

THE HUGUENOT LETORTS FIRST CHRISTIAN FAMILY ON THE CONESTOGA

Mrs. Benson, long an outstanding authority on the relationships between Pennsylvania Indian traders and the Proprietary Government, reveals in this research paper the origins and ordeals of an early trading family which settled in Lancaster County.

Introduction

For more than two hundred and fifty years the name *LeTort* has clung to a little cross roads in Manor Township, Lancaster County. No one in the neighborhood could tell you where the name came from. No one named LeTort lives there now. Historians of Lancaster are scarcely more helpful, even though they all mention the name *James LeTort*. Our early historian, Rupp, was accurate as far as he went. In a footnote he says, "James LeTort was a French Huguenot . . . he lived on or near the banks of the Susquehanna within the present limits of Lancaster County in 1719." But Ellis and Evans, most frequently consulted historians of Lancaster County, say that James LeTort was a French Canadian, and Klein, following Ellis and Evans, says the same thing. Since Carlisle was built at LeTort's spring, the Cumberland County history refers to James LeTort, calling him a French-Swiss.¹

None of these authorities do more than mention the name, nor do they indicate that there were two men by the name of LeTort, father and son, both far from insignificant persons, their activities in the Pennsylvania wilderness spanning close to seventy years. All these histories imply that French fur traders such as the LeTorts were of little significance in the development of a community, that the real history of Lancaster County begins in 1710 with the settlement at Strasburg of the Swiss Mennonites, ancestors of many seated here this evening.

But if the Protestant heritage is significant in the history of America and in the lives of those living in Lancaster County today, the Huguenot LeTorts are certainly the spiritual ancestors of us all. Displaced persons, as were so many of our ancestors, fleeing from religious and political intolerance, they were the first to find a haven in this wilderness to which so many more came seeking freedom after them.

We are positive that Anne LeTort and her son lived here in 1704 because in that year "LeTort, the french woman at Conestogoe" sent a message to Philadelphia about the Twightwee Indians attacking two Indian families at Conestoga.²

In 1704 when a man in Philadelphia mentioned Conestoga he meant the whole region through which the Conestoga River flows, that is, most of what is Lancaster County today. But the French woman at Conestoga had come here for the Indian trade, and the Indian trade centered at the Indian Town not far from Susquehanna. Probably at that time, and for fifteen more years, Madame LeTort lived close to the spot which still bears her name, now the little village of LeTort. Her home was so near the Indian Town that at one time the Indians complained because her hogs invaded their corn.³

By what path had this French Huguenot family traveled from the Valley of the Loire to the banks of the Susquehanna?

PART I

CAPTAIN JACQUES LETORT AND HIS WIFE ANNE SETTLE ON THE SCHUYLKILL — 1686-1696

The LeTorts were natives of Bonnetable, a little town between Le Mans and Alencon in the valley of the Sarthe, a branch of the Loire, in northern France. When, in 1685, revoking the tolerant Edict of Nantes, Louis XIV ordered all Frenchmen to join the Church of Rome or suffer dire consequences, the LeTort family was one of those which kept the faith and fled. The size of the family we do not know. We are sure it contained at least Capt. Jacques LeTort, his wife Anne, their small son James and two uncles who, James said in 1704, were Protestant ministers in London. The LeTorts fled to London, for Bonnetable lies less than one hundred miles from the English Channel, but many times that distance from the German state whose powerful prince, Frederick William, Elector of Brandenburg, head of Protestantism in Germany, had offered sanctuary.⁴

Like refugees and displaced persons of our own day, the French Protestants in London in 1686 were faced with need to make definite decisions about a future home and find ways to carry out their projects. Two and one half months after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes had deprived him of the rights of a French citizen and freedom of worship, Jacques LeTort of Bonnetable was in London thinking seriously of entering the service of the Elector of Brandenburg. LeSauvage, refugee minister of the Huguenot congregation at Alencon, wrote a letter of recommendation for him to take to the German prince. This letter of recommendation, now among the manuscripts in the Logan collection at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, is the earliest LeTort family document found so far. It is written in French, the spelling somewhat different from that of modern French, and it is rather difficult to decipher, but an accurate translation has been made:

Le Sieur Jacques Le Tort native of France of middle height aged thirty-five years is a powerful man of good birth and of an excellent family. We know him because he was for a short time a member of our flock at Alen-

con, assigned to our Assemblies and performing the duties of a true Christian. He has zeal for our religion in which he was brought up and of which he has retained the profession to the present moment with several good qualities with which God in his grace has endowed him. He would be worthy of some responsible employment by his Highness the Elector of Brandenburg whom he wishes ardently to serve. We recommend him strongly to our Brothers and pray God that He may bless him abundantly with all his family.

Done at London the 1 January 1686

Le Sauvage

Minister⁵

The wording of this recommendation indicates a family of some consequence before the dispersion. Perhaps the phrase "un homme considerable" might be translated "an important man" rather than "a powerful man." The title *Sieur* applied only to persons of excellent family; leaders of the congregations attended assemblies or synods of the church. Two brothers or brothers-in-law of LeTort were ministers of the Reformed Church, a position requiring more than average education. The Protestant universities in seventeenth century France produced ministers of the highest caliber, especially Saumur where the lectures of Amyraut had increased William Penn's concern with religious tolerance and the doctrine of the inner light. In Pennsylvania documents Jacques LeTort is always referred to as *Captain LeTort*, and years later James Logan, not given to complimentary phraseology, referred to Jacques' widow, Anne LeTort, as an "old gentlewoman."⁶

Another bit of evidence indicating the LeTorts to be people not lightly dismissed is the responsible position which Jacques LeTort secured before the end of 1686, recorded in a document recently discovered in the Land Office at Harrisburg. September 13, 1686, in London, Sir Matthias Vincent gave "Capt. Jaques Letort late of Bonnetable in the Province of Main in the Kingdom of France" letters of attorney to look after his Pennsylvania estate of 10,000 acres just purchased from William Penn.⁷

Sir Matthias Vincent had joined with other Englishmen of wealth and influence to purchase from William Penn 100,000 acres of land bordering on Lake Erie, their ultimate aim establishment of a trade in Canadian furs by way of Lake Erie, the Susquehanna and Delaware Rivers to the port of Philadelphia. Dr. Daniel Coxe, physician to royalty, owner of enormous land tracts on the New Jersey shore of the Delaware, and Governor of West Jersey, exerted himself energetically in the Pennsylvania fur venture, called the New Mediterranean Sea Company. Vincent's 10,000 acre purchase on the Schuylkill and Dr. Coxe's adjoining 10,000 acres were personal investments made while larger company plans took shape.⁸

We have Governor William Markham's word for it that the LeTorts reached Pennsylvania in 1686, so they must have set sail very soon after Sir Matthias gave Captain Jacques power to take possession of his 10,000 acre estate, to supervise and to manage it. The LeTorts brought with them at least one other Huguenot family, that of Gousse Ronnin, apothecary, "late of Marenneo in the province of Sointonge," the Ronnin family bound to serve Vincent four years, then to receive 100 acres of Pennsylvania land.

In Philadelphia February 6, 1687 LeTort engaged a second family to serve Sir Matthias Vincent four years for thirty pounds and one hundred acres of land. He sent the bill to Sir Matthias in England. Alas, that worthy gentleman died suddenly in June, 1687 before the bill reached him; whatever plans he may have made for LeTort perished with him. Lady Vincent refused to pay so Dr. Coxe accepted the bill and sent word to LeTort that the servants were his. Dr. Coxe wrote that he planned to buy Vincent's property, that he was sending LeTort goods for the Indian trade and would lease him four hundred acres on which he was living. Dr. Coxe's letters in 1687 are full of high hopes for the fur trade to be opened by the new company on Lake Erie.⁹

The New Mediterranean Sea Company never materialized. Fur merchants at Albany looked upon most of Pennsylvania as within their domain; they had complained of encroachment by New Jersey fur traders even before the Duke of York became King James II. After James II came to the throne in 1685, Governor Dongan of New York sent him word that a Pennsylvania fur trade on Lake Erie, the Susquehanna and Delaware Rivers would cut off his income from the port of New York. William Penn could not afford to antagonize the King, his powerful patron, so he never signed the deed prepared for the Mediterranean Sea Company. The collapse of this project did not prevent its individual members and other companies of London merchants from forming their own plans to trade for furs in the same areas. While Dr. Coxe retained Captain LeTort as his Indian fur trade agent, many another company of London merchants sent ship loads of Indian goods to Pennsylvania with a factor instructed to enter the Indian trade, each bent on outdoing his neighbor in this business which held such promise of quick wealth to the entrepreneur.¹⁰

Jacques LeTort's four hundred acre plantation leased from Dr. Coxe lay on the Schuylkill River, about thirty miles from Philadelphia, close to the present day town of Spring City, admirably situated for trade with Indians. The source of furs lay northwest in Canada and the Illinois region; pelts reached the East via the Great Lakes or rivers whose upper branches lay close to the sources of the western waters. For nearly a hundred years Indians from the West had been bringing their furs to the Delaware via the Schuylkill. In making plans for a city upon the Susquehanna William Penn wrote (1690) that it could be reached by way of the Schuylkill "for a Branch of that River lies near a Branch that runs into Susquehannagh River, and is the Common Course of the Indians with their Skins and Furrs into our parts, and to the Provinces of East and West-Jersey, and New-York, from the West and North-West parts of the Continent from whence they bring them." Traders from Pennsylvania and the Jerseys, swarming up the Schuylkill and the Susquehanna seeking routes to western sources of furs had alarmed New York traders for almost a decade.¹¹

At a point on the Schuylkill, situated far enough west to intercept

Indians coming eastward with furs, Jacques LeTort had certainly established himself by the spring of 1687 and there he planned to carry on a large Indian trade. He was not alone in this determination. The woods were full of traders with the same idea. William Penn's policy of open trade,¹² no monopoly, filled many with a fervor for furs and quick profits. Plantations laid out to lure the Indian and his furs lined the Schuylkill from LeTort's to Philadelphia. The Farmer family¹³ at Whitemarsh, Zachariah Whitpain¹⁴ near present Norristown, like LeTort were backed by groups of London merchants; at intermediate points lived Swedes such as Lasse Cock (member of Council) and the Yocums long engaged in the trade; the Jerseys and New Castle were alive with old traders, and those of Maryland, such as John Hance Tilghman (Steelman) and Col. Caspar Herman of Bohemia Manor intended to fight for *their* share.¹⁵ Penn himself certainly hoped to recoup some of his outlay by profits from peltry. Governor Dongan of New York reported that in 1687 two hundred packs of beaver went down the Schuylkill to Pennsylvania traders and that even more were expected to go that way in 1688. This, he declared, would be the ruin of New York and Albany. He asked permission from James II to build New York forts upon Delaware and Susquehanna to prevent Pennsylvania from interfering with the New York fur trade.¹⁶

In this atmosphere of fur trade fever (1687) LeTort wrote Dr. Coxe for Indian trade goods, promising to make a good return in furs; Dr. Coxe sent the supplies, with a warning not to buy anything from Whitpain who had filled a ship with goods and would not allow the Coxe supplies to sail in it. No document has been found by which we can pinpoint Jacques LeTort's activities for two years — spring 1687 to spring 1689. In the meantime his competitor, Zachariah Whitpain, had made another trip to London, returning in February 1689 bearing the first news that Protestant William of Orange had landed in England to overthrow his father-in-law, Catholic James II.¹⁷

The politics of the fur trade combined with the politics of religious differences to harass and bedevil the LeTort family as long as they lived, at the same time opening for them new roads of enterprise. Whitpain's news of Protestant overthrowing Catholic in England set rumors of wild-hue flying through the woods all up and down the American coast: the Catholics in Canada were coming with nine thousand Seneca Indians to join the Catholics of Maryland, exterminate all Protestants of Maryland and Pennsylvania. This news reached the Pennsylvania Council from New Castle. When Captain LeTort heard the rumors at his backwoods trading post he too sent a report of it to the Council. The Council remained calm; even later when word came from England of war with France because Catholic Louis XIV fought to restore James II to the throne, Pennsylvania felt little agitation.¹⁷

King William's War (1689-1697) in the colonies developed into a struggle between Albany and Canada for fur trade routes to the Illinois and Mackinac. Less conspicuously fur traders of Pennsylvania made use of the war for their own trade benefit in many devious ways. Lasse Cock

seized upon this occasion to investigate an unwelcome fur trade competitor in April of 1690, going "up Skoolkill among our Indians . . . to make Enquiries Concerning the store and quantity of Ammunition in the Custody of the few Franch families seated up the said River." The French families were few indeed, — the LeTorts and two families of servants, perhaps temporarily increased by a few of the Huguenots whom Dr. Coxe had sent to his New Jersey lands.¹⁸

Could this annoying visit of the Swede have been the reason why, one month later (May 1690), Captain LeTort applied to the Council for "liberty to goe for England"? This could have been one of the reasons, but scarcely the only reason. Captain LeTort had reasons, urgent reasons to reach London and talk personally with his sponsor, Dr. Daniel Coxe. This urgency near cost him his life and his cargo as well, for we can presume that he took with him the furs which he had promised Dr. Coxe in return for a supply of trade goods. It was a dangerous time for any traveler upon the high seas, a time of war. English and French ships attacked and captured each other; a French Protestant captured in an English ship and taken prisoner to France might spend the rest of his life as a galley slave. LeTort faced the peril and set sail for London in 1690.¹⁹

What of the LeTort family during these uncertain days of war, left alone in a strange wilderness? French Protestant women as well as men lived dangerously in that slashing century. Madame Anne LeTort, a French woman of gentle birth, had first fled for her faith from France, marked time in London while her husband sought a suitable connection, made the long voyage to America in a small sailing ship with family and servants, arrived in Philadelphia just as winter (1686) set in. Then, setting up housekeeping in a log cabin home remote in the woods on the Schuylkill, she first became acquainted with Indians (1687).

French women have ever been their husbands' partners in business as well as domestic life, so it is not fantastic to surmise that from the start Anne LeTort helped her husband trade for furs with the Indians who brought pelts down the Schuylkill to their house. After a mere three years experience of wilderness life Captain LeTort left his valiant wife to carry on the trade alone while he returned across the sea. More than three years went by while Anne lived alone in the woods, alone that is except for children and servants, rival fur trade neighbors, and the Indians who came to trade. Her son, named for his father, but known by the English form of the name, James LeTort, reached the age when his education should begin as apprentice to some trade. She must make the decision herself, allowing him in those perilous times to serve John King of Philadelphia for five years "either on Board or on Shore," (1692) John King promising to treat him as is customary . . . for . . . apprentices bound out to sea."²⁰

It was in July 1692 that Martin Chartier and the Shawnees came out of the West, settling for a time near the mouth of the Susquehanna. The first mention of these strange Indians in Pennsylvania records refers to their trade with Madame LeTort, Peter Bizaillon and Captain John Du-

brois. Curiously enough, the first mention of Peter Bizaillon in Pennsylvania records is this same instance, associating him with the LeTorts and with Chartier. Clearly Madame LeTort, Peter Bizaillon and Captain Dubrois were in business together in 1692-1693 and Captain Jacques LeTort was not on hand. It is equally clear that they had the inside track in securing the coveted trade with Martin Chartier's Shawnees. When, in July 1692 these Shawnees first appeared in Maryland some of them immediately went up the Susquehanna, taking a route which led to the Minisink and a hoped-for trade connection with New York merchants. This trip took them very close to the LeTort plantation, perhaps down the Schuylkill; by December 1692 Madame LeTort, Peter Bizaillon and Dubrois had advanced the Shawnees trade goods in expectation of return in furs, for in that month they sent "a packett of Letters . . . to ye strange Indians called Shawnarooners, Sealed upp in a blew Lynnen Cloath." Of this Anne LeTort was accused, as a crime. She responded (through an interpreter) "that what those Informants by mistake calle a packett of Letters, was only a book of accot of what the Indians owed them, wrapt up in a blue Linnen Cloath to preserve it from the weather."²¹

Every fur merchant and trader from Virginia to Albany burned with ambition to make profitable contacts with western Indians. The LeTorts, Bizaillon and Dubrois had succeeded in making uncommonly good connections that way. Rival traders, catching at any straw to eliminate such able competitors, drew up charges against them implying contact with strange Indians as some sinister scheme of these French traders to associate with the enemy. Some of the rumors developed among the Yocums and others at Whitpain's plantation. They sent to the Governor and Council a list of charges against Anne LeTort for which they suggested she should be brought to trial. With the charges went a petition. This petition plainly stated that its purpose was to prevent the French on Schuylkill from engaging in the fur trade, for the petitioners say that on request they will supply additional information "why those up Schuylkill should not be there permitted with such stocks of amunition." Then they "humbly pray that ye ffrench may be called In from those Remote and obscure places where still Continue their former way of ffreedome of Commerce with Natives, and yt if they be permitted to Retayle Trade that it may be in places of this or other Towns in the Province, and yt neither they nor any other be permitted to freedome of Trade with the natives — but such as are approved of . . ."²²

Who were Anne LeTort's associates, Peter Bizaillon and John Dubrois whose success in the Indian trade had been great enough to arouse an organized attack against them?

John Dubrois is easily accounted for. Like the LeTorts, he was a Protestant, sent to New Jersey at the head of a considerable band of Huguenot refugees in the employ of Dr. Daniel Coxe. New Jersey records hold interesting accounts of his first projects in behalf of Dr. Coxe, and his subsequent rise to fortune may be followed in the Court Records of Kent County, Delaware.²³

Peter Bizaillon is the key to the combination — the one who, “in remote and obscure places” carried on commerce “with the natives.”

In the great revolt of the Canadian *coureurs-de-bois* and *voyageurs* against the French fur monopolies’ crushingly low wages, Pierre Bizaillon was only one of many who (like Martin Chartier) fled to the English for better pay, bringing with him knowledge of the western waters which only the French had gained.²⁴ Peter Bizaillon knew secrets worth a fortune to any English merchant lucky enough to secure his services. Peter Bizaillon had been one of Tonti’s men; he was familiar with the Illinois country, with the Arkansas; he had been to the mouth of the Mississippi. There could not have been half a hundred Europeans in all America at that time with as great a knowledge of the Mississippi. For Peter Bizaillon was one of those *voyageurs* whom Tonti had signed up in 1686 to make the trip from Canada to the mouth of the Mississippi for a rendezvous with LaSalle who was voyaging to the same point in a sailing ship from France. They never found LaSalle; he had gone on to Texas and there died by a shot from one of his own party — but they did see the country.²⁵

During Jacques LeTort’s absence upon his dangerous voyage to London Peter Bizaillon made his headquarters at the LeTort plantation on the Schuylkill.²⁶ There is no specific record to explain how he got there, but there is a chain of circumstantial evidence with which we may outline some fascinating suppositions.

As concerns the Indian trade, the Farmers and Whitpaines had the jump on Dr. Coxe’s (i.e. LeTort’s) Schuylkill trade by two or three years. They assuredly had the local red men’s trade sewed up and did not welcome new faces planning to horn in on their business. Governor Markham in 1688 referred to Whitpaine and his associates as “those ingrossers of the Indian Trade” who “endeavours to keep the Indians from treating with the Governmt.”²⁷

This strong opposition hindered trade close to his Schuylkill headquarters. But Jacques LeTort was a man of action. When he guaranteed to secure furs for Dr. Coxe in 1687 he went after them. The entrancing question is: How far did he go? Did he go far enough to meet with Peter Bizaillon upon some western river? Consider that there is no recorded mention of LeTort from the spring of 1687 when he wrote Dr. Coxe for Indian trade goods, until the spring of 1689 when he reported the wild rumors of Seneca invasion; recall too, the Pennsylvania traders’ complaints because the French on Schuylkill had been trading for some time “in remote and obscure places.” Add to that Dr. Coxe’s statement that in 1693 he had lent to William Penn “a Large Journall written & a Large Mapp” (never returned) of a voyage made by “three of my tenants” who “in a birchen Canoa went up School kill”, thence down a branch to the Susquehanna, up that river to its western head, over a portage to the Allegheny, down the Ohio to the Mississippi, and up the Mississippi to a “great yellow River”. “They went & Returned Through above forty Nations of Indians who all treated them very kindly & gave them many furs

for Indian Trade they Carried with them." On such a trip LeTort could have encountered Bizaillon.²⁸

Although we can only conjecture, the known facts create a strong impression that LeTort made a trip to the West in 1688 and determined to take the furs, report of the trip and journal to London in person, and that the journal which Dr. Coxe lent William Penn in 1693 might have been a journal brought to London by LeTort. In drawing up a list of his land holdings about this time Dr. Coxe included his interest in the New Mediterranean Sea Company, boasting that he could exclude the inhabitants of Pennsylvania from the Great Lakes fur trade by a grant which he "and Divers others have from Mr. Penn." A remark which would scarcely endear him or his agents to Jacques LeTort's neighbors upon the Schuylkill.²⁹

The jealous Pennsylvania traders, Swedish and English, thus had reason to fear competition with a company employing determined French Huguenots and a Canadian voyageur who had been to the Mississippi. Their attack in reality aimed at undermining the Coxe interests, using the French origin of its employees to offset their superior abilities. Of this the Pennsylvania Governor and Council were well aware.

But why do the charges against the French traders on the Schuylkill in 1692 and 1693 make no mention of Jacques LeTort? Clearly he was still absent on his long voyage to London; all responsibility for the Schuylkill fur trade lay in his wife's hands: she alone was called to account. Luckily for us Governor William Markham wrote a letter about LeTort to the Governor of Maryland with a thumbnail sketch of the French captain's harrowing trip:

This LeTort was going for England in the ship with Governor Hamilton but he was taken. Letort was carried to Thouloun and narrowly escaped the galleys but after a long and hard usage got into England, where he became acquainted with the West Jersey Company and they understanding that his house stood upon the Schuylkill upon a convenient place for trade with the Indians contracted with him to trade for them there and wrote their agent to supply them with goods.³⁰

Governor Markham's remark that LeTort met with the West Jersey Society in London, that then they hired him to trade for them from his house on the Schuylkill, implies that LeTort reached London after March 4, 1692 for on that date Dr. Coxe sold all of his vast land holdings in West Jersey as well as his land on the Schuylkill to the West Jersey Society, LeTort's leased plantation automatically included in the deal.³¹

When Anne LeTort first came to Philadelphia on December 29, 1693 to answer the Swedes' accusations against her she was alone. Only Governor Markham and Lasse Cock attended the Council meeting.

None of the informers or witnesses appearing, shee humblie desired that she might not be again sent for till the extremetie of the weather was over, she having no person att home, remote in the woods, to be att her house in her absence.³²

When next she appeared before the Governor and Council, February 6, 1694, Anne was not alone. That powerful man, Captain Jacques LeTort had won through storms and wintry seas, war, capture, prison and commercial rivalry to reach her side again in triumph with papers confirming him as trader for the powerful West Jersey Society of London. The Yocums and their friends carried little weight beside this backing and authority. The Governor and Council listened to the charges against Anne LeTort, the evidence and the replies:³³

Accusation 1. Sympathy for French conquest of English: Polycarpus Rose said that an Indian king called Hicquoqueen had told him that Peter Bizaillon and Anne LeTort said the French would soon come and take the land away from the English. Polycarpus Rose and Thomas Jenner said that when they were with Benjamin Clift at Zachariah Whitpaine's plantation in November 1693 Clift said the Indians up Delaware had told him that the French would come in the spring of the year and burn the English.

Answer: Benjamin Clift testified that it was not Anne LeTort nor Peter Bizaillon, but Lewis, the French-Canadian prisoner of war living as a servant at the LeTorts who had told the Indians that the French would come to take away the land from the English.³⁴

Accusation 2. Contacts with strange Indians: Peter Yocum said that several Indians told him strange Indians had been coming and going from the LeTort plantation for over a year and gave no account of themselves.

Answer: Not denied. The Indians Shakhuppo and Kayantarras' wife said that strange Indians whose language they could not understand came to Anne LeTort's house.

Accusation 3. Attack on Swedish traders. Polycarpus Rose and Thomas Jenner "further say that upon the ninth of December 1693, They ryding by the House of Mam LeTort Polycarpus asked her how she did she answered Where have you been hee sayd at Peter Yoakhams she said their was no path for Swades and English Rogues there for noe English Rogues or Swad should come on her Ground and run in a fury with a Horse Whip and Whipt Polycarpus and called for Lewis to help her a ffrench Canida prisoner taken by our Indians . . ." ³⁵

Answer: Anne replied "that the Indians are much indebted to her & little to peter yokum, and that hee came befor her hous with Rum, & therewith enticed the Indians from her; whereupon shee in her anger, might call him & sd Polycarpus Rose names."

Anne's reply means that the LeTorts had given trade goods to the Indians on credit to be paid for in furs; when the Indians came with furs to pay their bill Peter Yocum brought rum to intoxicate them and so secure the furs due the LeTorts. It was a rough game for a woman.

After hearing both sides the Governor and Council dismissed these charges as unworthy of further notice, giving scarcely more consideration to the petition signed by many of the Swedish fur traders, Edward Farmer and others expressing anxiety about the "ffrench in generall amongst us and more Especially Referring to those Tradeing in Remote & Obscure

places . . . with the Natives.”

The Council resolved that Captain LeTort should give sureties “that hee shall acquaint the governmt with all matters hee can hear of or observe concerning the Natives & the enemies of the countrie, and that he take the oaths appointed by act of parliamt . . .” They wished to see Lewis, the French prisoner who lived at LeTorts, for questioning, but the LeTorts were vindicated, their rivals routed.

Immediately Captain Jacques LeTort and Peter Bazaillon set in motion enough fur trade activity to disturb more than Pennsylvania traders. They alarmed Maryland merchants whose fur trade centered in the Susquehanna Valley. Governor Nicholson of Maryland, a man with fur trade ambitions himself, wrote to Governor Markham of Pennsylvania complaining of LeTort and Bizaillon; Col. Caspar Herman of Bohemia Manor had reported them as dangerous enemy aliens. This indicates that LeTort and Bizaillon were increasing their trade with Chartier’s Shawnees, a trade which Herman had hoped to secure.³⁶

Markham’s letter in defense of the French traders gives priceless insight into their lives. Much of what he said we have already quoted in this account. Governor Markham slapped at the Maryland traders when writing to their governor. He remarked that Col. Herman would “be uneasy until he get all the Indian trade to himself. I have known Coll. Herman for a long time, and he that trades for him on Susquehanna [Amos Nichols] is better known than trusted.”³⁰

Markham wrote this letter June 26, 1696, a year and a half after Capt. LeTort’s dramatic return and appearance before the Governor and Council with his wife. The LeTorts were still on the Schuylkill. Capt. Jacques had been accumulating peltry and was ready again to undertake a hazardous voyage to London with danger of capture on the high seas. Markham told the Governor of Maryland that LeTort, as head of the West Jersey Society’s fur trade, “not many days since . . . went to Burlington [N.J.] to make up his account with the agent, intending soon as conveniently can for England. Governor Hamilton [of New Jersey] will give a very good account of him.”

With that statement Capt. Jacques LeTort, daring and courageous Huguenot, disappears from the record. He must have died soon after. Until some new document is discovered we can only guess in what place or manner. He may have been taken ill and died before his ship sailed . . . but there is no administration of his estate to be found in colonial Pennsylvania, New Jersey or Delaware. He may have been lost at sea by storm or by the fortunes of war, no news of him ever again reaching his anxious family. Perhaps no administration of his estate is to be found because no certain knowledge of his death existed. Perhaps this time he did not escape the galleys.

Only ten months after Governor Markham wrote that LeTort lived on the Schuylkill and was preparing to leave for England, Anne LeTort registered the ear marks of her hogs and cattle in Kent County, Delaware, indicating that she had gone there to live. For the next few years Kent

County Records contain the names of Anne and her son James associated often with the names of Bizaillon and Dubrois in several minor matters—concerning a silver spoon, a bit of ribbon, a bit of gossip, etc.³⁷

In 1697, the year that Madame LeTort moved to Delaware, King William's War came to an official conclusion and her son completed his apprenticeship. The young James LeTort immediately entered the fur trade,³⁸ perhaps as assistant to Bizaillon, perhaps on his own, for he knew the Indian tongues and he knew the business. Fur traders south of New York had benefited by that colony's distraction during the years of hostilities. The Iroquois tribes of New York, long Albany's middlemen in supplying furs from western tribes, had been reduced to impotency by French attacks and disease.³⁹ A number of the Iroquois had fled during the war years into the Susquehanna Valley forming a little Indian Town near the Conestoga.⁴⁰

The Letorts did not tarry long in Kent County. Their second period of vigorous activity began with their removal to Conestoga near the turn of the century. Madame Anne LeTort, Indian trader, carried on a business of her own, and her son James LeTort followed in his father's footsteps along the paths to the West.

(Part II of the LeTort story will appear in a future number of this publication.)

Lancaster, Pennsylvania

EVELYN A. BENSON

NOTES

1. Rupp, Israel D. *History of Lancaster County* . . . Lancaster, Pa.: G. Hills, 1844, p. 512; Ellis, Franklin. *History of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania*. Philadelphia: Everts and Peck, 1883, pp. 7, 15, 758; Klein, H.M.J. *Lancaster County, Pennsylvania: A History*. New York: Lewis, 1924, I, 101,257; *History of Cumberland and Adams Counties, Pennsylvania*. Chicago: Warner-Beers, 1886, pp. 8, 68-69, 229.
2. Pennsylvania Archives Colonial Records. *Minutes of the Provincial Council of Pennsylvania* . . . Edited by Samuel Hazard. Philadelphia. 1852. II, 121 (hereafter cited as *Colonial Records*.)
3. *Ibid.*, p. 554.
4. Petition of James LeTort to Governor and Council [1704]. Logan Papers, Provincial Council, Large, p. 16, Historical Society of Pennsylvania. (Historical Society of Pennsylvania hereafter referred to as HSP.)
5. Logan Papers, vol. XI, 5. HSP. In 1682 a Pastoral Announcement from the Roman Catholic Church (Gallican) promised the Reformed Church members that if they did not return to the fold "you are to expect disasters incomparably more terrible and more baleful than all those which up to the present time your rebellion and schism have drawn upon you." The reply of LeSauvage, pastor of Alencon, "*Peace is beautiful, but TRUTH IS SACRED,*" and his protest to the Pastoral are quoted in Baird, Henry M. *The Huguenots and the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes*. N.Y.: Scribners, 1895, I, 516, 520, 521.

6. Sturgis, Samuel Booth. *Huguenot Source of William Penn's Ideal of Religious Tolerance*. Philadelphia: The Genealogical Society of Pennsylvania, 1956; James Logan to Isaac Taylor, Nov. 4, 1719, Taylor Papers, HSP.
7. Sir Matthias Vincent to Jaques LeTort, Sept. 13, 1686, Letters of Attorney D-2 vol. 4, p. 208, Land Office, Harrisburg, Pa.
8. Zimmerman, Albright G. "Daniel Coxé and the New Mediterranean Sea Company," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, LXXVI (1952), pp. 86-96. (Hereafter cited as Zimmerman).
9. Contract Gousse Ronnin to Mathias Vincent, Contract Daniel Ervans to Jaques LeTort, Letters of Attorney D-2 vol. 4, pp. 207, 209, Land Office, Harrisburg Zimmerman 91-95.
10. Brodhead, John R., ed. *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York* (1614-1692) III. Albany, 1853, pp. 341, 349, 356, 425, (hereafter cited as N.Y. Col. Doc.); O'Callaghan, Edmund B., ed., *Documentary History of the State of New York. I*, Albany, 1849, pp. 151-156, 188, 405-412. (hereafter cited as O'Cal. (1849)).
11. Zimmerman, note 2, p. 87; Penn, William. *Some Proposals for a Second Settlement in the Province of Pennsylvania*. Shoreditch, 1690. Broadside, American Philosophical Society Collections. (American Philosophical Society Collections hereafter cited as APS).
12. Zimmerman, note 5, p. 88.
13. *Pennsylvania Archives, Second Series*, XIX, 433; *Colonial Records*, I, 147, 148, 187; Letter of Attorney Book D-2 vol. 4, pp. 163-166, 229, Land Office, Harrisburg.
14. *Ibid.*, 271, 101, 162, 177, 229; Patent Book A vol. 1, p. 272; Record Book F. No. 6, pp. 78, 79, 96, 115; Philadelphia Deed Book C2 vol. 3, p. 118, 119; Philadelphia Deed Book E2 No. 5, p. 233.
15. Zimmerman, 91-93; These traders are mentioned frequently in the *Maryland Archives*. See also Note 30, below.
16. O'Cal. I (1849), p. 188, 155.
17. *Colonial Records* I, 246-7, 277, 299-304; *Maryland Archives* VIII, 77-94; O'Cal. II (1849), 181.
18. Wraxall, Peter. *An Abridgement of the Indian Affairs . . . in the Colony of New York . . . 1678 to . . . 1751*. ed. by C. H. McIlwain, Cambridge, Mass, 1915, p. xviii; *Colonial Records* I, 334.
19. *Ibid.*, 340; for dangers to Protestants in the hands of French authorities see Baird, Henry M. *The Huguenots and the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes*. N.Y.: Scribners, 1895, II, Chapter XIII.
20. Record Book F No. 6, p. 44, Land Office, Harrisburg; *Pennsylvania Archives, Series 2*, XIX, 179-180.
21. *Maryland Archives* VIII, 341-354; *Colonial Records* I, 397, 435. In the quotation "Shawnarooners", etc. I have used the spelling in the original manuscript: Penn Letters and Ancient Documents vol. I, p. 242, APS, rather than the spelling used in the printed *Colonial Records* I, 396-397.
22. *Colonial Records* I, 396-397; Petition to Capt. William Markham . . . Jan. 6, 1694, Penn Letters and Ancient Documents vol. III (pages not numbers) APS.
23. *Burlington Court Book of West New Jersey 1680-1709*, ed. by H. Clay Reed. American Legal Records vol. 5. American Historical Association, Washington, 1944, pp. 104-114, 103, 120; *Court Records of Kent County, Delaware 1680-1705* ed. by Leon deValinger, Jr. American Legal Records, vol. 8. American Historical Association, Washington, 1959. (54 different page references in Index under Dubrois.)
24. O'Cal. (1849) I, 202, 205, 208, 210, 216, 228, 238, 254; N.Y. Col. Doc. IX, 131-6, Du Chesneau re revolt of Coureurs-de-bois; Brebner, John Bartlett. *The Explorers of North America 1492-1806*. Garden City, N.Y.; Doubleday & Co., 1955, pp. 258, 262.
25. *Rapport de L'Archiviste de la Province de Quebec pour 1929-30*. Repertoire des Engagements pour l'ouest conserve dans les archives Judiciaires de Montreal (1670-1778), p. 195: "15 fevrier 1686 Engagement de Vital Oriol, Charles Delaunay et Pierre Bisailon pour faire le voyage que feront Couture Baret et

- Jacques Filliatro avec M. de Tonty.”; O’Cal. I (1849) p. 221: Denonville’s Memoir 8th November 1686, [Tonti] “left Fort des Illinois last February to seek after M. de la Salle at the lower end of the Mississippi. He has been as far as the sea, where he learned nothing of M. de la Salle except that some savages had seen him set sail and go towards the South.” I am indebted to the kindness of Donald H. Kent of the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission for calling my attention to the Bizaillon item in the Quebec Archives.
26. Zimmerman, Note 2, p. 87: Maryland Archives XX, 406: complaint of Col. Herman (1696) “Capt. Letort . . . does now live back in the Woods in the same place . . . Basilion formerly lived . . .” Markham’s reply p. 470, says that LeTort lives on the Schuylkill. Futhcy, John S. *History of Chester Co. Pa.*; Phila. Everts, 1881, p. 210, re “Bezalion’s Cave.”
 27. Board of Trade Papers/ Proprietaries 1697-1776/ Vol 21 Part I 1761 & 1762/ London 1902. APS. Extract from Mr. Markham’s Letter dated 16 Feb.ry 1687/8.
 28. Quoted by Zimmerman, p. 90; It has been customary to sneer at Dr. Coxe’s accounts of America. This attitude is based upon one remark of Governor Nicholson who had reasons of business rivalry to underrate the doctor. The extent of Dr. Coxe’s grants, investments in, and investigation of America were scarcely equaled by any other one individual of his generation.
 29. “Ms. Endorsed by Dr. Coxe: Dr. Daniel Coxe HIS Account of New Jersey.” *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* VII (1883) p. 328
 30. *Maryland Archives* XX, 470.
 31. *Documents Relating to the Colonial History of the State of New Jersey*, ed. by William A. Whitehead, vol. II, 41, 73.
 32. *Bid.* Records I, 397.
 33. *Ibid.*, 435-437, (the hearing); 396-397 (accusations).
 34. Penn Letters and Ancient Documents vol. I, 248, APS.
 35. I have used the spelling in the original manuscript: Penn Letters and Ancient Documents vol. I, p. 242, APS, rather than the spelling used in the printed *Colonial Records*. I, 396-397.
 36. *Maryland Archives* XX, 406; *Maryland Archives* VIII, 458-461.
 37. *Court Records of Kent County, Delaware*, p. 90.
 38. Hanna, Charles A. *The Wilderness Trail*. New York: Putnam, 1911, I, 167. Hanna mentions a 1722 petition in which James LeTort says he had been an Indian trader for 25 years—therefore he must have entered the trade in 1697 the year his apprenticeship expired. *The Wilderness Trail* contains a tremendous amount of unorganized material on Pennsylvania fur traders, although it is not used as a direct source for this paper. End of war: *Pennsylvania Archives* Series I, vol. I, 125.
 39. *New York Colonial Documents* IV, 159, 305. Lord Bellomont to Lords of Trade, New York, May 8, 1698, “the five nations of Indians . . . are half destroyed by this war.” p. 337, Comparative population of . . . Indians in 1689 and 1698: 2550 Five Nation warriors in 1689, 1230 in 1698. O’Cal. I (1849), 349, Five Nations at Albany 1696, “The enemy has brought us to a very low condition, we are become a small people.”
 40. *Maryland Archives* VIII, 197-198, 181, 207, 518.