

Treaty of Fort Stanwix (1784)

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On October 22, 1784, at Fort Stanwix in present-day Rome, New York, the United States signed a treaty with the Iroquois Confederacy, a confederation of six Iroquoian-speaking American Indian tribes, the Mohawk, Seneca, Oneida, Cayuga, Onondaga, and Tuscarora Nations, whose homelands spanned western Pennsylvania, Kentucky, West Virginia, and New York. By signing the treaty, the Iroquois relinquished their claims to land in the Ohio Country, which was then assumed by the United States federal government. At this time, the American Revolutionary War (1775-1783) left the newly founded United States burdened by debt. To generate revenue, the federal government hoped to assume ownership of “unclaimed” territories, including the Ohio Country, and sell this land for a profit, as well as to compensate military officials for their service in the war.

The Iroquois Confederacy previously assumed possession of lands in the Ohio Country through their military campaign referred to as the Beaver Wars (1650-1700), during which they displaced American Indian tribes living in Ohio Country in order to access beaver populations for trade with British and Dutch fur traders. The Confederacy returned these lands to Ohio natives as part of the Treaty of Grande Paix, or the Treaty of Great Peace, in 1701. Although some Iroquois groups continued to live in Ohio, many returned to their homeland in the St. Lawrence River region in modern-day New York State. The Iroquois Confederacy later signed another treaty in 1768, also called the Treaty of Fort Stanwix, through which they relinquished their claims to land south of the Ohio River in an attempt to quell conflict between

native peoples living there, such as the Delaware, Seneca-Cayuga, and Shawnee Tribes, and encroaching Anglo-American settlers.

In 1783, the Treaty of Paris ended the Revolutionary War, but it failed to address American Indian territories within the areas given to the United States as part of the treaty negotiations. Tribes who were native to Ohio, including the Shawnee, Seneca-Cayuga, and Delaware, rejected the Treaty of Fort Stanwix and refused to give up their claims to land in the Ohio Country, arguing that the Iroquois did not have the right to sign off on land what was not theirs. The Ohio Country, especially the natural resource-rich Ohio River Valley, was a common battle ground for bloody skirmishes between Anglo-Americans and native peoples over land disputes. Emboldened by the treaty, Anglo-Americans began to settle the area in the mid-1780s, and in the process, tensions escalated and Anglo-Americans pushed American Indian tribes off their native lands.

See Also

References

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