In 1863, led by a group of staunch Unionists, the western counties of Virginia seceded from their mother commonwealth to form a new state. This was not the first attempt to separate the mountainous area from the piedmont and the tidewater country. Patriotism, however, played little part that time. Less than a century previous a group of entrepreneurs and land speculators from the eastern seaboard and England had endeavored to establish a new colony, Vandalia, in the frontier region south and east of the Ohio River. The boundaries of the proposed province closely match those of the present state of West Virginia. Their efforts ended in failure, but that was not for a lack of trying.

Since the country was sparsely populated, the inspiration for separation had to come from elsewhere. Some of the leading merchants and politicians in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and England hoped to profit from their efforts. Printer and philosopher Benjamin Franklin, his son Sir William, governor of New Jersey, Superintendent of Indian Affairs in the Northern Department Sir William Johnson, his deputy George Croghan, merchants George Morgan and John Baynton, and lawyer and Speaker of the Pennsylvania Assembly Joseph Galloway all interested themselves in the project. The leading lights of the movement, though, were members of a prominent and prosperous Quaker mercantile family, the Whartons of Philadelphia.¹

The Wharton males, guided and inspired by patriarch Joseph, Senior (1707-76), had risen in two generations from relative poverty to riches in local trade, the export-import business, and sponsoring small industries. His sons Thomas (1730/31-1784), Joseph, Junior (1732-1816), and Charles (1744-1838) profited as merchants. Samuel (1732-1800) became a partner in Baynton and Wharton, later Baynton, Wharton and Morgan, a firm interested in trading overseas and with the Indians in the west. A younger brother, Isaac (1745-1808), allied himself with Thomas and progressively became a successful insurance man and banker. All held interests in common, particularly the accumulation of excess capital to invest in wide-ranging enterprises with emphasis on land bought cheap and sold dear.² In many respects the story of Vandalia centers on the Whartons and their moves and countermoves to obtain approval for the new colony from the British crown.

The Whartons had initially invested in real estate in the vicinity of Philadelphia, but had rapidly expanded and extended their speculations. Thomas in particular had with various partners purchased land in the frontier regions of Virginia, New York, and Pennsylvania. His Virginia ventures included tracts in what is now the eastern panhandle of West Virginia. All these efforts failed to find a profit. In some cases, as in Virginia and New York, Indian troubles and depredations and the advent of the War of American Independence discouraged prospective buyers here and abroad. Clouded titles further confused the issue. In the Wyoming Valley of Pennsylvania, for instance, courts decided disputed claims in favor of squatters on the land rather than to absentee speculators.³ The fight for Vandalia began with the failure of the Illinois Company.

The end of the French and Indian War and the resulting Treaty of Paris in 1763 opened vast areas of formerly enemy-held territory to British exploitation. Traders such as Baynton, Wharton and Morgan foresaw immense profits to be gained from supplying various Indian nations and the British garrisons along the Mississippi River. Samuel and his partners together with Croghan and some frontier merchants from Lancaster formed the "grand Illinois Venture," which by 1766 evolved into the Illinois Company. The investors included four Whartons (Joseph, Senior; Joseph, Junior; Samuel, and Thomas), George and John Morgan, John Baynton, William Franklin, George Croghan, and Sir William Johnson. For additional capital they later invited some Englishmen to participate, a deal which paved the way for future joint Anglo-American speculative collaborations. An interested bystander was Benjamin Franklin, then Pennsylvania's agent in London. The investors attempted to use his influence in governmental circles to obtain the necessary approval. Franklin readily cooperated. He had already tentatively agreed to join Samuel and Baynton in the purchase of two large tracts in newly acquired
Quebec. In all, the Illinois Company applied for a grant of 1,400,000 acres to be effected upon the establishment of a civil government. This effort collapsed for several reasons. Loss of trade goods and overinvestment forced Baynton, Wharton and Morgan into receivership. The reluctance of British ministers to approve large grants, however, proved to be the main cause. They also feared that the resulting violations of the Proclamation Line of 1763, which limited settlements to the east of Allegheny Mountain, would invite the Indians to renew fierce and bloody frontier wars. Competing claims by other interested parties, mainly represented by the Gratz family of Philadelphia and Lancaster, also confused government agencies which took the easy way out by declining all applications.4

The failure of the Illinois venture caused the Whartons and their allies to seek their fortunes elsewhere. They grabbed at what appeared to be a better opportunity, tying themselves to the appeals of the "suffering traders." In 1754, during the opening scenes of the French and Indian War, several traders, including William Trent and Croghan, lost supplies to Indian raids. Trent, a partner in Franks, Trent, Simons and Company, was a close associate of the Gratzes. The natives repeated their seizures in 1763 when Pontiac lured his followers to battle English settlers on the frontier. Some of the material destroyed during the "conspiracy" belonged to Baynton, Wharton and Morgan although the firm had evidently only consigned goods to other traders. The victims of the attacks sent Croghan to London in 1764 to seek compensation for their losses. Croghan failed to interest the government in their appeals, and he returned empty-handed.5

In February 1765 twenty-one parties petitioned Sir William Johnson to convince the Six Nations to indemnify them for the £80,862:12:05 (New York currency) in destroyed goods. Samuel and his firm had already received the proxies of four of the traders, and Trent represented the remainder. They and other speculators soon convinced additional distressed men to sell their shares at a discount to be paid when the Indians repaid them by forfeiting some land. A complicated system of shares was devised based on the value of each individual's losses. As in most cases such as this, the speculator soon completely superceded the original losers. Johnson assembled a meeting at Johnson Hall in April at which time he placed the petition forcibly before the sachems. He chose, however, to ignore the "sufferers" of 1754 because, as he later explained, the Indians destroyed their property in time of war. On May 6 the chiefs agreed to concede some lands to the traders, but nothing further resulted from the conference. Baynton, Wharton, and Morgan remained optimistic of "the Justice of Our Application" for the Indians "making Recompense for their Robbry."6 The major steps for obtaining the land came with the organization of the Indiana Company, the details of which are vague, and the conference at Fort Stanwix in 1768. Samuel Wharton with 16,628 shares was the major stockholder of the new company. Other important shareholders included John Baynton (8,530), Trent (7,427), and William Franklin (5,399).7
On October 24, 1768, after some delays, Sir William Johnson opened the meeting at Fort Stanwix. The seriousness of the main issue - alterations to the Proclamation Line of 1763 - merited attendance by Governor Franklin, Governor John Penn of Pennsylvania and two members of his council, and Virginia’s commissioner Thomas Walker as well as the heads of the Indian nations concerned, Croghan, Samuel, and Trent also participated. Much about the proceedings remains a mystery since the majority of the discussions were conducted in secret. The attendees, white and Indian alike, agreed, however, on a new line to be established west of the original demarcation. In the area of immediate concern, it traversed from Fort Pitt down the Ohio River until it met the Tennessee where it turned south. The extent of the new area authorizing white settlement far exceeded Johnson’s instructions and has caused his motives to be questioned. He may have linked private ambitions with official duties. The chiefs listened to the appeals made by Samuel and Trent, then acquiesced and ceded to the “suffering traders” the tract which became

Sketch Map of Indiana and Vandalia
known as Indiana. Its boundaries (see sketch map, page 376) began on the southerly side of the mouth of Little Kanawha Creek, where it empties into the river Ohio, and running from thence south east to the Laurel Hill, thence along the Laurel Hill until it strikes the river Mononghela . . . . to the Southern boundary line of . . . Pennsylvania, thence westerly . . . to the river Ohio, thence down the said river . . . to the place of beginning.8

The agreement with the Indians and the location of the grant would have been impossible without the transfer of the proclamation line to the Ohio River.

After the Indians had conceded the land, the company stockholders decided to guarantee their interests by obtaining consent from the British ministry. Since a personal representation appeared to be the best method, they sent Samuel and Trent, the spokesmen for the two main factions (the Whartons and the Gratzes) within the company, to London to plead their case. Five of the most interested, parties pledged their financial support. The personable Samuel was the key man. All the members involved anticipated that the visit would be short. Many would have reconsidered if they had known that Trent would not return until 1775 and Samuel more than three years later. Hopes ran high that the government would readily approve the grant. Few could have predicted that an even larger grant would be sought for the establishment of a new colony inland of Virginia.9

Samuel departed Philadelphia sometime after February 1769, carrying with him letters of introduction to English contacts. William Franklin described him as "a gentleman of character & abilities," informing William Strahan, an English publisher and post office official, "You will like him." In London, Samuel encountered a society which, though unfamiliar, delighted and enticed him, one completely free from the Quaker surroundings in which he was raised. Apparently shrewdly analysing his character, Doctor Cadwalader Evans, an old family friend, recommended that Benjamin Franklin "read a lecture to [him] on temperance" before the "luxeries of London" infected him. Samuel became a stylish hypochondriac, though enjoying excellent health, "dressed in rich Silks," and took to wearing a "Sword &c. with as much ease, as if He had always done it." Though the assumed foppishness created some problems with the more conservative Trent, he became recognized by many as an expert on the colonies. His wide range of acquaintances impressed one visitor who remarked that Samuel had introduced him "to some of the first families of this place" and entertained him "with much Splendor."10 If Thomas, who enjoyed his own lifestyle, for he and his brother Joseph were among the wealthiest of the Philadelphians, had known of Samuel's pretensions, he would have been disgusted with his brother's un-Quaker-like affectation, not least because he was financing Samuel in London and the latter's family in Philadelphia.

After their arrival in England, both Samuel and Trent decided that any appeal to the government for Indiana would be fruitless. Thus they did not even petition the Privy Council for the land. Their reasoning could have been influenced by two considerations. First, existent governmental opposition, even hostility, would automatically deny any such application. Second, they may have listened to Benjamin Franklin who, as he later said, advised Samuel that the grant had been willingly given by the Indian nations as sovereign governments. In his opinion, that legally sufficed, and British ministerial sanction would thus be superfluous. Regardless, the agents switched direction, and, upon the recommendation of Thomas Walpole, Sir Robert’s nephew and important member of Commons, they decided to form a new company with English and American investors to purchase a block of land south and east of the Ohio River. This tract incorporated the area of Indiana. The group, which now included Franklin as an active participant, became known as the Walpole Associates, and in July they applied for a new grant. Each member contributed five guineas to pay for what Samuel described as "Clerkship."11

The new organization brought many changes. As the plan, or plot, developed, Samuel and Franklin discarded many of the Americans interested in Indiana. Most importantly, the omission of Baynton and
Morgan seriously split the partnership. Morgan later vowed that henceforth he would contact Samuel strictly on business relating to their firm. Although the roster of members included Croghan by necessity, he had already forfeited some of the claims he gained at Fort Stanwix. On December 10, 1768, he sold his share of Indiana to Thomas Wharton and Joseph Galloway, each paying £450 (Pennsylvania currency).\textsuperscript{12}

On December 27, 1769, the members of the Walpole Associates convened at the Crown and Anchor Inn in London and organized the Grand Ohio Company. Samuel proposed to purchase from the crown the land which became known as Vandalia. He and his allies hoped to establish a colony placed on the same footing with the old provinces incorporating governmental organizations, a royal governor, a legislature, courts, etc. At first the sponsors planned to call it Pittsylvania in honor of William Pitt, but, to encourage royal consent, they named it Vandalia for the queen who reputedly was descended from the Germanic tribe. In England it is generally known as the Walpole Grant. Representatives of the Illinois and Indiana factions participated, and they agreed to cede Indiana to the new company when the government approved the new colony. Indeed, for all practicality, the members of the older companies hedged their bets to preserve their interests. Within six months, George Mercer asserted to incorporate the rival Ohio Company of Virginia (he was its representative in England and his endeavors had been unsuccessful) into the enterprise for two of the seventy-two shares. The land requested, more than two million acres, the greater part of the present state of West Virginia (see sketch map page 376) was vast. The boundaries were delineated as follows.

Beginning on the South side of the River Ohio, opposite the mouth of Sioto, thence Southernly through the Pass in the Onasioto [variously spelled] Mountains to the South Side of said mountains . . . . Northeasterly to the Fork of the Great Kenhawa made by the junction of Green Briar and New Rivers thence along the said Green Briar River . . . termination of the North Easterly branch thereof, thence Easterly to the Allegheny Mountain to Lord Fairfax's line . . . to the Spring head of the North branch of the River Powtomack thence along the Western boundary line . . . of Maryland to the Southern Boundary line of . . . Pennsylvania . . . along the said Southern Boundary line . . . until the same shall strike the River Ohio to the Place of beginning.\textsuperscript{13}

From that time the fortunes of the company rose and fell with the success of the efforts made by Lord Hillsborough, Secretary of State for the Colonies, to obstruct the project. Franklin, who distrusted the Secretary, described him as "the most insincere, and the most wrong-headed" of all his acquaintances. Further, he believed Hillsborough had deliberately attempted to sabotage the land deal from the start. According to the philosopher, Hillsborough "encouraged us [the Associates] to ask for more Land, when we first ask'd only for 2,500,00 [the estimated size of Indiana] Ask for enough to make a Province, were his Words, pretending to be friend our Application . . . ." Secretly, he then meant "to defeat" the petition 'from the beginning, and that his putting us upon asking so much was with that very View, Supposing it too much to be granted."\textsuperscript{14}

Observers on the scene viewed the prospects of the company optimistically. As early as January 1770, Abel James, a Quaker merchant and variingly a rival or compatriot of the Whartons, informed Baynton, "It is next to impossible that [Samuel's negotiations] can miscarry." Walpole informed Joseph, Junior, in November 1771 that it had "a fair chance of success." That same month Samuel considered the contract with the Treasury to be "fixed & irrevokable" (a thought echoed by Franklin) and the only remaining complication, "The Policy of Settling," would be resolved "during this Winter."\textsuperscript{15}

Despite this bright outlook, Hillsborough's opposition at first succeeded. Upon deliberation, the Commissioners of Trade and Plantations in April 1772 reported negatively on the venture to the Privy Council. They opposed the new proclamation line established at Fort Stanwix and inland colonies in general as counter-productive to the empire as an entity. Indeed, they recommended that all settlements west of the original line of 1763 be forbidden or demolished and the decision enforced. In August, however, the Privy Council ordered another study in light of the proposal of a separate government for Vandalia. Walpole's spirited defense of the company's memorial had caused them to reconsider. Hillsborough's plan had backfired; his opposition to a large grant had returned to haunt him. He fell from power to be replaced by the Earl of Dartmouth. As Franklin explained it, "[H]is Mortification becomes double. He had serv'd us by the very means to destroy us, and tript up his own
Heels into the Bargain.” The next year the Commissioners revised their stance and recommended that a new colony be established with boundaries extended beyond those requested. The new borders were moved further westward into what is now Kentucky and the southern boundary coincided with the dividing line between Virginia and North Carolina. The conditions of granting the concession included a payment of £10,460:07:03 Sterling with annual quitrents of two shillings per each one hundred acres beginning twenty years after the first settlement.16 This was indeed a cheap price to pay for the huge prospective benefits to be gained. The announcement created great jubilation among the investors, but they had overcome the foe in only one battle; the campaign remained to be won.

In America in the meantime, the stockholders, or proprietors as Thomas Wharton habitually called them, eagerly anticipated the colony’s approval. As early as late in 1769 William Franklin had formulated plans for the construction of forges and mills in Vandalia. Morgan, excluded from Vandalia but still a holder of stock in Indiana, proposed his moving west in the summer of 1772 to arrange land surveys. He had received many inquiries concerning the nature of the terrain there, but, despite his many journeys to the west, he knew little about the lay of the land except for the plots “bordering on the [Ohio] River.” The timing was right for him “as this seems to be a proper Season & a time of Liesure [sic].” The opportunities for locating settlers also appeared to be auspicious. The next year Christopher Rawson, Thomas’ longtime friend and commercial contact in Halifax, reported sending his son to Philadelphia for his health and asked Wharton to give him “directions respecting a purchase on the Ohio.” Joseph Trumbull from Connecticut wrote Wharton of his and his brothers’ desires to “go & settle on the Banks of the Ohio.” Croghan encouraged matters when he optimistically, and perhaps mischievously, relayed the information that “there cant be less than 60000 Souls settled between this place [Fort Pitt] & the mouth of that [Scioto] River.17

Yet relations among the investors did not proceed entirely smoothly. Individual greed complicated the scene. Stimulated by the prospects for great wealth, Joseph, Senior, yearned to increase his allotment of shares in the company. Perhaps recent events in England had deluded him as to the extent of Samuel’s influence, for he believed Samuel’s opposition to be the main cause of Hillsborough’s fall from grace. "The Grand Duke,” a term commonly used to describe Joseph, could not conceal his elation, and, as a result, he irritated a few influential Philadelphians with his “verey unbecoming aiers.”18 For reasons which remain unclear, William Franklin’s holdings became his particular target. Perhaps there was some personal animosity involved, for, after all, Franklin’s father had been one of Joseph’s closest friends for years; he had been one of the original members of the famed Junto.

Unbeknownst to either Thomas or Joseph, Junior, "The Old Man" sent one of the brothers to Franklin "to demand" that the governor "sell [his] Share of the Lands on the Ohio" to Joseph, Senior. Since the messenger was a stranger and did not identify himself, Franklin indignantly refused. He later indicated that he would have acted in a more gracious manner if he had known the courier’s identity, but he allowed that his answer would not have been changed. Still, the unpleasant episode indelibly altered the relationship between Franklin and Joseph, Senior, whom the New Jerseyite described as "becom[ing] excessively absurd." His father agreed, noting that the elder Wharton’s act demonstrated "more Craft than Friendship" and further commenting, "perhaps I resent it as much as you do."19 Although Thomas took pride in Samuel’s accomplishments, and even though the latter had downgraded Benjamin Franklin’s important role in obtaining the Commissioner’s approval, the strong bonds between himself and both the Franklins were not affected by this unseemingly incident.

Meanwhile, in England, plans for the new government proceeded at a satisfactory pace. Samuel fully expected to be named the royal governor of the province. Rumors of his appointment had circulated there and in the colonies as early as mid-1770. At least at the beginning, he anticipated operating out of Fort Pitt, and so he asked Croghan to arrange for suitable quarters fashioned out of existing houses or, if necessary, to be constructed. Samuel wanted to hurry any decision, for a new potential menace to Vandalia had arisen. To counter Virginia’s activities on the frontier, Pennsylvania planned to establish a new county, Westmoreland, west of Bedford. The boundaries of the new county could possible affect those of Vandalia. Samuel predicted, "It need not give us any Uneasiness,” but he did discuss the matter with several of the investors and some government officials including Lord Camden, Anthony Todd, and Thomas Pitt.20
The other main faction of Americans in the Vandalia project, the Franks-Trent combination, also approved the progress demonstrated so far. Bernard Gratz, a relative of the Franks, could hardly wait for Samuel's return. He heartily approved of the plan then in the hands of the Solicitor General which he had seen during a visit to Thomas. As yet the proprietors, including prospective chief executive, knew little about the geographical aspects of the purchase. Samuel asked Thomas to investigate the land and, most vital to the interests of all, determine the prices to be charged. Morgan at that time had not reported on his reconnaissance as had been expected. Later, however, the Whartons estimated that a fair price might be twenty pounds (Pennsylvania) per hundred acres though Morgan believed fifteen pounds would be more realistic.21

Thomas also eagerly anticipated Samuel's return. He did not wait, however, to spread information about Vandalia around the colonies. He knew from his previous land deals that he had to solicit customers from a wide audience. In one typical letter he described the virtues of the area to Joseph Trumbull. Vandalia's attractions were many, not least being "the Richness of the Land" and "the Temperature [temperateness] of the Climate." He believed many would enjoy living there, and he encouraged Trumball to find "a Number of industrious, sober Families to settle therein."22

Consolation of the Indians living or hunting in the area was another major consideration of the company. For these activities the investors learned considerably on the good will and the services of Croghan at Fort Pitt, although he no longer enjoyed an active association with the company. Croghan had always been amazingly adept at dealing with the natives. In several instances they had refused to deal with any other Englishman. Wharton sent him £160 (Pennsylvania) in 1773 to buy presents and provisions for the chiefs at a conference to be held there. Croghan reported that the Indian leaders as a result had "returned to their Habitations with much good Will toward the Province." Additional support came from the Seneca Chief Kayasuta, whom Wharton aptly described as a King, who traveled widely in the west, from Illinois to Johnson Hill, spreading support for the company. In anticipation of gaining final approval for Vandalia, the company officers purchased various supplies and gifts to be presented upon Samuel's arrival at his new domain. The goods, including gunpowder and lead for bullets, were shipped to Georgetown, Maryland, in care of Thomas. They never reached their intended recipients, but the munitions later got the merchant into trouble with the Maryland Committee of Safety.23

Rival interests in the west, however, clouded the issues and slowed the recruitment of settlers. Virginia's efforts to enforce her claim to the lands in Vandalia complicated the situation. In November 1773 reports reached Thomas that George Washington was surveying the valley of the Kanawha River, and he feared the Ohio Company of Virginia would sell lands there at a cheaper rate than Vandalia could. He asked Samuel to inquire into the possibilities of opening a loan office so sales might begin. As the year progressed he expected momentarily to hear of the grant's approval. It was now under what seemed to him to be an interminable review by the crown's attorneys. Moreover, Virginia's seizure of Fort Pitt and its environs through the activities of Doctor John Connolly really disturbed him. Pennsylvania protested Connolly's movements (and later Lord Dunmore's) around the forks of the Ohio, but months passed before the problem was resolved. Wharton perceived that Vandalia could not become reality until the actions of the executives of both provinces "will be confined to the limits of their Colonies." That Connolly had the nerve to sell land within the boundaries of Vandalia truly angered Wharton. He believed that only final approval by the crown would end "The Annarchy & Confusion . . . on our Frontiers." He dreaded that Connolly's rampages and inciting of the Indians would lead to another border war. In addition, another Virginian named Lewis sold lands within the proposed province for "a small Consideration Which must hurt them [the settlers whose titles were not clear] & abundently [sic] Injure the Proprieters."24 Virginia's sale of land within her own boundaries as described by her charter was at least quasi-legal; her activities in the vicinity of Fort Pitt were both illegal and immoral.

In America the affairs of Baynton, Wharton and Morgan became, perhaps inevitably, entangled with the prospects for Vandalia. Samuel's presence in London induced some Englishmen not involved with Vandalia to seize a financial advantage. Abel James, a trustee of the firm then in the capital city on business, warned Thomas in 1770 to watch out for Richard Neave, a British banker who had served the needs of several Whartons, who wanted to collect monies; due him. The English firm later did create considerable pain and trouble for the trustees. Neave wanted all dividends from the company
and proceeds from the sale of Samuel's lands to go toward paying his debts. Underlying his threats always lay the danger that Samuel could be imprisoned as a debtor. By 1776 Neave had become at least a minor stockholder in Indiana through absorption of Samuel's shares. The resurrection of Baynton, Wharton and Morgan provided one more reason for the Philadelphia investors to hope for Vandalia's approval. At least one Londoner believed Samuel would gain sufficient funds immediately "to discharge all the Demands of Baynton & Wharton's Creditors" from the sale of "Lands in the new Colony."

Thomas, distracted as he was as an agent for the East India Company, continued to pray for the grant through the exciting days of the tea crisis of 1773. As the court attorneys delayed approval, he began to suspect a conspiracy against the investors. He thought some "secret and weighty opposers" influenced officials to sidetrack Vandalia. Later he believed General Thomas Gage, who opposed western immigration and inland colonies because they incited the Indians, to be the chief culprit. In September 1774 he discussed Lord Dunmore's exertions in the Ohio country with Patrick Henry, then one of the delegates to the First Continental Congress. The Virginian was convinced that the Indian war then being waged was actually to the advantage of Vandalia. Dunmore, according to Henry, wanted better lands north of the Ohio and appeared willing to surrender the more mountainous areas. Henry also stated that lawyers he had consulted confirmed the validity of the Vandalia grant, and he thus approved any expansion for Virginia to be even further to the west. This analysis must have surprised a naturally suspicious Wharton who discounted Henry's version. He commented to Croghan that Dunmore's interest probably derived "from a private than Publick View."

Over and above the legal delays, the business of obtaining final approval for Vandalia proceeded slowly because of the nature and habits of British officials. Samuel complained that the matter could not even be discussed since key ministers absented themselves from London for months at a time. He planned to publish a pamphlet to counter arguments then current against the grant. In addition to prevention of conflict with the Indians, the opponents argued that limiting settlements to the seaboard would discourage establishment of local manufactories, thus contributing to the efficiency of the various Acts of Trade. Moreover, by preventing migration westward, the labor supply would increase where it was most needed. Samuel thought the arguments specious and "beyond all historical Example." Regardless of the ultimate ministerial action on Vandalia, he believed the movement of the population westward in America was unstoppable. In October 1774 he thought a decision on the colony had to be made that winter.

Actually, the Vandalia affair simply drifted and finally faded into obscurity with no decision being announced. Other events in the relationship of Britain and her colonies simply dominated discussions in Parliament and in the Privy Council. Open warfare between colonialists and British regular troops erupted in April 1775. Thomas, who abhorred any thought of bloodshed, reluctantly accepted the fact that more important and pressing considerations facing the British ministers overshadowed Vandalia. The fantasy faded very slowly from his thoughts, however, because it had come so close to reality.

Samuel's thought began to turn elsewhere. In August he visualized "little prospect of Harmony being speedily, if ever restored between this Kingdom and America." He therefore focused his attention on land he believed already legally theirs; Indiana. He recommended that Thomas and Trent, who had recently returned to Philadelphia, contact "Dr. Franklin & other members of Congress" to obtain support for purchasers of land from Indian nations. To speed approval from that body, Thomas should offer one-half of a share in the company each to eight delegates. Thomas approached the Congressmen with these bribes, no other word suffices, and his efforts apparently got him into deep trouble, for in 1777 Congress recommended that he be arrested as an enemy to his state and be exiled to Virginia. One odd aspect of this situation is that Samuel asked Benjamin Franklin for help. The philosopher had evidently resigned from the Great Ohio Company at least a year previous. Additionally, Samuel had commented to Croghan in 1773 that relations between them had deteriorated, and he thought Franklin's reputation "mere Piff & Declamation." Regardless, ten days after writing to Thomas, Samuel closed his accounts and severed his business, if not his personal, relationship with his English associates. For all practical purposes, this step marked the end of the efforts to secure Vandalia. All that remained was the allotment of the expenses involved among the other investors.
Thomas and the survivors of the "suffering traders" did revive the Indiana Company. They convened on March 20, 1776, at the Indian Queen Tavern in Philadelphia and formed a new corporation for selling the land. Those attending selected Joseph Galloway president and Wharton vice president. They sent Morgan, by this time embittered at all the Whartons since he and his father-in-law Baynton had been excluded from Vandalia, to Fort Pitt to open a land office and to sell tracts in Indiana. Croghan, also at that frontier fort, had allied himself with Virginia during the Connolly affair, a decision Samuel described as "exceedingly indiscreet." He added, seeking additional justification for the defeat of the Grand Ohio Company, that Croghan's actions "may have contributed to the Delay of our Grants, And in the End will not be useful to Himself." As an appended mission, the company assigned Morgan the task of restoring Croghan's loyalty. All these undertakings soured when Trent, the majority proxy holder, refused to attend the company's general meeting at Philadelphia in the fall. His reluctance to cooperate finished Thomas' practical hopes for riches from the west, although to his deathbed in 1784 his visions lingered on. At that moment he may have been content with Trent's decision. He informed him,

Indeed my share is so very small that I am almost tired being anyway further concerned - Its almost 8 years since I have been a perfect drudge to SW & thyself, and I am desirous of being much less so than heretofore -

Attempts to rejuvenate the Indian grants of 1768 continued spasmodically thereafter. The most earnest efforts may have been those exerted by Benjamin Franklin and Samuel in the early 1780s while the latter served as a delegate to Congress. The other representatives hesitated to take any action, and Indiana fell by the wayside again. All endeavors by the Whartons ceased when the states forfeited their claims to the western lands as a condition of entering the Union, and Virginia retained as part of the commonwealth the lands encompassing both Indiana and Vandalia.

Thus the campaign to create a new colony, "the first West Virginia," waned into oblivion. Not one of the involved parties gained as a result, and many friendships were broken, some, as viewed with hindsight, unnecessarily. Land competition in the west caused Pennsylvania and Virginia almost to resort to the clash of arms. Sir William Johnson's reputation tarnished because he promoted the revised proclamation line of 1768. Baynton, Wharton and Morgan underwent complete bankruptcy proceedings because of the split among the partners over membership in the Grand Ohio Company. Divided opinions for a time separated Samuel and Benjamin Franklin when concerted action may have insured successful acceptance of Vandalia. Greed influenced a break between Joseph, Senior, and both Franklins. Perhaps the one most affected was Thomas who financed Samuel in London and his family in Philadelphia, funds never reimbursed during his lifetime. This loss, combined with the collapse of his business during the War of American Independence, placed him in deep financial distress at the time of his death. There was only one winner, avarice, and that is by its very nature a loser.

Notes


2. Ibid., 4-15, 157.

3. Ibid., 137-56.

1970), IX 457-88. The Historical Society of Pennsylvania has authorized quotations from manuscript materials in the Society's collections.


15. Emphasis in originals. Abel James to Baynton, January 19, 1770, BWM Papers, reel 2; extracts, Thomas Walpole to Joseph Wharton, Jr., November 6, 1771; Samuel Wharton to Joseph Wharton, Jr., November 1771, Franklin Papers, APS.


17. B. Franklin to W. Franklin, March 17, 1770, Franklin Papers, XVII, 97; Morgan to T. Wharton, May 6, 1772; Rawson to T. Wharton, July 1, 1773, Corr., Wharton Papers (hereafter WP), HSP; Joseph Trumbull to Thomas and Isaac Wharton, July 12, 1773, Joseph Trumbull Papers, Connecticut Historical Society (hereafter CHS); Croghan to T. Wharton, December 9, 1773, "Letters of George Croghan," PMHB, XV (1891), 436-37. Any migration westward could help Croghan sell some of his own lands at Fort Pitt.


19. W. Franklin to B. Franklin, April 30, 1773; B. Franklin to W. Franklin, July 14, 1773, ibid., XX. 184-85, 306. The identity of the Wharton son can only be surmised, but, since W. Franklin knew all the elder brothers, one can presume he was either Carpenter or Robert.

20. J. Baynton in Col. John Wilkinson, September 5, 1770, BWM Papers, reel 2; S. Wharton to Croghan, February 3, 1773, Croghan Papers, Cadwalader Col., HSP; S. Wharton to J. Calloway and T. Wharton, April 9, 1773, Franklin Papers, APS.


22. Thomas and Isaac Wharton to Trumbull, January 11, 1773, Joseph Trumbull Papers, CHS.

23. T. Wharton to Thomas Walpole, December 27, 1773; to S. Wharton, September 23, 1774, T. Wharton Letterbook, 1773-1784, WP, HSP; S. Wharton to Croghan, December 24, 1772, Croghan Papers, Cadwalader Col., HSP. For the fate of the supplies in Maryland, see Anderson, "Thomas Wharton," 307-309.

24. T. Wharton to S. Wharton November 30, 1773, January 3, 1774, February 28, 1775; to Thomas Walpole, May 2, 1774; to George Croghan, December 25, 1773, March 17, 1774, T. Wharton Letterbook, WP, HSP; S. Wharton to T. Wharton, March 17, 1774, Corr., Owen Jones Papers, HSP. All Virginia's activities ran counter to the government's instructions. See, for example, Earl of Dartmouth to Earl of Dunmore, April 6, 1774, Davies, Documents of the American Revolution, VII, 80.


26. As reported by W. Franklin to B. Franklin, July 29, 1773, Franklin Papers, XX, 31.

27. T. Wharton to Thomas Walpole (?), September 23, 1774; to S. Wharton, September 23, 1774; to Croghan, September 30, 1774, T. Wharton Letterbook, WP, HSP.

28. S. Wharton to T. Wharton, May 21, 1774 (incomplete), October 5, 1774, Corr., Owen Jones Papers, HSP.