

■ Proclamation of 1763

Date: October 7, 1763

Author: John Pownall; Board of Trade, Great Britain

Geographic Area: Britain; American colonies

Summary Overview

The Proclamation of 1763, issued October 7, 1763, by Great Britain's Board of Trade under King George III, represented an attempt to control settlement and trade on the western frontier of Britain's North American colonies. The Proclamation of 1763 essentially closed the Ohio Valley to settlement by colonists by defining the area west of the Appalachian Mountains as Indian land and declaring that the Indians were under the protection of the king. No settlement or land purchases were to be conducted there without the Crown's approval. The proclamation also defined four new colonies that Great Britain had won from France and Spain in the just-concluded Seven Years' War (1756–1763, known in its American manifestation as the French and Indian War). These colonies were Quebec (which in fact had long been settled), East and West Florida, and the island of Grenada.

The British hoped by this decree to prevent the conflicts between colonists and Indians that had played a part in the recent costly war and in fomenting a new Anglo-Indian war that had just broken out, today often called Pontiac's Rebellion (1763–1765) for the name of the Ottawa chief who was a principal leader on the Indian side. They also hoped to encourage settlement in the newly gained colonies while, at the same time, ending or at least controlling the seemingly endless westward stream of colonists, who in this and other respects had begun to appear too independent. While most scholars have focused on its impact on Anglo-Indian relations along the frontier, it is important to remember that the Proclamation of 1763 suggested the permanency of British troops in colonial America.

Defining Moment

The context for the Proclamation of 1763 depended on one's location within the emerging British Empire. The act's implications differed according to whether the person considering it was within the chambers of Whitehall,

residing in British North America, or living in an Indian community along the Appalachian divide. The proclamation transformed colonial-imperial land discussions and political relationships for the next decade. The edict challenged colonial conceptions about who "owned" the land and who should direct the settlement of it. The resulting salvos showed just how divergent colonial and imperial thoughts were regarding the future of North American settlement.

Even before Britain and France signed the Treaty of Paris in February of 1763, ending the Seven Years' War, English politicians had decided to reassess the imperial-colonial relationship. Many English officials believed that their North American colonies had shown an utter disregard for England's needs during the just-completed conflict. In military and economic matters the colonists had thought only of their self-interest, not Great Britain's. The result had been not only a major war but also a doubling of Britain's national debt—a direct consequence of colonial autonomy. The years preceding the war had seen tentative moves to impose a royal presence in North America, but they had not been enough. The war had shown just how independent the American colonies had become. Many a writer advised British officials to rethink and restructure their relationship with the American colonies. As the historian P. J. Marshall once noted, one "lesson of war for Britain's rulers was that empire required the effective exercise of authority" (Marshall, p. 89) Now Whitehall officials saw the postwar period as an opportunity to reassert parliamentary control over the colonies.

One area in which imperial officials were very proactive in their assertion of royal authority was Indian affairs. The Crown called representatives of several colonies to the meeting known as the Albany Congress of 1754 largely to address Indian land complaints, and the decision in 1755 to create an Indian superintendency system showed growing imperial concern about colonial

autonomy regarding Indian relations. Nothing worried policy makers more than colonial efforts to expropriate Indian land, often illegally. Indeed, from London's perspective it was colonial claims to western lands and the colonists' insistence on settling these lands that had precipitated the Seven Years' War. The Crown might have hoped to forestall such a conflict, but it was unable to do so. And when the colonial conflict became an international conflict, imperial officials found they could not focus solely on their North American colonists, even if they had wanted to.

While the colonies thought only of the conquest of Canada, London officials needed to concern themselves with affairs in the Caribbean, Europe, Africa, and Asia. The result was a constant struggle between royal and colonial officials over the war in North America. Colonial governments complained about paying for the war while having no say in how it was prosecuted. The British statesman William Pitt's promise in 1758 to reimburse colonial regimes for the costs of the war solved some of the problems, but at a steep price; it contributed mightily to England's enormous debt crisis. Perhaps more important, the colonists' audacity to challenge London on both money and military matters revealed how much power colonial legislatures had assumed over the decades.

Once the war ended, the Board of Trade decided to assume powers previously exercised by the colonies and give these powers to royal officials. The Crown was not going to return to the pre-1754 status quo in colonial-imperial relations. Nowhere was this new assertion more obvious—and, from a colonial perspective, more dangerous—than in Parliament's decision regarding western lands. Known as the Proclamation of 1763, the act closed off the Ohio Valley to colonial settlement. Colonists and their governments had assumed that the victory over the French had offered them this region. The Proclamation of 1763 therefore marks the moment when colonists began "to reformulate their understanding of Britain" as a bastion of republican virtue and see it instead as a corrupt tyrannical regime (Shalev, p. 122).

In their reconception of England, colonists usually ignored their own actions regarding their Indian neighbors and the growing rift between the two peoples. London officials, however, did not. They remembered how colonial land greed had precipitated the war. Militarily this was important because England's strategy toward North America was predicated upon her Covenant Chain of Friendship with the Six Nations Iroquois. When Hendrick, a Mohawk spokesman, symbolically broke the

chain in 1753, English policy makers were unprepared. One result of colonial actions had been that Indian agents such as William Johnson spent the first half of the Seven Years' War reestablishing Indian alliances rather than securing Indian allies to fight against the French. Many of the issues that Hendrick had raised were still unresolved at the end of the conflict.

Imperial officials, when looking at an enlarged territorial base and an economic crisis at home, knew that good Indian relations were cheaper to maintain than wars of conquest. Nevertheless, peaceful relations were going to be difficult if unrestricted colonial settlement of the West was allowed to continue. From Britain's perspective, this problem was compounded by the seeming indifference of the colonists. Many settlers, and not just veterans who had been promised land for service, had begun moving into western Pennsylvania and the Ohio Valley. Fort Pitt (on the site of present-day Pittsburgh) served as more than "an imposing symbol of imperial presence and a threat to Indian independence" (Callaway, p. 55). It served as a beacon for squatters and settlers.

Complicating the situation were competing colonial territorial claims, such as the struggle between Pennsylvania and Connecticut over the Wyoming Valley. South Carolina and Georgia had their own territorial conflicts. The original charters extended beyond the Allegheny and Appalachian mountains, and now settlers used these charters to justify their western expansion. Making matters from the home government's viewpoint worse was the fact that settlement west of the mountains put the settlers beyond the geographic reach of both imperial and colonial officials. Rivers there flowed away from the Atlantic Ocean. Geography dictated that settlers turn their back on England and look toward the Ohio and Mississippi rivers for their future. Imperial officials knew that their enlarged empire required addressing this development.

The result of both Indian unhappiness and colonial movement was a decision by Whitehall officials to rethink colonial expansion. Britain's newly won lands in North America offered the Crown not only an opportunity to rein in this expansion—the cause of the war—but also an opportunity to remind the colonies of where ultimate power lay.

Author Biography

Seemingly coming out of nowhere and issued to address a specific event, the Proclamation of 1763 actually had roots extending back nearly a decade. In 1754, when the

Seven Years' War was just brewing, the British colonial statesman Thomas Pownall (1722–1805) wrote a proposal for colonizing the interior of North America with English settlements. He sent his essay, "Considerations on ye Means, Method, and Nature of Settling a Colony on Land South of Lake Erie" to his brother, John Pownall, then secretary for the Board of Trade (and the man responsible for writing the final Proclamation of 1763). Thomas Pownall later refined his proposals in his "Plan for New Settlements" (1755), and this time he included a map to illustrate where these western colonies should be located.

Pownall's "Plan" and his map are a blueprint for the future direction of Indian affairs. He proposed creating new colonies in the West, including one immediately south of Lake Erie in which the "New Proposed Government" was "to be taken out of the Province of N[ew] York & taken possession of & settled by military Townships" (Pownall, 1755, p. 2). The new western colony would be settled in an orderly fashion, by military men, under the direction of the Crown. He also proposed establishing a new colony south of Lake Erie. Instead of allowing colonists to settle either of the new colonies, Pownall suggested using retired military personnel, a suggestion later integrated into the Proclamation of 1763.

When Thomas Pownall drafted his proposals he made certain assumptions, and these assumptions influenced future British policy. One assumption was that the colonists would be more difficult to control the farther west they moved. Here geography, not Indian claims to the land, influenced Pownall's thinking. At the time of the proclamation's announcement, however, Indian land claims seemed just as important as geography. Another assumption was that the Indians and the colonists were unlikely to coexist peacefully. Interestingly, Pownall wanted a series of forts constructed on the borders of the

Indian territory and the new colonies. They would serve a dual mission. First, they would stand as a reminder of British power. Second, they would protect the Indians from colonial land encroachment. In a later essay he went so far as to argue that colonial expansion should be confined "either by policy from home, or invasion of Indians abroad" (Pownall, 1764, p. 130). Perhaps this is why imperial officials did not require Jeffrey (sometimes spelled "Jeffery") Amherst, the British commander in chief in North America, to dismantle the former French forts, as he had promised the Indians he would in 1758.

When John Pownall drafted the Proclamation of 1763 he included many of his brother's ideas in the final draft, including the idea of military settlements to the west of existing colonies. For example, the proclamation promised discharged military personnel land grants ranging from fifty to five thousand acres, depending on one's rank. While the proclamation did not specify where those grants would be located, it was clear they would come from the Crown, not a colony. Thomas Pownall's writings to his brother provided a starting point when royal officials decided they needed to reconfigure imperial-colonial relations.

What began as a theoretical discussion became a necessity when news of "Pontiac's Rebellion" reached London. It was at this point that Thomas Pownall's thoughts about the necessity of dealing with Indian complaints took center stage. The outbreak of the war both prompted and allowed Charles Wyndham (the Earl of Egremont and the British secretary of state) and the Board of Trade to take action. A single document was prepared that not only addressed the integration of Britain's new territorial holdings into the empire but also sought to mollify her Indian inhabitants about the future. The result was the Proclamation of 1763.



Reproduction of a map showing the territories established by the Proclamation of 1763. Library of Congress Geography and Map Division Washington, D.C. 20540-4650 USA dcu.

HISTORICAL DOCUMENT

By the King. A Proclamation. George R.

Whereas We have taken into Our Royal Consideration the extensive and valuable Acquisitions in America, secured to our Crown by the late *Definitive Treaty of Peace*, concluded at Paris, the 10th Day of February last; and being desirous that all Our loving Subjects, as well of our Kingdom as of our Colonies in America, may avail themselves with all convenient Speed, of the great Benefits and Advantages which must accrue therefrom to their Commerce, Manufactures, and Navigation, We have thought fit, with the Advice of our Privy Council, to issue this our Royal Proclamation, hereby to publish and declare to all our loving Subjects, that we have, with the Advice of our Said Privy Council, granted our Letters Patent, under our Great Seal of Great Britain, to erect, within the Countries and Islands ceded and confirmed to Us by the said Treaty, Four distinct and separate Governments, styled and called by the names of Quebec, East Florida, West Florida and Grenada, and limited and bounded as follows, viz.

First—The Government of Quebec bounded on the Labrador Coast by the River St. John, and from thence by a Line drawn from the Head of that River through the Lake St. John, to the South end of the Lake Nipissim; from whence the said Line, crossing the River St. Lawrence, and the Lake Champlain, in 45 Degrees of North Latitude, passes along the High Lands which divide the Rivers that empty themselves into the said River St. Lawrence from those which fall into the Sea; and also along the North Coast of the Baye des Chaleurs, and the Coast of the Gulph of St. Lawrence to Cape Rosieres, and from thence crossing the Mouth of the River St. Lawrence by the West End of the Island of Anticosti, terminates at the aforesaid River of St. John.

Secondly—The Government of East Florida, bounded to the Westward by the Gulph of Mexico and the Apalachicola River; to the Northward by a Line drawn from that part of the said River where the Chatahouchee and Flint Rivers meet, to the source of St. Mary's River, and by the course of the said River to the Atlantic Ocean; and to the Eastward and Southward by the Atlantic Ocean and the Gulph of Florida, including

all Islands within Six Leagues of the Sea Coast.

Thirdly—The Government of West Florida, bounded to the Southward by the Gulph of Mexico, including all Islands within Six Leagues of the Coast, from the River Apalachicola to Lake Pontchartrain; to the Westward by the said Lake, the Lake Maurepas, and the River Mississippi; to the Northward by a Line drawn due East from that part of the River Mississippi which lies in 31 Degrees North Latitude, to the River Apalachicola or Chatahouchee; and to the Eastward by the said River.

Fourthly—The Government of Grenada, comprehending the Island of that name, together with the Grenadines, and the Islands of Dominico, St. Vincent's and Tobago, And to the end that the open and free Fishery of our Subjects may be extended to and carried on upon the Coast of Labrador, and the adjacent Islands, We have thought fit, with the advice of our said Privy Council to put all that Coast, from the River St. John's to Hudson's Streights, together with the Islands of Anticosti and Madelaine, and all other smaller Islands lying upon the said Coast, under the care and Inspection of our Governor of Newfoundland.

We have also, with the advice of our Privy Council, thought fit to annex the Islands of St. John's and Cape Breton, or Isle Royale, with the lesser Islands adjacent thereto, to our Government of Nova Scotia.

We have also, with the advice of our Privy Council aforesaid, annexed to our Province of Georgia all the Lands lying between the Rivers Alatomaha and St. Mary's.

And whereas it will greatly contribute to the speedy settling of our said new Governments, that our loving Subjects should be informed of our Paternal care, for the security of the Liberties and Properties of those who are and shall become Inhabitants thereof, We have thought fit to publish and declare, by this Our Proclamation, that We have, in the Letters Patent under our Great Seal of Great Britain, by which the said Governments are constituted, given express Power and Direction to our Governors of our Said Colonies respectively, that so soon as the state and circumstances of the said Colonies will admit thereof, they shall, with the Advice and Consent of

the Members of our Council, summon and call General Assemblies within the said Governments respectively, in such Manner and Form as is used and directed in those Colonies and Provinces in America which are under our immediate Government: And We have also given Power to the said Governors, with the consent of our Said Councils, and the Representatives of the people, so to be summoned as aforesaid, to make, constitute, and ordain Laws, Statutes and Ordinances for the public peace, welfare and good government of our said colonies, and of the people and inhabitants thereof, as near as may be agreeable to the Laws of England, and under such regulations and restrictions as are used in other colonies; and in the mean time, and until such assemblies can be called as aforesaid, all persons inhabiting in, or resorting to our said colonies may confide in our royal protection for the enjoyment of the benefit of the Laws of our Realm of England; for which purpose, we have given power under our Great Seal to the Governors of our said colonies respectively, to erect and constitute, with the advice of our said Councils respectively, courts of Judicature and public justice within our said colonies, for the hearing and determining all causes, as well criminal as civil, according to Law and Equity, and, as near as may be, agreeable to the Laws of England, with liberty to all persons, who may think themselves aggrieved by the sentence of such courts, in all civil cafes, to appeal, under the usual limitations and restrictions, to us, in our Privy Council.

We have also thought fit, with the advice of our Privy Council as aforesaid, to give unto the Governors and Councils of our said Three new Colonies, upon the Continent full Power and Authority to settle and agree with the Inhabitants of our said new Colonies or with any other Persons who shall resort thereto, for such Lands. Tenements and Hereditaments, as are now or hereafter shall be in our Power to dispose of; and them to grant to any such Person or Persons upon such Terms, and under such moderate Quit-Rents, Services and Acknowledgments, as have been appointed and settled in our other Colonies, and under such other Conditions as shall appear to us to be necessary and expedient for the Advantage of the Grantees, and the Improvement and settlement of our said Colonies.

And Whereas, We are desirous, upon all occasions, to

testify our Royal Sense and Approbation of the Conduct and bravery of the Officers and Soldiers of our Armies, and to reward the same, We do hereby command and empower our Governors of our said Three new Colonies, and all other our Governors of our several Provinces on the Continent of North America, to grant without Fee or Reward, to such reduced Officers as have served in North America during the late War, and to such Private Soldiers as have been or shall be disbanded in America, and are actually residing there, and shall personally apply for the same, the following Quantities of Lands, subject, at the Expiration of Ten Years, to the same Quit-Rents as other Lands are subject to in the Province within which they are granted, as also subject to the same Conditions of Cultivation and Improvement; viz.

—To every Person having the Rank of a Field Officer—5,000 Acres.

—To every Captain—3,000 Acres.

—To every Subaltern or Staff Officer—2,000 Acres.

—To every Non-Commission Officer—200 Acres.

—To every Private Man—50 Acres.

We do likewise authorize and require the Governors and Commanders in Chief of all our said Colonies upon the Continent of North America to grant the like Quantities of Land, and upon the same conditions, to such reduced Officers of our Navy of like Rank as served on board our Ships of War in North America at the times of the Reduction of Louisbourg and Quebec in the late War, and who shall personally apply to our respective Governors for such Grants.

And whereas it is just and reasonable, and essential to our Interest, and the Security of our Colonies, that the several Nations or Tribes of Indians with whom We are connected, and who live under our Protection, should not be molested or disturbed in the Possession of such Parts of Our Dominions and Territories as, not having been ceded to or purchased by Us, are reserved to them, or any of them, as their Hunting Grounds.—We do

therefore, with the Advice of our Privy Council, declare it to be our Royal Will and Pleasure, that no Governor or Commander in Chief in any of our Colonies of Quebec, East Florida, or West Florida, do presume, upon any Pretence whatever, to grant Warrants of Survey, or pass any Patents for Lands beyond the Bounds of their respective Governments, as described in their Commissions: as also that no Governor or Commander in Chief in any of our other Colonies or Plantations in America do presume for the present, and until our further Pleasure be known, to grant Warrants of Survey or pass any Patent for lands beyond the heads of sources of any of the rivers which fall into the Atlantic Ocean from the West or North West; or upon any lands whatever, which not having been ceded to, or purchased by us, as aforesaid, are reserved to the said Indians, or any of them.

And We do further declare it to be Our Royal Will and Pleasure, for the present as aforesaid, to reserve under our Sovereignty, Protection, and Dominion, for the use of the said Indians, all the Lands and Territories not included within the Limits of Our said Three new Governments, or within the Limits of the Territory granted to the Hudson's Bay Company, as also all the Lands and Territories lying to the Westward of the Sources of the Rivers which fall into the Sea from the West and North West as aforesaid.

And We do hereby strictly forbid, on Pain of our Displeasure, all our loving Subjects from making any Purchases or Settlements whatever, or taking Possession of any of the Lands above reserved, without our especial leave and Licence for that Purpose first obtained.

And We do further strictly enjoin and require all Persons whatever who have either wilfully or inadvertently seated themselves upon any Lands within the Countries above described, or upon any other Lands which, not having been ceded to or purchased by Us, are still reserved to the said Indians as aforesaid, forthwith to remove themselves from such Settlements.

And whereas great Frauds and Abuses have been committed in purchasing Lands of the Indians, to the great Prejudice of our Interests, and to the great Dissatisfaction of the said Indians: In order, therefore, to prevent such Irregularities for the future, and to the end that the Indians may be convinced of our Justice and determined Resolution to remove all reasonable Cause of Discon-

tent, We do, with the Advice of our Privy Council strictly enjoin and require, that no private Person do presume to make any purchase from the said Indians of any Lands reserved to the said Indians, within those parts of our Colonies where, We have thought proper to allow Settlement: but that, if at any Time any of the Said Indians should be inclined to dispose of the said Lands, the same shall be Purchased only for Us, in our Name, at some public Meeting or Assembly of the said Indians, to be held for that Purpose by the Governor or Commander in Chief of our Colony respectively within which they shall lie: And in case they shall lie within the limits of any proprietaries, conformable to such directions and instructions as we or they shall think proper to give for that purpose: and we do by the advice of our Privy Council, declare and enjoin, that the trade with the said Indians shall be free and open to all our subjects whatever; provided that every person who may incline to trade with the said Indians, do take out a licence for carrying on such trade, from the Governor or Commander in chief of any of our colonies respectively, where such person shall reside, and also give security to observe such regulations as we shall at any time think fit, by ourselves or commissaries, to be appointed for this purpose, to direct and appoint for the benefit of the said trade; and we do hereby authorize, enjoin and require the Governors and Commanders in chief of all our colonies respectively, as well those under our immediate government, as those under the government and direction of proprietaries, to grant such licences without fee or reward, taking especial care to insert therein a condition that such licence shall be void, and the security forfeited, in case the person to whom the same is granted shall refuse or neglect to observe such regulations as we shall think proper to prescribe as aforesaid.

And we do hereby authorize, enjoin, and require the Governors and Commanders in Chief of all our Colonies respectively, as well those under Our immediate Government as those under the Government and Direction of Proprietaries, to grant such Licences without Fee or Reward, taking especial Care to insert therein a Condition, that such Licence shall be void, and the Security forfeited in case the Person to whom the same is granted shall refuse or neglect to observe such Regulations as We shall think proper to prescribe as aforesaid.

And we do further expressly conjoin and require all Officers whatever, as well Military as those Employed in the Management and Direction of Indian Affairs, within the Territories reserved as aforesaid for the use of the said Indians, to seize and apprehend all Persons whatever, who standing charged with Treason, Misprisions of Treason, Murders, or other Felonies or Misdemeanors, shall

fly from Justice and take Refuge in the said Territory, and to send them under a proper guard to the Colony where the Crime was committed of which they, stand accused, in order to take their Trial for the same.

Given at our Court, at St. James's the 7th. day of October, one thousand, seven hundred and sixty-three, in the third year of our reign.

GOD SAVE THE KING

GLOSSARY

Approbation: official approval

Definitive Treaty of Peace: a reference to the Treaty of Paris of 1763, which ended the Seven Years' War

Hereditaments: properties that could be inherited

Quit-Rents: land taxes imposed by the British authorities

Document Analysis

The Proclamation of 1763 is a straightforward document that shows both the short-term and long-term policy positions of the imperial government. It begins by defining its four newest colonies—Quebec, the two Floridas (East and West), and then Grenada. Listed first, Quebec's placement shows how royal officials saw the former French settlement as most important. It was the most settled of the North American colonies that England had secured at the Paris peace, and officials wanted to establish British colonial government there as quickly as possible. By clearly defining the province's eastern, western, and southern boundaries, the Crown superseded any territorial claims that one of its earlier colonies might have had to the land based on their original charters. The proclamation repudiated colonial charter claims of land "from sea to sea" (Jacobs, p. 10).

Imperial officials made clear their desire to see Quebec become the focus of population and territorial growth in 1774. The Quebec Act of that year made the land secured through the Seven Years' War a part of Quebec. Although English settlers accounted for only 5 percent of the colony's total population, the former French colony's boundary now stretched down the Ohio River into the very region where Virginians were engaged in a new war—Lord Dunmore's War—trying to secure it from the Shawnee and Delaware Indians. Integrated into the

empire with the Proclamation of 1763, Quebec, and not Williamsburg or Philadelphia, would be where land patents were issued for the Ohio Valley.

After defining the new colonies, the Crown notifies its subjects about territorial readjustments. It annexes the "Islands of St. John's and Cape Breton, or Isle Royale, with the lesser Islands adjacent thereto" and places them under Nova Scotia's colonial government. One way to see this decision is as punishment of the Massachusetts Bay Colony for its parsimony during the Seven Years' War—after all, Massachusetts militiamen had regularly fought for and taken the island in previous conflicts with France, and Massachusetts officials, always interested in the fishing grounds to their north, might reasonably have assumed that governmental jurisdiction would be given to them. A more likely scenario, however, is that England was still dealing with the aftereffects of its earlier decision to exile the Acadians. By placing the islands under Nova Scotian control, the Crown probably believed it would limit Acadian unrest in Quebec should the exiles seek to return home.

The next portion of the document deals with a boundary dispute between Georgia and South Carolina. Here the Crown "annexed to our Province of Georgia all the Lands lying between the Rivers Alatamaha and St. Mary's." Whether this was intended to punish Carolina for the problems the Cherokee conflict of 1761 had cre-

ated for the Crown is unknown. What is known is that Georgia at the time was smaller than South Carolina and its frontier was less extensive than South Carolina's. Thus the Crown could better regulate the expansion of that frontier, the very goal of the Proclamation of 1763.

Having dealt with territorial issues, the proclamation next sets out to create governments for the two Floridas and Quebec. Here the Crown showed its long-term policy objectives. To help the new colonies grow, the governors of Florida and Quebec were allowed to grant land so their populations might increase quickly. This growth promised to come on the very lands where existing colonies had hoped to settle their own people. Why, Americans wondered, were they being prevented from settling on lands their militias had won?

Having encouraged Quebec and Florida to create conditions that would lure new settlers, the proclamation then addresses a looming economic crisis—the return to England and retirement at half pay of some fifty thousand soldiers and several hundred officers. The proclamation promises servicemen who remain in America “Quantities of Lands” ranging in size from fifty acres for “every Private Man” to five thousand acres for a “Field Officer.” The Crown hoped the offer not only would keep many veterans from returning but also would ensure an adequate reserve of soldiers should they be needed on the frontier of North America. In making the latter calculation, George III and his ministers were giving a nod to Thomas Pownall and his earlier essay, which had noted that military settlement would allow the British “to support our selves . . . against ye Western & French Indians.” At the same time, Pownall observed, Britain would be “actually becoming possessed of ye Command of the Country” (Pownall, 1755, p. 4).

While the proclamation does not stipulate where the soldiers had to take their land, the assumption was that it would be in the territory given to Quebec. The reason for this is that immediately following the grants is a paragraph claiming it was “essential to our [England’s] Interest” that lands of “the Several Nations or Tribes of Indians with whom We are connected . . . are reserved to them.” In case the colonists and their governments missed this point, the paragraph concludes by saying that “no Governor or Commander in Chief” could grant any “Warrants of Survey” or pass “any Patents for Lands beyond the Bounds of their [current] respective Governments” until further notice was given. Moreover, those people who had “either willfully or inadvertently seated themselves upon any Lands . . . reserved to the said In-

dians” were to “remove themselves” forthwith. Colonists were also forbidden from “purchasing Lands of the Indians.” For many colonists the rationale for fighting the Seven Years’ War had disappeared.

The traditional independence of the colonies in Indian land purchases was at an end; the Crown, not colonial entities, would make all future land purchases. Henceforth, imperial officials would determine future colonial growth. This did not mean that purchases came to a complete end; Georgia officials secured more than 5,500,000 acres of land in three sessions between 1763 and 1775. Nevertheless, the prohibition of land purchases was the section of the proclamation that received the most attention from colonists and speculators.

Having, in their minds, brought unregulated western settlement to an end, Board of Trade members used the proclamation to restructure commerce with the Indians. If the proclamation promised a more organized settlement pattern, it also offered a more competitive economic environment. It opened the Indian trade to “all our subjects whatever,” stipulating only that traders receive licenses from a colonial governor. This provision opened Pandora’s box. Governors licensed almost any trader who applied for one, and soon traders swarmed the Indian country in pursuit of skins and profits. The proclamation created no mechanism for regulating such activities. As a result, trade now took place not only beyond the fort walls but also on the boundaries of Indian communities. Privy council members seem to have recognized the problems the proclamation had unintentionally created, since they later talked about creating regulations for the trade in correspondence with Indian Superintendent Sir William Johnson. Before regulations could be enacted, however, traders sought out new locales, including the recently created West Florida. For southern Indian groups such as the Choctaws, the decade following 1763 was one of profound social and economic change, and the “southern Indian trade became marked by disruption and violence” (Calloway, pp. 109–110).

In this new environment, the idea of separating Indians from colonists appealed to many southern Indian groups. Cherokee elders had long considered and used dividing lines when it came to conflict resolution. This approach had resolved at least one Cherokee-Creek conflict, and it was used in 1762 while negotiating the Cherokee war resolution. Both the Cherokee war and a change in colonial perceptions about the backcountry during the 1760s meant that negotiating some sort of demarcation became imperative, and this is what happened

in the 1765–67 period. Finally, the proclamation reserves land to the Crown not specifically given to East and West Florida or Quebec.

It is interesting to note what the proclamation did not do. It did not suspend the colonial charters and negate all existing colonial land claims. Nor did it propose to send more troops to America so that, as his secretary, Maurice Morgann, had suggested to William Petty, 2nd Earl of Shelburne, the president of the Board of Trade, the colonies might “now be surrounded by an army, navy, and by hostile tribes of Indians” (ctd. in Humphreys, pp. 247–248). What officials such as Egremont, Shelburne, and John Pownall were more interested in was figuring out how to combine the needs of imperial policy with the desires of colonists for western lands.

If the Seven Years’ War made England the undisputed power of North America, the war left the Indians along the colonial frontier deeply worried. With the French gone, Creek and Seneca leaders could no longer play the British against the French. Headmen throughout the Eastern Woodlands found their ability to preserve their political autonomy threatened. No longer able to threaten aligning with the French, Indians in both the Southeast and Northeast found their traditional foreign policy strategies undermined. While it might be true that the English could provide the Indians with better goods than the French, it was also true that with English traders came settlers. Moreover, with French traders driven from the forest, at least temporarily, competition vanished, and prices rose.

At the same time, Jeffrey Amherst saw the end of the war as an opportunity to curtail Indian-related expenses. Worried more about political problems in England than about North America, he repeatedly warned Sir William Johnson about Johnson’s lavish use of Indian gifts, arguing that “when men of what race soever behave ill, they must be punished but not bribed” (Long, pp. 180–182). Neolin, the Delaware prophet, spent the postwar years telling anyone who would listen that “this land where ye dwell I [the Master of Life] have made for you and not for others” (Stevens et al., vol. 6, p. 262). Neolin’s words resonated. When Turtle Heart, a Delaware, met Captain Simeon Ecuyer during the siege of Fort Pitt, he told the commander that “this land is ours, and not yours” (Parkman, vol. 2, p. 23).

While contemporary writers expressed surprise at the outbreak of Pontiac’s Rebellion in 1763, it should not have surprised them. When Fort Duquesne fell in 1758, the Indians of the region had warned the British that

if Euro-Americans occupied the fort there “would be a great war” against them (Downes, pp. 93–95). Now, in 1763, not only did the forts remain, but Amherst also had curtailed Indian presents. The result was economic hardship for many Indian communities. Amherst’s decision came at the very time when pent-up demand for British goods in North America’s interior were greatest. At the same time, Indian groups found that their traditional foreign policy strategy no longer worked. With France defeated, there was no counterweight to Britain. These various streams—military retrenchment, colonial land-grabbing, and a new political reality—channeled their way toward violence in 1763, and though the war was never widespread or great in scope, it provided London officials with all the justification they needed to issue the Proclamation of 1763.

The proclaimed boundary line offered the Indians some hidden hope. Smallpox appeared in 1763. Generally blamed on Amherst on the evidence of his letter to Colonel Henry Bouquet during Pontiac’s Rebellion about the possibility of giving the Indians blankets used by victims of the disease, the outbreak might simply have been the result of earlier epidemics introduced by soldiers and settlers moving throughout the interior. By separating Indians and colonizers, the proclamation offered an opportunity to end the ravages of disease.

Whatever the cause of the disease’s outbreak, the Proclamation of 1763 offered the Indians an opportunity to see Amherst’s earlier promise come to pass. Amherst had promised the Ohio Indians that he would destroy the forts built by the French once the war ended. He had not done so. The proclamation suggested that some forts were unnecessary to maintain while others would be transformed into centers of commerce, following the French rather than the English model. As the nineteenth-century historian William Poole noted, the proclamation promised to keep the Indians in “undisputed possession” of the land “between the Alleghanies [*sic*] and the Mississippi” (Poole, p. 687). If Pontiac’s Rebellion had not brought the French back, it seemed to promise an end to unregulated colonial land encroachment.

Essential Themes

The Proclamation of 1763 is often credited with securing Indian friendship in the years to come. Besides such long-time Indian allies as the Mohawk, former French Indian allies such as the Ottawa sided with Britain during the Revolutionary War. The proclamation’s recognition of Indian rights, when coupled with the actions of

well-intentioned Indian agents, stood in stark contrast to the land avarice that western colonists from Virginia and Carolina showed.

For the original thirteen colonies, the proclamation contained some distressing items. It repudiated colonial charter claims of land “from sea to sea” (Jacobs, p. 10). The governors of Florida and Quebec were allowed to grant land so their populations might grow quickly. This growth promised to come on the very lands where existing colonies had hoped to settle their own people. The Indian trade was also transformed. Unlike the *laissez-faire* trade of earlier times, licenses were now to be required and the trade restricted to existing British outposts. Indian department officials and military personnel were authorized to seize and apprehend any person who disregarded any of the proclamation’s edicts. Adding to this insult was the proclamation’s placement of indigenous people within the empire. It made the Crown responsible for their protection. In the eyes of many, Indians and colonists now occupied the same legal space. This development occurred at the very time Indians, colonists, and British soldiers were fighting along the frontier.

It took five years and ten treaties, but the proclamation led to the creation of a continuous boundary from New York to the Gulf of Mexico. The two most important treaties regarding the Proclamation of 1763 were completed in 1768. John Stuart negotiated the Treaty of Hard Labor with the Cherokee in October of that year. Sir William Johnson completed his controversial negotiations with the northern Indians a month later in the Treaty of Fort Stanwix. Stuart’s actions at Hard Labor were more in line with imperial expectations than were Johnson’s. The southern Indian superintendent allowed the Cherokee to remain in control of the Kentucky region despite pressure from some of Virginia’s leading men. Stuart’s actions, however, were undermined by Johnson’s scarcely a month later. At Stanwix, Johnson went well beyond his instructions to secure a boundary along the Ohio to the Great Kanawha River and then back to Chiswell’s mines near the Virginia–North Carolina border. This arrangement would have kept Kentucky in Indian hands. Instead, Johnson secured Iroquois acquiescence to the Tennessee River, thereby opening up Kentucky to settlement. Stanwix alienated the western Indians and created tremendous discord between Pennsylvania and Virginia. By 1774 tensions reached such height that Virginia’s governor, Lord Dunmore, sent his own representative to Pittsburgh with orders to bring the region under Virginian control.

In many ways the proclamation’s audience was not supposed to read the document, but to hear it—from Indian agents and military officials. The proclamation’s focus on Indian issues showed the imperial government’s commitment to maintaining good Indian relations. As the Crown had done when it called the Albany Congress in 1754, it now put forward the proclamation in the hope that it would serve as a foundation for future negotiations involving Indian-colonial relations. While the proclamation became intertwined with Pontiac’s Rebellion, the document clearly indicated that these relations were going to be placed on a new foundation.

A less obvious but harsh impact of the proclamation fell upon frontier squatters, many of whom were non-English-speaking Germans or anti-English Scotch-Irish. They first heard of the document from the soldiers assigned to remove them. Even officers who understood the reasoning behind such evictions grumbled about the duty to enforce them. Moreover, even when the army removed squatters, the families often returned the next season. In the end squatters found that the proclamation shielded them legally. Since no land titles could be issued, squatters settled on land indiscriminately. This does not mean that squatters came to accept the proclamation. They did not. What it did mean was that the proclamation offered protection to them when it came to clearing the land, even though it meant a legal limbo for them once they wanted to take title.

While squatters worked around the proclamation, the edict hurt one group of listeners particularly hard: the land speculators. Squatters could slip into the region and take up residence, but land companies could not. Speculators needed to obtain clear title to the land before they could sell it. The proclamation barred companies such as the Ohio Company of Virginia from renewing their earlier grants. As one lawyer commented, the proclamation was “a species of ‘tyranny’ that was ‘sufficient to prevent the operations of the companies’” (Holton, p. 8).

The reference to tyranny was not simple rhetorical flourish. The proclamation served as a catalyst for a rethinking of what England stood for. The Seven Years’ War had inspired a mass of literary works that likened the English-French conflict to Rome’s struggle with Carthage. The British writer Horace Walpole, for example, said that victory made England “heirs apparent of the Romans” (Shalev, p. 115). Such comparisons did not enjoy long popularity in North America. The proclamation, when combined with the Sugar Act and Stamp Act, led colonists to recast the Roman metaphor. England became

the corrupt and tyrannical Rome, the empire not the republic. The proclamation offered a new understanding of England that eventually convinced the colonists that they were American rather British.

What seemed most unfair, to Virginian and Pennsylvanian veterans, was how the governors of Quebec and the Floridas were allowed to make land grants. This provision meant that legal title to the land might slip from the established colonies to the newly created ones. The veterans had volunteered to serve in the conflict on the promise of land titles being given to them by Virginia and Pennsylvania. Adding to Virginia's apprehension was the rumor of the so-called Vandalia Charter, which would close the Ohio region entirely to Virginians. Here is where British desires to influence the direction of settlement directly challenged colonial assumptions about postwar expansion. In Virginia, then, the proclamation helped set the stage for Dunmore's War in 1774, a series of battles that bled into the start of the American war for independence. And here is the proclamation's final impact: It was a root cause of the American Revolution.

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