

## **We can Thank Sir William Gooch (1681-1751) for Settling the West**



### **Sir William Gooch**

Sir William Gooch is rarely mentioned in the historical accounts of Virginia, however, he played a major role in opening up Western Virginia for colonization. He was given the task of Royal Lieutenant Governor of Virginia in 1727 and for the next two years focused on protecting the West from Native Americans and French encroachment. Every Spring the West was invaded by the Iroquois who attacked the Indian tribes along the war-trails leading southward.

His idea of using the Shenandoah Valley as a buffer for the Colonials from Indian attacks began with the hiring of Conrad Weisner to negotiate with the Indians tribes in that region.

Weisner came to Pennsylvania with his family from the palatinate and was sent to live among the Mohawk Indians of that region. This is where Weisner learned tribal languages. He accepted the offer of Sir Gooch and spent 1736 and 1737 negotiating with the Indians in the Shenandoah Valley.