In July of 1754, agents representing the Penn family traveled to Albany, New York, the site of a Congress ordered by the British Board of Trade to negotiate a new peace treaty with the Indians and discuss matters of importance to the colonies. Public proceedings at the Congress included a proposal by Benjamin Franklin for what would become known as the Albany Plan of Union. Franklin believed military affairs, westward expansion, and Indian relations would all be managed best by a united public authority, rather than by thirteen colonial governments.

Many private negotiations took place on the periphery of the Congress. With the help of Conrad Weiser, a respected Indian interpreter, Penn family agents John Penn and Richard Peters made an agreement with the Iroquois to purchase the land located south of the West Branch of the Susquehanna River and east of the Allegheny Mountains. The purchase was recorded in the official proceedings of the Congress, and the land—the Juniata River Valley—became part of the colony of Pennsylvania.
Before the Treaty: The State of Affairs

The Juniata River Valley existed as a lush wilderness that might have beckoned to colonists in eastern Pennsylvania, but the area was considered dangerous Indian territory and remained largely unsettled. The few that ventured west were mostly trappers and traders, and many of them followed the Juniata River like a road west to the Allegheny Mountains.

As the colony's population grew, so did the need for additional land. Indians and Europeans had developed an uneasy familiarity through 150 years of colonization in America, and negotiations for land involved suspicions and expectations on both sides.

In keeping with their Quaker faith, the Penn family chose to deal fairly with the Indians, and bought land claims from them before opening new areas for settlement.

The Six Iroquois Nations, a group of Indian tribes in the colony of New York, were often involved in negotiations for the purchase of land in the mid-Atlantic colonies.
After the Treaty: The Consequences

Settlers moved eagerly into the new land, unaware of a dispute between the Iroquois who sold it to the Penn family and the Delawares and Shawnees, who actually inhabited the area. Indian raids by these displaced tribes and the brewing war between the French and the British drove colonists back to the safety of the east; the Juniata River Valley became home to only several small forts, built to defend the western frontier against French invasion.

Benjamin Franklin continued to promote the plan for a colonial union, but both Britain and the individual colonies themselves rejected it. No colony wanted to give up the degree of independence it enjoyed because Britain was an ocean away, and the British were reluctant to agree to anything that might encourage the colonies to think they were self-governing. Britain needed to control the American colonies as it prepared for a war with France that would last seven years.

In 1763, Britain and France agreed to terms of peace and the French left the Ohio Valley. The Penn family added to the size of their colony by making additional purchases of land as far west as the Allegheny and Ohio Rivers. Six years later, 3,200 applications for western land were submitted by people living in eastern Pennsylvania. The Juniata River Valley welcomed many of these new settlers, and the Juniata River became a road west once again.