



Letter, Captive Inquiry Transcription

“Letter, Captive Inquiry, 1760, Gratz Collection”

Introduction

As the French and Indian Wars wind down, The Commissioners for Indian Affairs are negotiating to secure the release of the white settlers that are still being held prisoners by the Indians. However even before a general Treaty, Trustees of the Mennonite Church are attempting to accelerate this release by offering the Indians “presents” if they would escort the white prisoners from their lands to Pittsburgh. This gesture is to be considered payment for the cost and inconvenience to the Indians for this journey, and not as a ransom for releasing the white prisoners.

If the Commissioners for Indian Affairs will agree to instruct their Agents to take every opportunity of enquiring what Captives there are in each Indian town & as near as they can their Ages & Sex, & the Disposition of the Indians, with whom they live, respecting the releasing them, it is thought the Minutes of all such intelligence may be of service, if transmitted in time, to be laid before the Governour at the time of a general Treaty. And if any of the Indians who have Captives are willing to release them before the Time of such a Treaty, in order to encourage them therein, some small Presents might be given in Proportion to the Distance they live from Pittsburgh, in consideration of their Journey in bringing them thither, the full Value of which the Trustees of the fund raised by the Menonites will immediately pay to the Commissioners, their Agents or their Order, but which may be inconvenient to do any thing of this kind in such a manner as to give the Indians cause to think we intend to ransom the Prisoners in general. Great Caution is Necessary in transacting the Affair.

Submitted to the Consideration of the
Commissioners for Indian Affairs, the 7th day, 6th month 1760
On behalf of the Trustees for the Menonites.

P. Pembleton