming ubiquitous on the frontier even as Barton wrote. When the newly founded

Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography published his letter in 1880, the editors noted that the Paxton Boys had believed "they stood in the same position of a nation who conquered its neighbors and enemies by force of arms." The editors also observed that "only a few years later this idea was carried to a successful conclusion by our patriotic forefathers." This statement was not intended ironically or critically. The Paxton Boys did more than declare an end to Pennsylvania's Peaceable Kingdom. They ushered in the new order that reached fruition during the American Revolution.

. . . In the opening decades of the eighteenth century Pennsylvania forged an alliance with the powerful Iroquois confederacy, which claimed the small Indian nations of Pennsylvania as "tributaries" by right of conquest. The Iroquois invariably claimed to have defeated the ancestors of the subordinate nations in battle; although details of a decisive military victory were often lacking, they backed up the claim with elaborate diplomacy and the threat of force. The Iroquois sometimes required the subject nations to pay a tribute in the form of wampum (beads made from polished shells, woven onto strings or belts and used for currency and ceremonial purposes) or other gifts. More important, they denied their tributaries two fundamental rights: the power to buy or sell land and the power to go to war. Pennsylvania's emerging alliance with the Iroquois, which gave both parties leverage against the colony of New York, hastened the dispossession of the Delaware Indians, most of whom moved across the Susquehanna River to the Ohio country.

. . . [T]he French and Indian War . . . set against the back-drop of the larger imperial conflict that engulfed North America between 1754 and 1763, . . . originated in the Ohio country, triggered in part by Virginian adventurers led by George Washington. When a British expedition under General Edward Braddock suffered catastrophic defeat near the French stronghold of Fort Duquesne in 1755, the western Delawares, led by three remarkable brothers, Shingas, Pisquetomen, and Tamaqua, went to war against Pennsylvania. By the end of the year Teedyuscung, the self-styled king of the eastern Delawares, had joined the campaign. In 1756 Pennsylvania took the fateful step of going to war for the first time in its history. The declaration of war, which included scalp bounties for Indians, signaled the collapse of the Peaceable Kingdom and provoked a crisis among Pennsylvania's small but influential faction of strict pacifist Quakers, led by Israel Pemberton Jr., who supported the Delawares' efforts to negotiate a peace with Pennsylvania. The treaty negotiations, combined with the conquest of Fort Duquesne, brought the fighting in Pennsylvania to an end in 1758. But memories of the French and Indian War died hard among frontier settlers, who blamed the Quakers for failing to provide adequate defense and harbored deep suspicions about local Indians, including the Conestogas.

No sooner had the French and Indian War ended with the first Peace of Paris in 1763 than the great Indian uprising known as Pontiac's War began. . . . After the massacres at Conestoga Indiantown and Lancaster, several hundred Paxton Boys marched on Philadelphia, threatening to sack the city. Due in large part to the efforts of Benjamin Franklin, the rebels chose to write down their grievances rather than proceed with their march. They submitted two documents, the *Declaration* and the *Remonstrance*, castigating the provincial government for its policies regarding Indians during wartime. Only one of their grievances was redressed before the American Revolution: the restoration in 1764 of scalp bounties for Indians killed or captured during wartime, which had been discontinued in 1758, when the Pennsylvania phase of the French and Indian War ended. But the Paxton Boys won a larger victory, escaping unpunished after exterminating a group of Indians who lived under the protection of the government.

The Paxton crisis unleashed an extraordinary exchange of pamphlets in Philadelphia. . . . The debate went beyond the massacres and the march on Philadelphia to address the fundamental question of how Pennsylvania ought to be governed. The Penn family, as proprietary governors of the province, controlled the executive branch; the Quaker party dominated the Assembly. From the mid-1750s onward the two branches were locked in disagreement, especially when it came to funding military defense. From the perspective of frontier settlers, the government seemed callously indifferent. In the political crisis triggered by the Paxton Boys, the Quaker party and its supporters squared off against an uneasy coalition of Presbyterians and Anglicans, 'who rallied to the proprietary interest. Franklin's *Narrative of the Late Massacres,* attacking the Paxton Boys, Presbyterianism, and the Penn family, triggered a pamphlet war in 1764 that culminated in his ill-conceived proposal for royal government in Pennsylvania. Only twelve years later Franklin was at the forefront of the patriotic movement to rid the American colonies of monarchy. Yet he was consistent throughout this period in his contempt for archaic forms of power and privilege; he merely broadened his focus by 1776 to include George III as well as the Penns.

. . . After the Conestoga massacres the frontier descended into anarchy. John Penn's Quaker critics insisted that his failure to pursue the Paxton Boys had undermined the reputation of the provincial government and given carte blanche to like-minded frontier settlers, thereby threatening to provoke another Indian war. When the Fort Stanwix Treaty of 1768 cleared the way for large-scale settlement in Pennsylvania west of the Allegheny mountains, violent seizure of Indian land became the norm rather than the exception. Having disappeared from view for almost six years after the Conestoga massacres, the Paxton Boys reemerged in 1769. They offered their services as mercenaries to the Susquehannah Company, a Connecticut land speculation venture intent on planting a colony in the Wyoming Valley of northern Pennsylvania.

Lazarus Stewart, who led the attack on the Lancaster workhouse in 1763, brought a group of Paxton Boys into the Wyoming Valley, where they finally acquired the land they had long been fighting for. As the American Revolution approached, the Paxton Boys cast themselves as Yankee patriots doing battle against the arch-Tory Thomas Penn. They fought their last battle in July 1778, when an army of loyalists and Iroquois Indians invaded the Wyoming Valley. The Paxton Boys died as patriots—of a sort—fighting Indians over land. The Indians won the fight that day, but they could not hope to prosper in the world the Paxton Boys had helped create. Wholesale destruction of Indian culture came later in the Peaceable Kingdom than in other American colonies, bur Pennsylvania was the gateway to the west—and hence to the future.

Cynthia J. Van Zandt **NO**

Brothers Among Nations: The Pursuit of Intercultural Alliances in Early America, 1580–1660

Captain Claiborne's Alliance

Before tobacco, the fur trade not only gave Virginia its first major export product but also shaped many intercultural relations for the first thirty years of the colony's history, peaking in the 1630s. Indeed, throughout eastern North America, the 1630s witnessed a great increase in the fur trade. Native Americans and Europeans increasingly looked for additional or new trading partners as networks spread over greater distances and in new directions. Every trade relationship was evaluated according to its benefits to individual traders and its impacts on political and cultural affairs. In seventeenth-century North America, the fur trade at times provided the nexus for remarkable kinds of intercultural cooperation. In the end the promise of these alliances seldom lasted, but the short-lived nature of many of them was not necessarily apparent to anyone in the early seventeenth century.

The shifting web of alliances spanning eastern North America made it difficult for anyone at the time to foresee which ones would have the greatest staying power. What they were able to see was only that each new partnership had the potential to affect an entire sequence of other relationships. As it turned out, the fact that European settlements changed so dramatically in the 1630s meant that European power dynamics often interfered in otherwise flourishing intercultural connections.

The cultural and political landscape of eastern North America began to alter dramatically in the 1630s with alliance-changing shifts in several regions. The new colonies of Massachusetts Bay, New Haven, Maryland, and New Sweden appeared on the scene, and colonial populations increased and spread out. Any alteration in the network also invariably threatened a change in political power dynamics, and people became particularly alert to the impact of shifting relations as the movement of peoples accelerated and the fur trade expanded. In other words, intercultural relationships had to survive not only the constant challenge of cultural misunderstanding, but also the aggressions of other parties threatened by the new alliance. . . .

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In the 1630s the Chesapeake became the center of an extraordinary intercultural alliance organized around the fur trade. The Susquehannocks had long been looking for a reliable European trading ally and found one in an English colonist named William Claiborne. . . .

The Susquehannock–Claiborne alliance was extraordinarily influential, and its impact had both geographical and temporal dimensions. Geographically, the Susquehannock–Claiborne connection and its demise affected people and events from the Chesapeake to Iroquoia. Temporally, its effects lingered throughout the first half of the century.

The strategies that both parties used to create the alliance demonstrate the ways in which power and advantage shifted fluidly between Indians and Europeans in the 1630s. Moreover, the Susquehannock–Claiborne association had far-reaching consequences for other peoples from the Chesapeake to Iroquoia, and its disruption by Maryland at the end of the decade transferred the Susquehannocks' attention more fully to the mid-Atlantic and the people who lived there. . . .

In the early 1630s, however, the Susquehannocks looked with considerable interest at the English settlements in the Chesapeake, and William Claiborne helped to persuade them that they had finally found a willing and reliable European ally. To understand why such a collaborative effort seemed so beneficial to each side, we need to understand several events that took place in the 1610s and 1620s; indeed, the Susquehannocks' willingness to ally with Claiborne had everything to do with their relationship with the Five Nations or Haudenosaunee. Part of the Susquehannocks' Haudenosaunee strategy was to develop several other alliance configurations in the years before they agreed to one with Claiborne.

Moreover, Claiborne's willingness to ally with the Susquehannocks and the readiness of the Virginia governor and his council to allow it had much to do with the collapse of the Powhatan-English alliance. And in the midst of these shifting Susquehannock and English alignments, Dutch and Swedish colonizing activities helped to create the circumstances that shaped the beginning and the end of the Susquehannock–Claiborne alliance.

In some ways, the Englishman who had played a crucial role in establishing the earlier Powhatan-English alliance also helped to lay the groundwork for a partnership between Virginia colonists and the Susquehannocks. Indeed, before Pocahontas came to call Captain John Smith "father," Smith had spent considerable time exploring the area to the north of Jamestown. . . .

Smith first met a group of Susquehannocks in the summer of 1608, and he reported that they were quite willing to establish a coalition with the Jamestown English. Although much has been made of the report that Smith was awestruck by the Susquehannocks' powerful stature—indeed, he portrayed them as giants—and of his claim that they were in awe of and tried to worship him, ultimately the key information he conveyed was that the Susquehannocks were a powerful nation and were willing to ally with the Jamestown English.

However, the English settlers at Jamestown never really followed through on Smith's early contacts with the Susquehannocks, in part because of the great stresses of Jamestown's early years and in part because of their careful monitoring of their connection with the powerful Powhatans. But over the years English colonists remembered the Susquehannocks and kept an eye on other Europeans' relations with them. In the twenty years after the first Smith-Susquehannock meeting, the English had few recorded dealings with them. Instead, the Susquehannocks made intermittent contact with French and Dutch colonists priests and traders and chose to pursue alliances alternately with New France and New Netherland.

The Susquehannocks' comparatively widespread contact with Europeans of different ethnicities resulted from their geographical position, which was almost in the center of the array of European colonial settlements on the east coast from the Chesapeake to the Saint Lawrence. It also resulted from two other factors. The first was the Susquehannock nation's size and strength. They were an Iroquoian speaking people and, like the members of the Huron and Haudenosaunee Five Nations confederacies, were more populous and militarily more powerful than most of the Algonquian peoples living near European settlements. The second, which helps to explain why the Susquehannocks had wide-ranging contacts with Europeans, was the fact that their network of alliances and enemies coincided in the early seventeenth century with the spread of European colonial settlement. For instance the Susquehannocks' ongoing enmity with members of the Five Nations Iroquois, or Haudenosaunee especially the Mohawks and the Senecas, was directly responsible for the Susquehannocks' choices in their dealings with French, Dutch, Swedish, and English colonists and traders. Furthermore, the changing nature of the Susquehannock–Five Nations rivalries also affected the Susquehannocks' relations with Algonquian peoples throughout the eastern seaboard. During the first half of the seventeenth century, the Susquehannocks played a crucial role, culturally, politically, and geographically, between Algonquians, Iroquoians, and Europeans. . . .

Because they were within relatively easy reach of Dutch and French colonial settlements, the Susquehannocks turned their attention first to them. In the summer of 1615 Samuel de Champlain first learned that the Susquehannocks could be impressive allies. That August, Champlain and Huron warriors were gathering their resources in order to attack the Onondagas. While they were still engaged in preparations, the Hurons received news from their allies, the Susquehannocks, who sent word that they would provide five hundred men to fight with the Hurons and Champlain against the Onondagas and that they desired friendship and an alliance with the French. The Susquehannocks also explained to the French that the Five Nations made war on them periodically and received assistance from the Dutch.

For the Susquehannocks to join in the upcoming strike against the Onondagas would satisfy two important requirements of alliance. First, it would fulfill their obligations to their existing Huron allies. Second, it would enable the Susquehannocks to extend their alliance networks to include Samuel de Champlain and the French newcomers. Champlain and his men must have seemed ideal new allies to the Susquehannocks because they already had sided with the Hurons against the Five Nations Iroquois and could provide both significant military assistance and new trade goods. In the end, the Susquehannocks apparently did not arrive in time for the attack on the Onondagas, but their offer is revealing of how Native American alliance and information networks functioned in the early colonial era and demonstrates that the Susquehannocks were well aware of colonial developments from Iroquoia to the Chesapeake Bay. . . .

Claiborne came to Virginia about five years after the Susquehannocks offered to fight with the Hurons and Champlain's forces against the Onondagas. When he arrived in the colony in 1621, he came with an appointment from James I as the colony's surveyor. Significantly, he came with good connections in the Virginia Company and at court and would use them both in the colony and in England in order to set up an extraordinary intercultural trade venture. It is also noteworthy that Claiborne arrived in Virginia on the eve of the final collapse of the Powhatan–English alliance. This too would bring important consequences for Claiborne's trading activities only a few years later.

In the period leading up to the 1622 Powhatan attack, English colonial policy increasingly attempted to undermine the Powhatan paramount chiefdom. Colonial officials sought every means they could to drive a wedge between the Powhatans and their allied nations. Recognizing that Wahunsonacock and his successor, Opechancanough, had the strongest hold on member nations that were geographically closest to the Powhatans, English colonial leaders focused on luring the more distant member nations away from the Powhatan alliance altogether. Although English efforts before 1622 were never completely successful at breaking up the Powhatan paramount chiefdom, the policy had the effect of increasing the degree of attention English colonial leaders paid to the areas farther from the James River.

The Powhatans' 1622 surprise attack did not succeed in destroying the colony of Virginia. However, it did stop English colonial expansion to the west for the foreseeable future, with the additional consequence of prompting English colonists working in intercultural trade to look to the northeast and the Chesapeake Bay as the best route for expansion. They discovered a flourishing exchange there. Indeed, John Pory reported that nearly a hundred European traders were active in the Chesapeake Bay intercultural commerce in the early 1620, William Claiborne was one of those who quicklysaw the promise of joining the English traders' push to the north.

Having survived the 1622 Powhatan attack, Claiborne found his personal circumstances in the colony steadily improving in several ways. In the aftermath of the attack James I rescinded the Virginia Company's charter and made Virginia the first English royal colony in North America. The new imperial structure meant changes in Jamestown, and Claiborne was appointed a member of the new Governor's Council and received additional land grants as partial payment for his new office. These land grants were in addition to the two hundred acres he had received in partial payment of his services as colony surveyor; his first grants were for lands on the eastern shore.

Moreover, Claiborne also had land on the western shore at Kecoughtan, which, by the early 1630s, he was able to use as an auxiliary base for his trading enterprise. Before then, however, his trade path toward the Susquehannocks was cleared as he obtained greater public power in Virginia and another colonial office. In 1625 he became secretary of the colony and received trading licenses as a result of his new office. William Claiborne was well positioned to move into the fur trade.

The following year Claiborne began making tangible moves toward developing trade contacts to the north, and the Susquehannocks began to focus their alliance-seeking efforts farther south than in previous years. Thus, they began to move toward each other in search of new intercultural allies. Armed with his new trading licenses, Claiborne set out on an exploratory trip to the Chesapeake Bay. He stopped to check on his property at Accomack on the way, where he discovered that squatters had taken up residence. Instead of having them either arrested or evicted, Claiborne realized that they might offer him just the additional assistance he would need in developing a thriving trade on the Chesapeake Bay if he were able to find suitable Native American trading partners. Thus Claiborne allowed the squatters to stay at Accomack. Within five years they would move to form a new community and provide crucial support for the Virginia side of the Claiborne-Susquehannock trade relationship.

Also in 1626, very near the time that Claiborne was exploring the possibilities for a trade on the Chesapeake Bay, a delegation of Susquehannocks explored the possibilities for a trade alliance with the colonists at the new Dutch West India Company colony of New Netherland. Although Dutch traders and explorers had been active in North America since the first decade of the seventeenth century, it was not until the 1620s that a Dutch colony was attempted under the sponsorship of the West India Company. . . .

In the end, the Dutch–Susquehannock alliance did not flourish in 1626 or 1627. The timing was not right for New Netherland's colonial officials. Little did they know it, but they needed to act quickly to secure a place as the Susquehannocks' premier European ally. They had lost a valuable opportunity, one with ramifications beyond a single trading season. Soon the Susquehannocks found themselves entertaining a proposition from a different European ally. The following year William Claiborne received a trading license from Virginia. He was just in time.

Claiborne pursued his hopes of moving further into the fur trade again the next year, in 1628, when he sailed to the Chesapeake on an exploratory voyage. He saw real opportunities for finding a niche in the intercultural fur exchange in Virginia's northern reaches because New Netherland abandoned Fort Nassau on the Delaware in 1628, choosing for the moment to concentrate its resources on building up the colony's Manhattan center. As the Dutch pulled back to the Hudson, Claiborne began lining up the necessary colonial approvals to press outward.

On January 31, 1629/1630, Virginia's governor and council granted Claiborne a commission to trade with the Susquehannocks until April 1. This was quite a limited trading license, though not an unusual one. The fur trading season would eventually stretch from March to June each year. In the Chesapeake Bay region, early English accounts reported that most Indian nations there were not yet accustomed to trading furs each year, and so the "trading season" was not yet a standard intercultural market period. Claiborne's 1629 license may also have been intentionally brief, intended to give him only enough time to prove whether such a venture was likely to succeed.

Having secured a trading license from Virginia and faced with the news that the Dutch settlement on the Delaware was no longer a competitor, William Claiborne established his first base in the Chesapeake region. He selected a small island in the north of the bay, near the mouth of the Susquehanna River, and called it Palmer's Island. This was an ideal preliminary meeting place for Claiborne's initial negotiations with the Susquehannocks. Ultimately, it was not large enough to support a full-time settlement, with all of the necessary supplies for trade and defense, but it was a strategic, neutral meeting ground, and Claiborne made sure he secured Palmer's Island from the outset.

Later the same year, several events affected intercultural alliances in the Chesapeake. The first was the threat of a new colony. After New Netherland pulled away from its settlement on the Delaware (at least temporarily), another English venturer appeared on the scene. Cecil Calvert, Lord Baltimore, stopped in Jamestown after having visited Newfoundland, where he had originally intended to establish a haven for English Catholics. Lord Baltimore found the Chesapeake more inviting, and his visit threw the Virginia colonists into an uproar.

Panicking at the thought that Baltimore might try to move in on their colony, Virginia's leaders quickly sent William Claiborne to England to intervene on the colony's behalf and prevent Baltimore from creating another English Chesapeake plantation. Having survived a catastrophic Powhatan attack, epidemic disease, and years of malnutrition and economic failure, Virginia was finally operating on steadier footing. Yet it now appeared endangered from an entirely new direction: It was under threat from an English lord and a Roman Catholic, one with long-standing connections at court.

If William Ciaiborne seemed to Virginia's leaders to be an ideal choice to plead their case back home in England, the mission provided him with the perfect opportunity to put the financial elements of his trading plan into place. In this, Claiborne was remarkably like Isaac Allerton, who at nearly the same time was working to secure a new patent for Plymouth Colony while expanding his own trade contacts and arranging for additional financing for his growing ventures. Claiborne did much the same thing in 1629. He argued against Baltimore's plans and put forward Virginia's primacy to the region. However, while in England on behalf of the Virginia Colony, he also laid the foundations for his own expansion plan.

With an eye toward cornering the best market on the eastern seaboard south of the Saint Lawrence, Claiborne approached a firm of English investors with experience in speculating in North American trade. He established a partnership with William Cloberry and partners. Cloberry had already invested in the North American fur trade and had connections with the Kirk brothers, who seized Quebec from New France and held it as an English colony for two years. Accordingly, Cloberry knew how lucrative the North American fur trade could be; he needed only to be persuaded that the Chesapeake could offer a reliable source of high-quality furs. In addition, he evidently had already begun exploring that option because he had financed a trading mission in the Chesapeake under the leadership of Henry Fleet.

Claiborne, however, proposed a larger and longer-term venture and suggested using Kent Island as the group's main trading base. Kent Island was further south than Palmer's Island, but it was larger and more easily defended and would allow for easy access of trade boats and supplies. Using both islands would give Claiborne and his partners ready access to one of the eastern seaboard's most widely used routes into the interior, where the best furs were found. Furthermore, this area was far enough from New France to enable English traders to deal directly with Native American traders, especially if Claiborne could establish a lasting alliance with the Susquehannocks. Cloberry and his partners were swayed, and Claiborne secured the financing he needed. In typical seventeenth-century English entrepreneurial fashion, he ventured his person in the scheme, and Cloberry and the other England-based partners would open their purses.

Meanwhile, back in the colony of Virginia, relations with Algonquians near English settlements continued to worsen. In October the House of Burgesses called for regular military expeditions against the Pamunkeys and other Algonquians who were hostile to the colony and declared that the settlement would organize three strikes against them every year, one in November, one in March, and one in July. The relentless pace of these infrequent but regular attacks was designed to break the Indians once and for all, but it did not signal the end of Virginia's willingness to form alliances with native peoples.

While the new policy showed the hardening attitudes of Virginia's colonists toward many of the Algonquians who lived closest to them (and certainly toward any who had participated in the 1622 attack), it also reinforced the colony's shift in geographical emphasis. Intercultural alliances, particularly for trading purposes, were still of interest to Virginia's leaders, but only with native peoples who lived well beyond the limits of English settlement. As William Claiborne would soon show, the Susquehannocks would fit that bill.

Claiborne finally put all of the elements of his plan together in 1631, and for the next five years he based an interracial trading community on two islands in the Chesapeake Bay and developed a flourishing alliance with the powerful Susquehannocks, whose capital town lay just to the north of the bay on the Susquehanna River. Having persuaded his new English partners that Kent Island was an ideal location for an ongoing fur-trading enterprise in the Chesapeake Bay region, Claiborne returned to the Chesapeake in 1631 and settled Kent Island.

By October the Kent Island settlement had the rough outlines of a defensible colonial town, with a large, timber-framed house and several thatched-roof huts, all surrounded by palisades and four mounted guns. Claiborne's design was typical of early colonial settlements, especially their forts and trading posts. He had buildings in which to store his merchandise and to house and support his colonists, and he considered the importance of defending the community from the outset. Although Claiborne was probably not thinking in these terms, his Kent Island settlement would have looked familiar to the

Susquehannocks, whose reputation as a fearsome, powerful nation stemmed not only from their fighting expertise but also from the security of their well-defended and palisaded town.

From 1631 until 1638 Kent Island was the center of Claiborne's enterprise and was closely associated with him and his allies, the Susquehannocks. In 1631 he moved quickly to secure his position in the trade because he soon learned that Dutch traders were back in the region and had established a new settlement in the Delaware River valley in April. The new trading post was called Swaanendael, and Claiborne seems to have decided to neutralize Dutch competition by accommodating it.

In 1631 he received a commission from Virginia governor John Harvey to trade with the Dutch. In the end, Swaanendael did not last; conflict over a stolen tin coat of arms escalated in the chasm of intercultural misunderstanding, and neighboring Indians destroyed the settlement in retaliation for Dutch handling of the incident. Nevertheless, Claiborne knew that Dutch interest in the area and its native peoples would not end with Swaanendael's destruction; his best strategy to overcome this competition was to move quickly and claim a location where he could stay in regular contact with his native allies.

Thus in August the first ship supplied by Cloberry and Company, the *Africa*, arrived in the Chesapeake for Claiborne to use. After stopping first at Claiborne's plantation at Kecoughtan, the *Africa* sailed on into the Chesapeake Bay, and Claiborne and his crew went on to the Susquehannocks to trade. For the next several years, Claiborne's Kent Island crew maintained a successful alliance with the Susquehannocks, one that was quite lucrative for Claiborne but also appealed to Susquehannock interests. Moreover, the Susquehannocks' understanding of their alliance with Claiborne included a broad array of obligations. After Claiborne's community came under threat from Baltimore's new English colony in 1635, the Susquehannocks continued to fulfill their obligations to Claiborne's men for many years, long after Claiborne himself had moved back south of the Chesapeake Bay. But that came later. In the interim, the Susquehannock–Claiborne association had consequences for other Indian nations in the region.

When the Susquehannocks eventually formed their alliance with William Claiborne, various Indian nations around the Chesapeake felt the direct results of the shift in the Susquehannocks' attention. Claiborne and other English traders working with him established Kent Island and Palmer's Island in the Chesapeake Bay as fur-trading centers, which were well within reach of the Susquehannocks' major town at the mouth of the Susquehannock River, where it emptied into the bay. However, Claiborne's development of the trading centers at Kent and Palmer's islands had severe consequences for Indian nations on the upper eastern shore because these hubs encouraged the Susquehannocks to move farther south. Algonquians on the upper eastern shore found themselves largely unable to slow the advancing Susquehannocks.

The much more powerful Susquehannocks pushed the upper Eastern Shore Algonquians south from their early-seventeenth-century homelands into the Nanticokes' territory. They also cultivated a client relationship with the Algonquian Tockwoghs in the early seventeenth century, in which the Tockwoghs were subordinate to the Susquehannocks. In addition, the Susquehannocks and the Piscataways developed a strong rivalry, and Susquehannockwarriors raided Piscataway communities.

In much the same way that European colonies were gradually expanding along the Atlantic seaboard during the first three decades of the seventeenth century, so too were several Indian nations. Native peoples, such as the Susquehannocks, who were not devastated by disease epidemics often responded to the changing circumstances by expanding their power base and sometimes by moving into new territories. In other words, the Susquehannocks' movements and their alliance with William Claiborne reshaped native, European, and intercultural politics throughout the region. As we have seen, they were by no means the only Indian nation to expand in this way, nor were they the only one to have such a wide-ranging impact both culturally and geographically. But they were one of the most important players on the North American Atlantic seaboard during the first half of the seventeenth century, and their significance has often been underestimated, both at the time and by later generations of historians.

In the seventeenth century Lord Baltimore and his colonial officials were among those Europeans who failed to understand the strength and range of the Susquehannocks' influence. At first Baltimore truly did not comprehend the value of Claiborne's alliance with the Susquehannocks. Perhaps he believed that it was a relatively unimportant arrangement through which Claiborne and his London partners acquired North American furs.

Although there is little surviving evidence to tell us exactly what Calvert thought about Claiborne's affiliation with the Susquehannocks, the actions of Maryland Colony officials can explain a great deal because, regardless of how Calvert perceived the relationship, the actions of his colonists and colonial officials clearly indicate that they did not understand the larger North American context of alliances into which they had just stumbled.

Maryland's insistence that the Calverts claimed the entire region of the new colony, including Claiborne's island trading bases, failed to give credit to Claiborne's reasonable claims to the area even under English standards. Even more important, it failed to recognize the webs of alliances that already crisscrossed the area and paid no heed at all to the American conventions of diplomacy that governed them. Maryland's response to the Susquehannock–Claiborne alliance is a clear example of the fact that it took actual North American experience and knowledge for Europeans to fully understand the necessity of allying with powerful Indian nations or at least to gain a more realistic appreciation of which Indian nations were the most powerful. This was true despite the fact that many colonial promoters expected some degree of alliance formation. It was one thing to advocate the need to understand and make alliances with native peoples; it was quite another to recognize the real thing when faced with Indian peoples themselves.

The reality was often more extensive and more essential than even the Europeans' theories of colonization and trade asserted. In the case of the Susquehannock–Claiborne alliance of the 1630s, Lord Baltimore also obviously failed to understand that his actions against Claiborne would have consequences that would extend well beyond European control. Instead, Baltimore based his determination more on a sense of his power in England and in relation to colonists in Virginia. Nevertheless, it was a bad decision. As a result, his colony faced war with the Susquehannocks for nearly two more decades, and the legacy of those early years of conflict would reverberate throughout the 1670s.

The experiment at Kent Island did not fail because English alliances with native peoples collapsed. They did not. The Susquehannock–Claiborne alliance ended after fewer than ten years because of intra-English competition for favored status with the Susquehannocks. In the end, Kent Island could not survive the failure of competing English colonial interests to set aside their opposing claims. It was not an intercultural breakdown.

On the contrary, the Susquehannock–Claiborne alliance was extraordinarily successful. In the early seventeenth century, rivalries between Europeans, even those from the same general culture, played as important a role in shaping North America as rivalries between cultures did. In the context of early seventeenth-century North America the offer of alliance could come from any direction, and any new collaborative effort could be immediately challenged by Europeans or Native Americans who were threatened by the new alignment of interests.

The Susquehannocks' search for a reliable European ally and trading partner in the 1620s and 1630s was twice thwarted by internal European power struggles. First, the proposed Susquehannock–Dutch alliance was prevented from becoming more flrmly established in 1626, a fact that enabled Claiborne to push himself as the Susquehannocks' primary European ally. Ten years later, intra-European conflict impeded the Susquehannocks again when Lord Baltimore forced Claiborne to abandon his Kent and Palmer's islands trading posts.

In both instances, these power struggles rather than any cultural differences between Indians and European allies were the reason intercultural alliances failed. Yet, to a significant degree, they were unintended consequences of Europeans' preoccupations with their own rivalries and interests. When Europeans focused their attention on mapping other European rivals without paying adequate notice to the webs of Native American connections, the effects could be extremely disruptive for Indians and European colonists alike. . . .