

**John Connolly to George Washington, February 1, 1774,
Letters to Washington and Accompanying Papers.
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FROM DOCTOR JOHN CONNOLLY.

WESTMORELAND GOAL Feby. 1st. 1774.

DEAR SIR

I wrote you from Fredericksburgh on my return into this Country, apologizing for my not waiting on you, as I could have wished, & conformable to my promise—I hope you will excuse me for thus intruding upon you, when warranted by so slight an Acquaintance; but the importance of the Subject, with the desire I have to further our intimacy, (I flatter myself) will render me pardonable.

When we slightly touched upon the Pennsylvania Claim to this Western Country,¹ (which I could have wished to have enlarged upon) I was at that time before, & often since much surprized at the neglect of your Country, in allowing their Claim here, to lie dormant; when every equitable pretensions can be urged in her favor. There is now an ample field open for you, & as I think a foundation which will admit of a valuable Superstructure.— As the Agents of Pennsylvania have latterly extended their Jurisdiction as far West, as the Settlements are formed; the Inhabitants being grievously oppressed, by the enormous expence attending such a course of Justice, applied to His Excellency Lord Dunmore to afford them Relief; As I was well convinced that Pittsburgh, Red-Stone, & all the other Western Settlements, could not properly be within the Limits of Pennsylvania, & despising

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usurpation, as well as feeling the distress of the poor People, I urged the matter warmly to his Lordship, & He hath been pleased, to appoint a number of Magistrates at Pittsburgh, & to the Westward; determining to concert such measures with the Honorabe. House, as might bring the Pennsylvanians to some equitable determination of their Western Boundary; which his Lordship conceived could not be more effectually accomplished than by erecting a *New County* to include Pittsburgh. As I was an Officer appointed, I have been committed to Goal for denying the Jurisdiction of Pennsyla. at Pittsburgh, & attempting to act under a Commission from Virginia—You may now observe (Sir) what an extraordinary field you have now to look into, & examine your Rights here, compared with Pennsylvania, which most undoubtedly hath usurped Jurisdiction, as well as Territory, (in my humble opinion) affrontive to a Royal Colony. How dangerous to admit of such proceedings, permit me to shew you, by transcribing part of Lord Campden's opinion on the dispute between Connecticut & Pennsylvla.

“If all the Colonies of North America were to “remain at this day bounded, in point of right, as “they are described in the original Grant of each, “I do not believe there is one Settlement in that “part of the Globe, that has not, in some measure, “either been encroached upon, or else usurped upon, “its Neighbours, so that if the Grants themselves “were the only Rule between the contending Plantations, “there never could be an end of their disputes, “without unsettling large Tracts of Land, when the “Inhabitants have no better Rights Title to produce, than “either Possession, or Posterior Grants, which in “point of Law would be superseded by prior Charters. “Hence I conceive, that many other Circumstances “must be taken into consideration besides “the Parchment Boundary; for that may at this day “be extended or narrowed by POSSESSION, ACQUESCENCE, “or AGREEMENT, by the situation & condition “of the Territory at the time of the Grant, as well “as by various other matters.

This opinion was given in the year 1761, & from hence you may observe the Scheme of the Proprietaries, which indeed their officers do not fear to conceal, the [y] say as Willm. Penn's Grant by King Charles could not be properly executed, owing to a prior Grant of

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King James' to Lord Baltimore, which prevented him from extending as far South, as the Charter specified, & therefore obliged Him to purchase from Lord Baltimore the deficiency from Lord Baltimore; by virtue of occupancy to the Westward, & the extension of their Jurisdiction, they will insist upon an adequate proportion of the Crown's Lands, on the Ohio. How equitable this Claim may be, as well as modest, I submit to your opinion, but I am certain however, that if Virginia doth not vigorously exert herself upon this occasion, notwithstanding the just pretensions of that Colony, by prior occupancy, Grants, & Conquest, yet I am sure Pennsylvania will carry the point, by a steady & politic adherence to her Interest. As you (Dear Sir) have had a principal part in defending this his Majesty's Territory, from against the attacks of an open & publick Enemy, you will also (I flatter myself) contribute no small assistance, in defeating the same sinister designs of a private one.²

I am Dear Sir Your Frd: & most obedt: Servt: JOHN CONNOLLY

N: B: Please to make my Compliments to Col: Mason your Neighbour, & if you judge proper, you may shew my Letter. I am to be enlarged To Morrow on my Parole of honor, to surrender myself to the Sherif when demanded, & shall set off for Pittsburgh.

1 The boundary controversy between Pennsylvania and Virginia dated back as far as 1752, and was not finally settled until the completion of the Mason and Dixon line. To effect a cessation of differences, Alexander McClean, of Pennsylvania, and Joseph Neville, of Virginia, were appointed in 1781 to complete this line as a temporary boundary between these States until the country should be at peace and able to give the subject proper consideration. In 1783, the Rev. John Ewing, David Rittenhouse, John Lukens, and Thomas Hutchins were appointed by Pennsylvania, and Bishop Madison, Rev. Robert Andrews, John Page, and Andrew Elliott of Maryland, by Virginia, commissioners for running this line. Their report was adopted December, 1784, and this long dispute settled for all time.

2 When John Connolly returned to Pittsburg, he brought with him an appointment by Lord Dunmore as commandant at Fort Pitt, which had been demolished by the King's orders, and magistrate of Augusta County, including Pittsburg and its environs. His instructions were to reestablish the fort, and to take forcible possession of the town and surrounding country in the name of Virginia. On January 24, Connolly was arrested by Arthur St. Clair, then a magistrate of Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania, for the distribution of "an advertisement requiring the people to meet as a militia" to sustain the action of Virginia.—Pennsylvania Archives and FORCE'S American Archives. Being released on parole, he proceeded openly with his plans, raised militia to garrison Fort Pitt, which he renamed Dunmore, and arrested several Pennsylvania magistrates, and committed them to Staunton jail, Virginia. When the day for his appearance at court arrived he kept his parole, but came with an escort of militia

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sufficient to set Pennsylvania authority at defiance. He continued to occupy the fort, and, according to many depositions of the neighboring inhabitants, committed extraordinary outrages upon the property and persons of all who questioned his authority or the jurisdiction of Virginia. Connolly was again arrested in July, and again in November, 1775. The latter arrest was made in consequence of a letter written to John Gibson expressing loyalty to the King, and a strong condemnation of the prevailing tendencies, and resulted in a five years' imprisonment for its unlucky author.