

Fort Halifax, the “go-between Fort”

During the French and Indian War (1756-1763), the Province of Pennsylvania played a very significant role in the forming of a Provincial army and the building and garrisoning of Forts in strategic areas. Such was the role Fort Halifax played in this scenario.

Fort Hunter (Hunter's Mill) was built on the Susquehanna River near present day Harrisburg. It was part of a system of defenses built to defend Lancaster and Berks County. Col. William Clapham's 3rd Battalion of the Pennsylvania Regiment garrisoned there in May 1756.

At this time, Gov. Robert Morris was drawing up a plan to establish a fort at the junction of the North and West branches of the Susquehanna River near the old Indian town of Shamokin, which had been deserted after the attack at Penns Creek in October 1755.

On June 5, 1756, Col. Clapham marched out of Fort Hunter with five companies of men to proceed north along the Susquehanna River to establish a “go-between post,” or fort, between Fort Hunter and the Forks of the Susquehanna. Chaplain Charles Beatty writes in his journal dated Monday June 7, 1756, “Began to fell timber for building a Fort 160' square, called Fort Halifax.” Col. Clapham writes in his report to Gov. Morris on June 11, 1756, Camp at Armstrong's, “As I find this far the most convenient Place on the River between Hunter and Shamokin for a magazine on account of its good natural Situation.”

During the next 16 months, Fort Halifax served as the chief post on the line of communications between the settlements and Shamokin where Fort Augusta would be built later that same year. On July 1, 1756, Col. Clapham left Fort Halifax for Shamokin, leaving Captain Miles in charge of Fort Halifax and 30 men. Clapham ordered all supplies to be sent to Halifax to be stored there until needed when the fort at Shamokin was built.

Without this established go-between post at Halifax, the supplies and line of communication could not have been maintained for their critical use in building and sustaining Fort Augusta.

