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A *CHARMING* FIELD FOR AN ENCOUNTER

The Story  
of George Washington's Fort Necessity

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*CHARMING*  
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## THIS IS THE STORY OF *FORT NECESSITY*

—of the remarkable men who met and fought at a remote frontier stockade in the year 1754, of the historic events that took place there, of the developments that led up to those events, of the great American leader who there was trained and tested. The two engagements fought at and near Fort Necessity were the opening shots of the bloodiest conflict of the 18th century. In North America it was called the French and Indian War, and it changed the history of the continent. Elsewhere it was known as the Seven Years' War, and it changed the history of much of the rest of the world.

A distinguished American historian, Lawrence Henry Gipson, considered this the most important of all the wars the United States has fought. "It was destined," he wrote, "to have the most momentous consequences to the American people of any war in which they have been engaged down to our own day—consequences therefore even more momentous than those that flowed from the victorious Revolutionary War or from the Civil War. For it was to determine for centuries to come, if not for all time, what civilization—what governmental institutions, what social and economic patterns—would be paramount in North America. It was to determine likewise whether Americans were to be securely confined . . . to a long but narrow ribbon of territory lying between the coastline and a not too distant mountain chain, and whether their rivals, the French—then considered to be the greatest military power in the world and in control of the Appalachians—were to remain a permanent and effective barrier to any enjoyment of the vast western interior of the continent."



The story begins in Alexandria, Va., on April 2, 1754. There on a Tuesday morning, Lt. Col. George Washington mounted his best horse, gave a command, and to the sound of a single drummer marched a column of troops westward out of the city. Among his regimental papers he carried orders from Gov. Robert Dinwiddie of Virginia commanding him and his men to occupy, fortify, and defend the Upper Ohio Valley against a French army advancing southward from Canada. The march led to Winchester in the Shenandoah Valley, to Wills Creek (Cumberland) in western Maryland, and on to the Great Meadows in southwestern Pennsylvania where Fort Necessity would soon stand. It led to frustration, to short-lived victory, to fame clouded by censure, and to perhaps the bitterest defeat George Washington was ever to know.

As he started with his men toward the western mountains, Colonel Washington was wearing the uniform of an officer of the Virginia militia—red coat with white lace cuffs, red vest and breeches, black boots, a black three-cornered hat. He was only 22 years old, but a giant of a man, standing, by one reliable account, 6 feet 4½ inches. A figure of commanding presence and reserved demeanor, an expert and graceful horseman, he undoubtedly made an impressive appearance to those in Alexandria who were watching.

His troops were less impressive. Some were in the regimental uniform, but many wore combinations of uniform, civilian cloth, breeches, and buckskin hunting shirts. There were 132 men in the ranks, formed into two companies commanded by Capt. Peter Hogg, 51 years old, and Capt. Jacob Van Braam, 24, recently arrived from Holland. The companies had a total of five lieutenants or ensigns, two sergeants, six corporals, a drummer, a surgeon-major, and a gentleman volunteer from Sweden named Carolus Gustavus de Spiltdorph. Several creaking farm wagons carried the equipment and supplies, including tents for some, but not all, of the men.

Washington had spent some difficult weeks recruiting, equipping, and training his two companies. We honor these men today for valiant service to their country, but we must recognize, as did Washington, that most of them were “self-willed and ungovernable . . . loose, idle persons that are quite destitute of house and home.” They bore names representative of 18th-century America: Bibby Brooke, Michael Scully, Abner and Southy Hazlip, Peter Effleck, Mathew Nevison, Argyle House, Demsey Simmons, John Biddlecome, Ezekial Richardson, Godfrey and Christopher Bomgardner. . . .

The men carried smoothbore muskets with an effective range of about 60 yards, but few had bayonets. The legend has somehow grown up that all colonial Americans owned rifles, were expert Indian fighters, and, like Hawkeye in James Fenimore Cooper’s *The Deerslayer*, could



hit the head of a squirrel at 200 yards. The facts were otherwise. Rifles, in the language of the Pennsylvania Dutch country where they were made, were "seldom." Few of these men had even seen, much less battled with, an Indian. Many were far from expert in the use of the weapons they carried.

Their pay was low: eightpence, the monetary equivalent of 15 pounds of leaf tobacco, per day. Most had enlisted because Governor Dinwiddie had promised them that 200,000 acres of good frontier land would be divided among deserving volunteers, with a special tax benefit for 15 years. But now that land was in imminent danger of being taken over by the French, and these two companies, though still untrained and ill-equipped, were being hurried to the rugged and remote western frontier to head off an army of professional soldiers many times their number.

Washington was already familiar with the country he was to march through, occupy, and defend. As a commissioned county surveyor at 18, he had helped to survey an extensive area in the Shenandoah Valley where he now owned several hundred acres near present-day Charles Town, W.Va. Just 6 months before, during the winter of 1753-54, Governor Dinwiddie had sent him to deliver a notice of trespass to French officers in command of forts being built on and above the Allegheny River. Young Washington had a burning ambition for recognition, and this difficult and dangerous mission to a strange and hostile country gave him an opportunity to make a name for himself.

On that earlier trip he had engaged Jacob Van Braam as his French interpreter. A 24-year-old native of Holland, where he reputedly had served as a lieutenant in the Dutch army, Van Braam had come to America in 1752 and settled in Fredericksburg, Va. There he taught fencing and French (though, in light of subsequent events, one wonders how well) and was a fellow-member with Washington in Masonic Lodge No. 4. At Wills Creek Washington also employed four "servitors," a trader who spoke an Indian tongue, and, as guide, the renowned fur trader, surveyor, and explorer Christopher Gist. Three years before, in 1750-51, Gist had spent 7 months exploring the western country for the Ohio Company, a private, speculative land corporation made up of an "association of gentlemen" in Virginia and England.

Washington and his seven aides traveled northwestwardly from Wills Creek through the valley that held a pleasant open area called the Great Meadows and on to the Forks of the Ohio (the site of present-day Pittsburgh). At Logstown, an Indian trading center 13 miles down the Ohio River (near present-day Ambridge, Pa.), Washington conferred with two Iroquois chieftains who ruled the Indians of the Ohio Valley: Tanacharison, called the Half King, and Monacatootha, called Scarroyady by the



Shawnees over whom he presided. (Monacatootha boasted that in 30 fights he had killed 7 men and taken 11 prisoners. On his chest was carved the design of a tomahawk, and on each of his cheeks a bow and arrow.) The Half King agreed to accompany the mission to the French outposts with three of his retainers.



The party, now numbering eight whites and four Indians, emerged from the forest at Venango (now Franklin, Pa.) at the point 60 miles south of Lake Erie where French Creek empties into the Allegheny. The commandant there said that Washington must see his superior at Fort Le Boeuf (now Waterford), another 40 miles to the north. At dinner that evening, served in a confiscated English trading store, the French officers, flushed with wine, boasted that they intended, by God, to take and hold the Ohio Valley. They granted that the English could raise twice as many men as they could, but the English were certain to move too slowly to stop them.

Washington continued on to Fort Le Boeuf with his aides and his Indians, led by a Captain La Force, French commissary of stores (quartermaster), whom he was to meet again 4 months later, in April 1754, under less agreeable circumstances. Washington delivered Dinwiddie's letter demanding the "peaceable departure" of the French. The French commander was polite, but his written reply was firm: "As to the summons you send me to retire, I do not think myself obliged to obey it."

The first half of his mission accomplished, Washington decided to hurry home by forced marches. He put Van Braam in charge of his exhausted horses, his followers,

and his baggage, and started off on foot with Gist. It was not a dull trip. On the way to the Forks he was fired on by an Indian. Crossing the Allegheny on a makeshift raft, he was thrown into the river. He was rescued by Gist, and they spent a freezing night in wet clothes on an island. Just short of Wills Creek Washington met an oncoming pack train of 17 horses carrying "materials and stores" for a fort the Virginians were going to build on the Ohio. He delivered the French reply in Williamsburg on January 16, 1754, having traveled almost a thousand miles in 11 weeks.

Governor Dinwiddie now had written evidence of French intentions. He forwarded the reply to London, and he put Washington's 6,000-word journal of his mission into a pamphlet for circulation around the colonies, making the young author known throughout America and England. The British government gave Virginia £10,000 of ordnance supplies and authorized the American colonies to mount a joint program to hold back the French along the western and northern frontier.

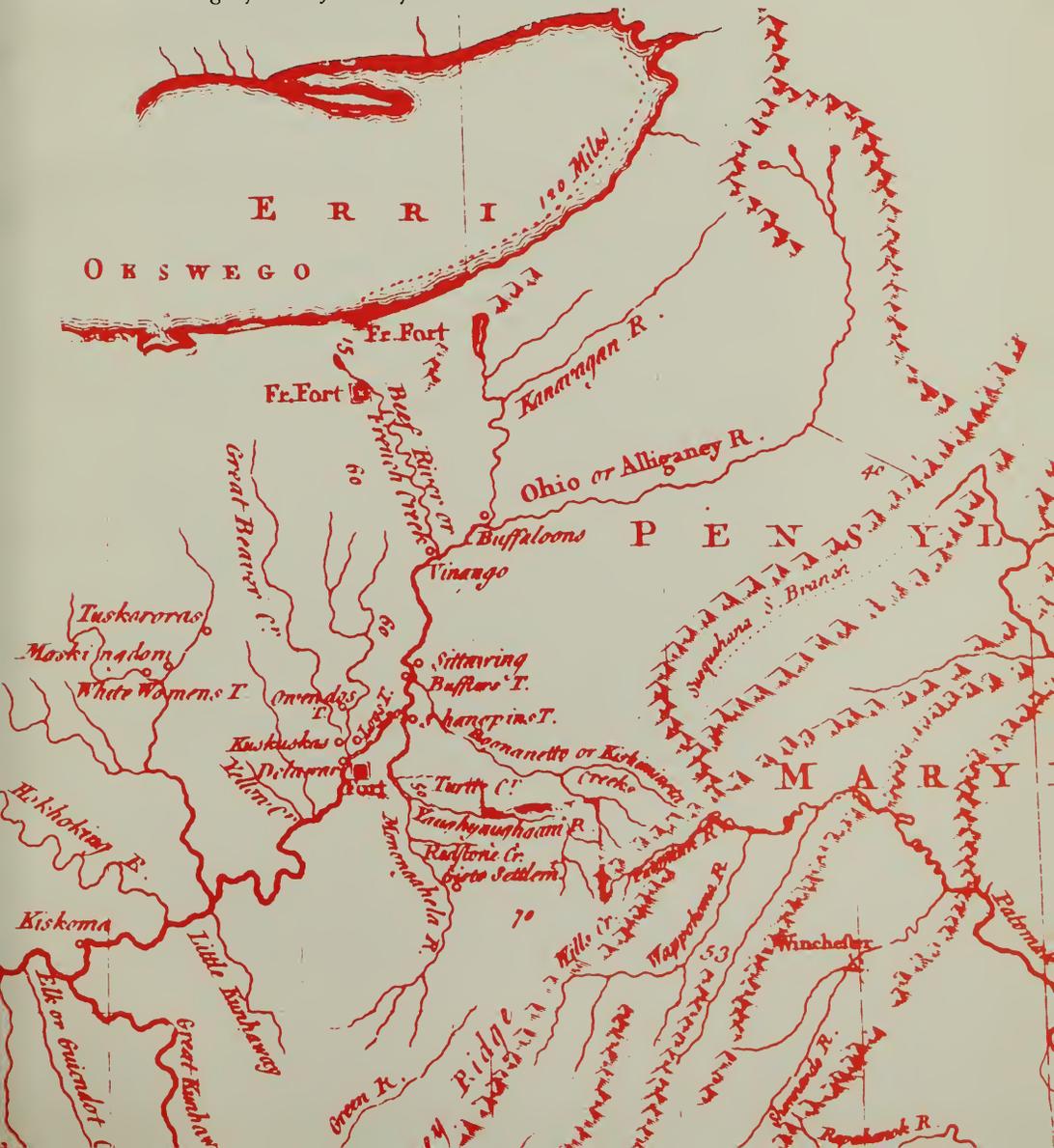
Such was the situation on that day in April 1754 when Colonel Washington led his soldiers out of Alexandria on his second journey into the Ohio Valley.

# ANGLO-FRENCH RIVALRY for the OHIO VALLEY

Hundreds of volumes have been written to describe and interpret the mid-18th-century struggle between France and England for supremacy in the region of the upper Ohio River. The basic issues, however, were quite simple.

The French owned Canada to the farthest western extension of the Great Lakes; they owned the Louisiana Territory as far south as the Gulf of Mexico; and they were determined to own all of the immense area lying between. In 1749 they sent a large armed force on a 2,000-mile expedition to visit the Indian tribes, drive out the English traders, and bury lead plates claiming the lands drained by the Ohio River and all its tributaries—in short, all the territory west of the Appalachian Mountains. By the spring of 1754, they were building a chain of forts on Lake Erie, French Creek, and the upper Allegheny River and were headed for the Forks of the Ohio.

England and her American colonies, of course, had their own plans. They, too, claimed ownership of the Ohio Valley and the right to control the Indian fur trade. But they lacked the magnificent system of rivers that connected French



Quebec, Niagara, Detroit, the Illinois country, the Forks of the Ohio, and New Orleans. Indeed, to reach the Ohio from Philadelphia or Williamsburg they had to cross seven mountain ridges that stretched north and south across 60 back-breaking miles. But they were hundreds of miles closer than the French; and, unlike Canada, the American colonies were filling up with immigrants hungry to own and settle the lands on the western frontier. The French saw this thrust of settlers to the west as an attempt to drive a barrier between them and the Indians, and between their possessions in Canada and Louisiana.

The Ohio Company of Virginia was eager to help Americans settle in the Ohio Valley. The British Crown had granted the company 1/2-million acres in that region, and it intended to develop the land for thousands of families. The company had already built warehouses at Wills Creek and at Red Stone Creek on the Monongahela River (at present-day Brownsville, Pa.), and in 1754 it was the moving force behind the attempt to fortify the Forks of the Ohio against French encroachments.

This familiar situation of two powers competing for land, trade, and strategic advantage was complicated by other conflicting interests. Virginia and Pennsylvania each claimed the lands of the Upper Ohio Valley, and, indeed, they later (1774) very nearly engaged in a comic-opera war to possess them. The merchants of those two colonies were bitter rivals for the Indian trade. And the Indians themselves claimed the Ohio country as a hunting ground open to all friendly tribes but owned by none.

The number of Indians was not large—not more than 200,000 altogether east of the Mississippi and not more than 2,100 warriors in the Six Nations Iroquois Confederation of Mohawks, Oneidas, Onondagas, Cayugas, Senecas, and Tuscaroras. But the few warriors were as elusive as sharks in the sea, and at that time and in those circumstances they held the balance of power between the French and the English.

The Iroquois Indians had been allies of the British for 150 years, and they were blood enemies of those Canadian Indians who had sided with the French. They were dependent on British trade goods, which were of better quality, greater variety, and priced lower than those of the French: cooking utensils, tools, edged weapons, firearms, mirrors, blankets, clothing, "mouth organs," and scores of other marvels of the white man's culture. Now, however, in this impending war between two nations of white men, the Iroquois resolved to remain neutral and at peace with both—at least until they saw which side would win.

The small force that Washington led into the Upper Ohio Valley comprised two of six companies of Virginia volunteers recruited for the expedition. Of the other four, one company—33 armed frontiersmen and 8 artisans—was already at work building a stockade at the Forks of the Ohio. Capt. Adam Stephen was raising another company in Winchester. Capts. Andrew Lewis and Robert Stobo were at Alexandria with the remaining companies and would soon leave to join Washington on the frontier. These six units together made up the Virginia Regiment under the overall command of Col. Joshua Fry, with Washington functioning as second in command. According to the plan, Dinwiddie's agents would have an adequate number of horses and vehicles waiting for the regiment at Winchester and other provisions and supplies at Wills Creek.

New York promised to contribute two companies, North Carolina 350 men, Maryland 200 men. South Carolina would send an Independent Company—that is, a company of Americans enlisted, trained, and paid as regular troops of the British Army but not attached to any British regiment. Pennsylvania would not furnish any troops, since it had no militia and its assembly was controlled by peace-loving Quakers, but the governor promised £10,000—with the restriction that it be used only to purchase grain. Finally, Dinwiddie had convinced himself that he could persuade the southern Indian tribes—Catawbas, Cherokees, and Chickasaws—to send 1,000 warriors to join in fighting the French and Canadian Indians.

Like Washington, the officers of the Virginia Regiment were men of substance and good reputation in the Virginia colony, though their military experience was limited. Except for an ensign and a lieutenant, all were older than he. Five were natives of Scotland.

Peter Hogg (pronounced Hogue), captain, was the oldest at 51. A native of Edinburgh, he had arrived in the American colonies about 1745. It is probable that he had seen service in Scotland's rebellion against England in that year. He had married a few days before he joined Washington's force in Alexandria.

Adam Stephen, 30, senior captain, had been educated in medicine at the University of Edinburgh and had served as a surgeon on a British hospital ship. He joined the Scots rebellion in 1745, emigrated to America, and set up a practice of medicine and surgery at Frederick, Md.

Capt. Andrew Lewis, 34, born in North Ireland, had come to Virginia as a boy and was now a figure of importance in Augusta County. He was noted for his great size, his strength, and a deportment that matched Washington's for dignity and reserve. A governor of New York exclaimed after meeting Lewis, "The earth seemed to tremble under him as he walked."

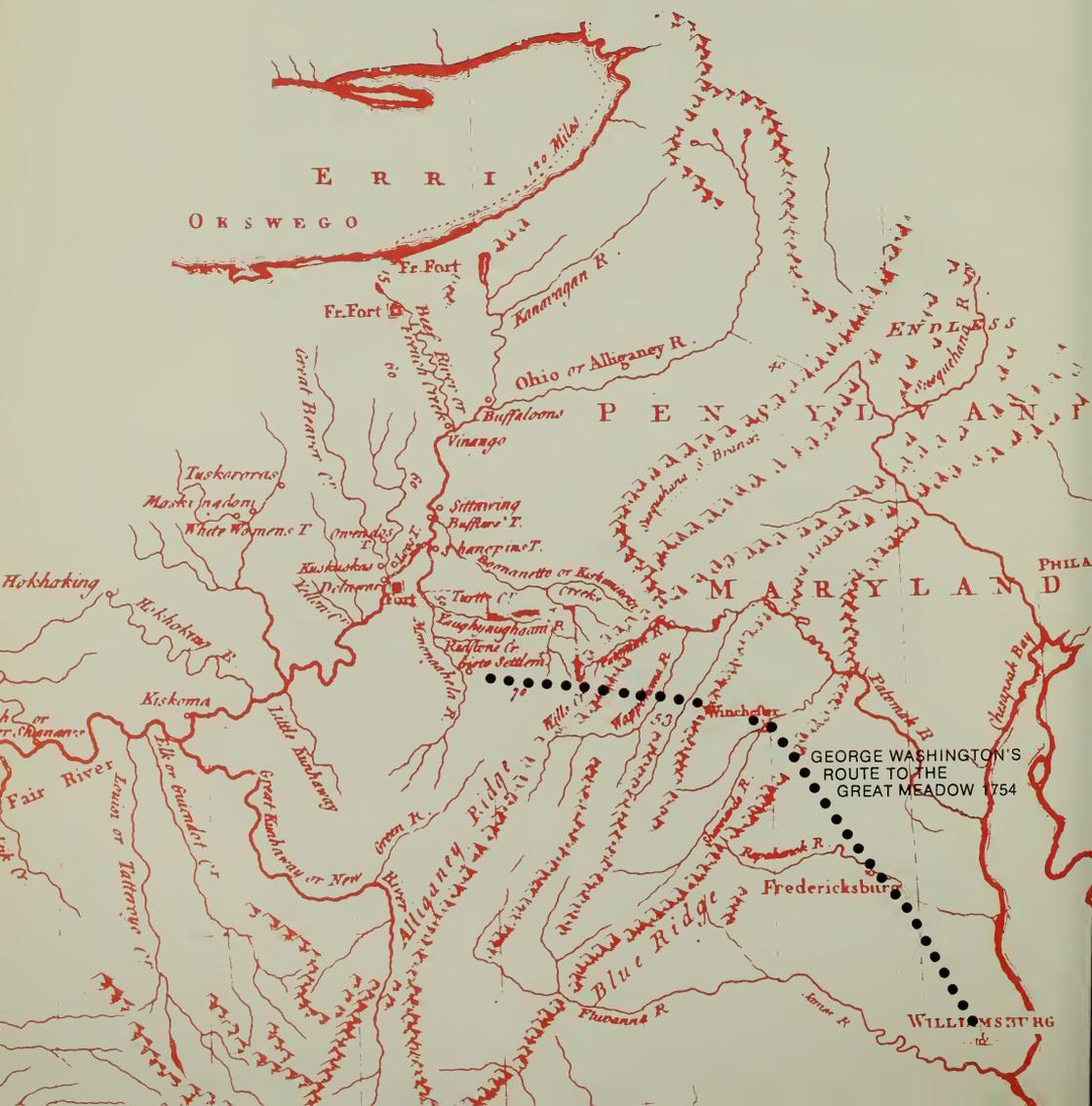
Capt. Robert Stobo, 28, was the orphaned son of a well-do Glasgow merchant. After a term at the University of Glasgow, he had invested his inheritance in merchandise,

crossed the ocean, and set himself up as a merchant in Petersburg, Va. When the prospect of an armed clash with the French seemed imminent, he bought and studied a treatise on the military art, hired 10 "servant mechanics," including a blacksmith and skilled hunters, and journeyed to Alexandria to join the Ohio expedition. Captain Stobo, who liked to travel in comfort and had the means to do so, brought with him a wagon filled with personal supplies and equipment and a cask holding 126 gallons of Madeira wine.

Washington's chief aide was Maj. George Muse. He was, with Washington, one of the four district adjutants of the Virginia militia. He had seen action in 1740 in the British attack on Spanish Cartagena on the northwest coast of Colombia in the Caribbean.

Surgeon-major of the regiment was James Craik, 24, physician, also a graduate of the University of Edinburgh. Dr. Craik had emigrated to Virginia in 1750.

To serve as the expedition's interpreter and adviser on Indian affairs and to supply it with certain provisions at Wills Creek, Governor Dinwiddie recruited George Crogh-



an (pronounced CROW-an), Indian agent, trader, and land speculator. To command a contingent of 18 American scouts, Dinwiddie named Andrew Montour, the son of an Oneida chief and of an educated half-Indian, half-French mother. Montour was the leading interpreter at many major conferences and a trusted adviser on Indian affairs to the Pennsylvania government. He wore Indian ornaments and war paint and a strange mixture of Indian and colonial dress.

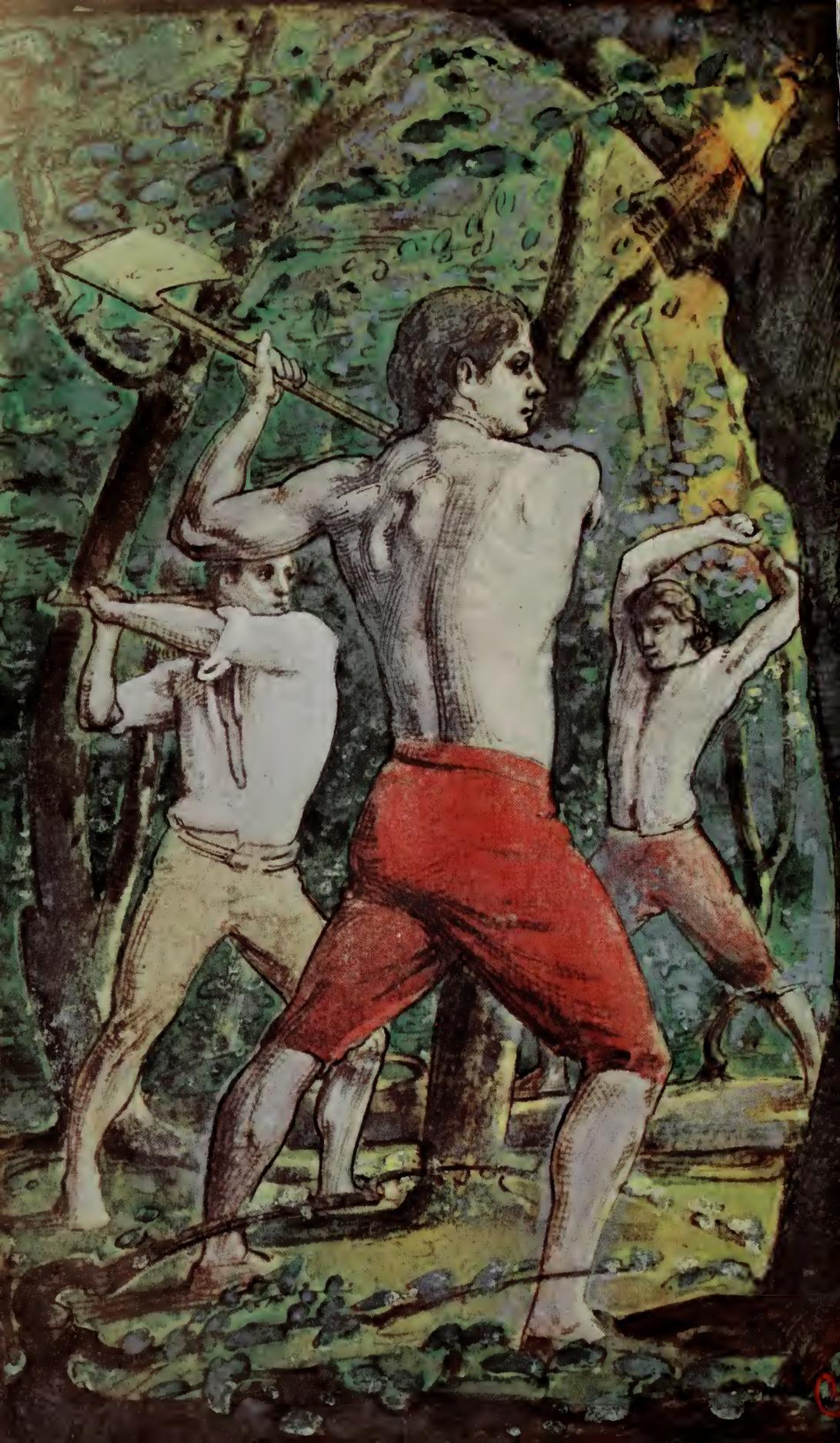
Fifty-four-year-old Joshua Fry, whom Dinwiddie had chosen to command the Virginia Regiment with the rank of full Colonel, was an Oxford-educated engineer, map-maker, and former professor of mathematics at The College of William and Mary. Colonel Fry was a man of some experience on the frontier, but he was, in Washington's opinion, too old and too fat to move with the speed required of such a command.

Washington led his two companies into Winchester about April 10, after a march averaging a respectable 11 miles per day. In that Scotch-Irish settlement of some 50 houses and cabins, he was welcomed by Captain Stephen and his company. He found only a few of the wagons and teams that had been promised, however, and in a week's effort he was able to procure only 10 others. Unwilling to lose more time, he set out with his three companies, now totaling 159 men in ranks, for Wills Creek, 80 miles to the northwest.

More trouble and worse news awaited him there. No pack animals, no wagons, no supplies had been delivered, nor were any expected. Within a few hours, Ensign Edward Ward walked into camp with an alarming story. Left in command at the Forks of the Ohio, he had just finished hanging the gate on the flimsy stockade when an armada of 350 canoes and boats containing "at least one thousand" French soldiers appeared on the Allegheny River. The Frenchmen took up positions with military precision, trained several of their 18 cannon on the stockade, and offered Ensign Ward a choice: surrender within one hour or be bombarded and attacked by overwhelming numbers. Ward surrendered. He and his men were permitted to leave with their arms and tools.

Washington rented one of his horses to Ward and sent him on to Williamsburg with his story. A few hours later the frontiersmen in Ward's company straggled into camp. There they assessed the situation, decided privately to resign the military life, and departed to attend to other matters. The six companies raised for the Virginia Regiment now numbered five—those commanded by Stephen, Van Braam, Hogg, Lewis, and Stobo.

With these developments the whole shape of the Expedition to the Ohio was changed. Washington's original mission had been to widen a trail to Red Stone Creek into a wagon road and to reinforce and defend the English fort at the Forks. Now a French force of superior numbers was



established there and would have to be driven out by an army vastly larger than anyone in Williamsburg or London had contemplated. At this point, on the basis of the new information supplied him by Ward, Dinwiddie might well have made a complete reassessment of what he and the Virginia Regiment were getting into. He did not.

Despite overwhelming odds, Washington and his officers resolved to push on to the mouth of Red Stone Creek on the Monongahela River. There they would wait for the army and supplies which Dinwiddie had assured them in letters from Williamsburg would soon follow. "We will endeavor to make the road sufficiently good for the heaviest artillery to pass," Washington wrote the governor, "and when we arrive at Red-stone Creek fortify ourselves as strongly as the short time will allow." This, he felt, would "preserve our men from the sorry consequences of inaction and encourage our [Indian] allies to remain on our side."

He put a detachment of men on road building on April 25 and 6 days later left Wills Creek with the rest of the regiment to join in the work. This was the hardest kind of labor through rough and wild terrain, and progress was slow—sometimes no more than 2 miles in a day. Over the next 3 weeks the men cut a road over the Great Savage Mountain, 2,850 feet above sea level with an ascent of almost 2 miles. They worked their way through a still, dark forest known as Shades of Death, forded Casselman's River at the "Little Crossing," and drove their road across what is now the Maryland-Pennsylvania border. They crossed Negro Mountain (2,908 feet), forded the Youghiogheny River at the "Great Crossing," climbed Laurel Mountain (2,400 feet), and descended to a plateau some 1,700 feet above sea level.

Washington left the regiment at the Great Crossing to explore the Youghiogheny in the hope that it might be navigable northward to where it joined the broad, deep Monongahela (at present-day McKeesport). With a lieutenant, three men, and an Indian guide, by means of canoe, raft, and wading, he proceeded 10 miles downriver to the "Turkeyfoot," where Casselman's River, Laurel Hill Creek, and the Youghiogheny come together (at present-day Confluence, Pa.). Some 8 miles farther on "we came to a fall [Ohiopyle Falls], which continued rough, rocky and scarcely passable, for two miles, and then fell, within the space of fifty yards, nearly forty feet perpendicular." He turned back with the disappointing knowledge that the Youghiogheny, even at high stage and even with portages, could not be used as a water course to the Forks of the Ohio.

On or about May 24 the regiment reached the Great Meadows, 50 miles northwest of Wills Creek. This was an open area of long grass and low bushes from 200 to 300

yards wide and perhaps 2 miles long, fairly level, lying in a wide valley between Laurel Mountain to the east and Chestnut Ridge, the last barrier to the Monongahela, looming on the west. The Meadows offered a rare benefit in that heavily forested country: pasture for the horses and cattle that were expected to come with the main body of troops. For this reason, among others, Washington chose it as an ideal base of operations and halfway station between the fortified positions at Wills Creek and Red Stone Creek.

He placed his wagons and pitched his tents between two shallow gullies that might serve as natural entrenchments. The ground was marshy in spots. Great Meadows Run, a twisting, weed-grown stream some 10 feet wide in places, and a smaller branch later known as Indian Run, crossed the area; the camp was begun within the triangle where the two streams joined. The site was bordered by two low hills covered with forests of hardwood trees, mostly white oak. It was, Washington informed Dinwiddie with youthful extravagance, "a charming field for an Encounter."

Despite his extended forward position, Washington was able to maintain frequent communication with the outside world. To Dinwiddie he sent regular reports of his progress and, especially, of his problems. He wrote of supply shortages, lack of reinforcements, and dissatisfaction among officers and men at their hard work, low pay, and meager diet. From Dinwiddie he received letters filled with promises, advice, orders, and reproaches for "ill-timed complaints." To the camp came scouts with information, deserters from the French forces, Indian runners with messages from the Half King, and Indian spies with news of activities at Fort Duquesne, the newly built French fort at the Forks of the Ohio. American traders and trappers, driven out by the French advance, passed through on their way east, full of accounts of French conduct, strength, and intentions. Many of the intelligence reports Washington was receiving at this time warned of armed French contingents sent out, or about to be sent out, to attack and destroy him. Indeed, Washington, his officers, and his advisors took it for granted that the armed French seizure of territory far removed from French bases, and in an area where they had never traded, was an act of war.

On the third day at the Meadows, Christopher Gist rode in with news that 50 marauding French soldiers under Captain La Force had just marched through his settlement and "would have killed a cow and broken everything in his house if they had not been prevented by two Indians" he had left on guard there. Washington immediately sent out Captain Hogg and 75 men—nearly half his force—on a reconnaissance.

About 8 p.m. an Indian brave named Silverheels arrived with a message from the Half King, who was encamped about 6 miles away (at the site now known as Washington's Springs). The chief had seen the tracks of the

Frenchmen and thought he knew where they were hiding. Washington at once assembled 40 men under Captain Stephen, Captain-Lieutenant Van Braam, and Lt. Thomas Waggener and set out to join the Indians and confront the enemy force.

Silverheels led them, in Washington's words, on a "march through heavy rain, with the night black as pitch and by a path scarcely wide enough for a man. We were often led astray for 15 and 20 minutes before we could find the path again, and often we would jostle each other without being able to see. We continued our march all night long." Seven men lost their way on the trail.

Daylight was breaking when the file reached the Half King. Monacatootha was with him, but they had only 10 or 11 warriors, only a few of whom had firearms. The chiefs agreed to join the attack and sent out two scouts to reconnoiter the French position. The men ate whatever ration they carried and dried and primed their flintlocks. The officers and the two chiefs laid out their plan of operation.

The scouts returned and led the force to a point where they looked down on the unguarded, unsuspecting enemy camp (now Jumonville Glen). Washington counted more than 30 French soldiers encamped at the bottom of a small, narrow, secluded ravine in the forest, thick with rocks and boulders. It was about 7 a.m. The men were preparing their breakfast. Some were only half dressed.

Stephen deployed his men at the left edge of the ravine. Washington posted the rest of the command on the more exposed position on the right. The Indians crept to a point on the far side of the French.

Exactly what happened next is still uncertain, and in 1754 it became, with grave consequences, a matter of partisan international dispute. The account most historians, French and Canadian as well as British and American, now accept is that in placing his men Washington accidentally let himself be seen at the edge of the ravine. Some of the French soldiers saw him and called out in alarm, pointing up in his direction. Others ran for their muskets, stacked in a dry place beneath a rock ledge.

At that moment Washington ordered his men to fire. The volley was echoed by Stephen's men on the left. (Stephen later asserted that the fire was so nearly simultaneous that it was not possible to say who fired first.) One of Washington's men was killed and several, including Lieutenant Waggener, were wounded.

The French were dropping by twos and threes. Caught in a hopeless position, they tried to escape at the far end of the ravine, but came upon the Indians with their drawn tomahawks, and turned to run back toward the Virginians, hands in the air. The engagement lasted less than 15 minutes. Washington went down to accept the surrender, but the Indians were ahead of him, scalping the dead and killing and scalping the wounded. The surviving French,



Moff

including one wounded man, were given protection. The Indians demanded that the prisoners be turned over to them. Washington refused.

When the confusion of the encounter subsided, Washington found that he had 21 prisoners and that 10 French soldiers lay dead, including their commander, Ensign Coulon de Jumonville, \* apparently killed by the Half King's hatchet. One Frenchman, answering a call of nature at the edge of the camp, escaped and walked barefooted back to the Forks of the Ohio to tell his story. Among the prisoners was Captain La Force, the French commissary who in December had led Washington and Van Braam to Le Boeuf and had boasted that the French would drive the English out of the Ohio Valley. In his report to Dinwiddie, Washington called him "a bold Enterprising Man, and a person of great subtility and cunning . . . whose active Spirit leads him into all parlays."

Joseph Coulon de Villiers,  
the "Jumonville" appellation  
confusion with numerous  
brothers



Washington also learned from Van Braam that the French officers were indignantly charging him with unprovoked attack in time of peace on members of a French embassy. They had been sent out, they said, to find the English, proclaim their desire for friendship, and warn them to depart peaceably from land that belonged to France or be forcibly ejected. They claimed that they did not know the English were near and that they had encamped in the glen, not to hide, but because of its supply of water. They produced credentials signed by a Captain Contrecoeur at Fort Duquesne that seemed to support their story. They insisted that they should be treated as members of a diplomatic mission and not as prisoners of war.

Other orders found among the French papers, however, indicated that Jumonville was also on a reconnaissance mission and had been sending back reports on English numbers and activities. Washington, his officers, and his Indian allies readily concurred that Jumonville was carry-

ing two sets of orders and had intended to use whichever set best suited the circumstances. In his journal Washington wrote disdainfully:

*Instead of coming as an ambassador should, publicly and in an open manner, they came with the greatest secrecy and looked for the most hidden retreats. . . . They . . . remained hidden there for two whole days, when they were no more than five miles from us. . . . They pretend that they called to us as soon as we were discovered. This is an absolute falsehood, for I was then at the head of the file going toward them, and I can affirm that, as soon as they saw us, they ran for their arms without calling, which I should have heard if they had done so.*

He again referred to a consideration that he held to be extremely important:

*The Half King's opinion in this case is that they had evil designs . . . and that if we had been so foolish as to let them go, he would never help us to catch other Frenchmen.*

Washington gave the French officers some of his clothes and sent them and the other prisoners back to Wills Creek under guard of one of his lieutenants and the Swedish volunteer, De Spiltdorph. Dinwiddie concurred that the Frenchmen were proper prisoners of war and congratulated his young commander on his first victory. He realized the larger significance of what had happened, however, and in his report to London he struggled to put the best possible light on the attack. "This little skirmish," he wrote, "was by the Half King and the Indians. We were auxiliaries to them, as my orders to the commander of our forces was to be on the defensive."

The incident was far from closed. The French prisoners became pawns in a great international struggle; they were destined to remain in Virginia a very long time. Over the next several years the French government exploited "the Jumonville Affair" expertly in a pamphlet\* distributed throughout Europe to prove that the English had committed the first act of aggression in the Ohio Valley. Of Washington's "little skirmish," Horace Walpole, eminent man of letters and son of a British prime minister, wrote, "The volley fired by a young Virginian in the backwoods of America set the world on fire."

\* Memoire contenant le precis des faits, avec leur pieces justificatives pour servir de reponse aux observations envoyees, par les ministres d'Angleterre, dans les courses de l'Europe

After the defeat of Jumonville, Washington assumed that the French would send out a force to attack him, and he straightaway set about to build a stockade to protect his men and supplies. He chose as the site the triangle of the two streams in the narrow part of the Great Meadows.

He had his men select some 75 oak trees 9 to 10 inches in diameter, cut them into logs about 10 feet long, and split them lengthwise in half. He had another detachment dig a trench about 2½ feet deep to form a circle with a diameter of about 53 feet. The logs, with the bark still on them, were then placed upright in the trench, edge to edge, flat side out, the tops axed to a point. Fifty or more smaller unsplit logs about 7 feet long were placed behind these to close the gaps and to serve as gun rests. The trench was filled in and the earth impacted. A gate 3½ feet wide, faced to the west, was hung between two whole upright timbers.

In the center of the stockade the men built a low log storehouse about 14 feet square, the roof of which was covered with bark and hides. In this structure they placed the powder, provisions, and several kegs of rum. Dr. James Craik, the regimental surgeon-major, would use this as an aid station when he arrived with the regiment's other two companies.

The stockade would hold up to one company of 50 men; the others would fight from trenches and embankments that surrounded the structure. Washington wrote to Dinwiddie on June 3: "We have just finished a small palisado'd fort in which, with my small numbers, I shall not fear the attack of 500 men." The next day he "had prayers in the fort."

The Half King had come to the Meadows on June 2 at the head of 80 to 100 Indians. It was a dubious reinforcement, for many of those who came were women, children, and old men. Only half the braves were in a condition to fight, and everyone expected to be fed from the regiment's insufficient and dwindling stores. The Half King declined the suggestion that he send all but his warriors to the English settlements. He had dispatched Monacatootha, carrying the scalps of Jumonville's dead, to persuade the Ohio tribes to go on the warpath against the French, and he would wait until he learned the results of that mission. Washington, fortunately, was able to replenish his larder with barrels of flour bought from a trader returning east, though he paid an outrageous price.

More substantial reinforcements marched into camp on June 9—the other two companies of the Virginia Regiment, totaling 110 men and five officers, commanded by Andrew Lewis and Robert Stobo. They were led by Maj. George Muse, for the stout Colonel Fry, commander of the regiment, had fallen off his horse and was mortally injured. With the contingent came Captain Montour carrying a belt

> *We have, with Nature's assistance, made a good Intrenchment, and, by clearing the Bushes out of these Meadows, prepar'd a charming field for an Encounter.* George Washington





Maffie

of wampum from Dinwiddie to the Half King. Croghan came with lame excuses for his failure to supply the provisions he had contracted for. He rode with a wagon filled with presents and medals for the Indians. Dinwiddie had intended to distribute these at Winchester at a Grand Council of the chiefs of the friendly tribes, and he had invested in a splendid uniform and written a speech for the occasion. But the chiefs did not choose to go to Winchester, and after waiting 16 days, the governor turned over the presents to Croghan and returned to Williamsburg, furious at Indian duplicity, at the inefficiency and corruption of army contractors, and at the "lethargy and supineness" that had kept the other colonial governors from fulfilling their promises of support for the Ohio Expedition.



Muse brought letters from Dinwiddie which announced a number of promotions. Washington was appointed to the rank of full colonel, replacing the lamented Colonel Fry in command of the Virginia Regiment. Muse was appointed a lieutenant colonel and Stephen a major. Col. James Innes of North Carolina, now on his way north with 300 British regulars, was the new commander in chief of the expedition.

The Great Meadows and its stockade were now the center of new and broadened activities, of scenes that excite the mind with their color and drama. A person can stand at the edge of the clearing today, look across the sweep of land, then rougher and more swampy than it is now, and imagine the camp as it must have appeared in June of 1754. It would not have been an orderly scene by present military standards. There were cattle and horses grazing; men performing their housekeeping chores; smoke rising from the scattered cooking fires where small groups kept a pot boiling. We can picture detachments marching out with axes, saws, sledges, and rigging to

work on the road; crowds gathering around any messenger newly arrived from Wills Creek or Winchester or Williamsburg; and Indians wandering sharp-eyed through the camp or dozing in front of their wigwams at the edge of the woods.

The day after the arrival of the fourth and fifth companies, the regiment fell out in formation for ceremonies honoring the Indian allies. The Half King and his braves appeared in a group, appropriately attired, decorated, and painted for the occasion. Washington, in dress uniform, read the speech Dinwiddie had not been able to deliver at Winchester. He presented Dinwiddie's belts of wampum and distributed his presents. He conferred on the Half King the English name *Dinwiddie*, meaning "The Head of Everything," and hung around his neck a crescent-shaped silver medallion called a "gorget," showing the features of King George II on one side and the British coat of arms on the other. Queen Aliquippa, a Seneca matriarch who came with the Half King, desired that her young son be received into the council and be honored with an English name. Washington decorated him with a gorget and named him *Fairfax*, which he said meant "First of the Council." Since Colonel Muse had brought several kegs of rum contributed by Dinwiddie, it may be supposed that every man and the Indian matron received a dram.

Within four or five more days, Capt. James Mackay (pronounced MACK-ee) rode into camp at the head of 100 smartly uniformed, well-armed men of the South Carolina Independent Company. They brought with them 60 head of cattle, some powder and ball, and 5 days' ration of flour.

Dinwiddie had repeatedly cautioned Washington that Captain Mackay held a commission signed by the King, that his men, though citizens of South Carolina and Georgia, were British Regulars, and that they expected "suitable regard." Washington and his officers, therefore, were to "show them particular esteem" and would be answerable "for any ill consequences of an unhappy disagreement."

Washington welcomed Mackay in a formal, military manner and did not presume to give him orders. Mackay picked his own campsite and mounted his own guard; Washington did not inspect them. Washington sent over the password and the countersign; Mackay returned them with the information that he could not accept them from a colonial officer.

The two men met and "reasoned calmly" over thorny problems of protocol and rank. Mackay was not unfriendly, but on these points he was inflexible: a royal commission of any rank took precedence over any commission of any rank signed by a colonial governor; and in any matters that involved both his company and the Virginia Regiment, he would give the orders. Washington replied as politely



as he could that it was obviously improper for a South Carolina captain to give orders to a Virginia regiment. Mackay did not agree. He further declared that he would not permit his men to join in the road building or any other non-military labor unless they were paid the one shilling a day extra customarily allowed for such service. Washington described Mackay's conduct to Dinwiddie at some length, and concluded: "I can very confidently say that his absence would tend to the public advantage." He would leave Mackay and his company at the Meadows, he said, and "continue to complete the work we have begun with my poor fellows; we shall have the whole credit, as none others have assisted."

On the morning of June 16, Washington had his men load on the wagons nine small cannon—swivel guns—that Muse's companies had brought with them. He formed his regiment, mounted his horse, and gave the command to march. We can be sure that the Carolina troops and the Indians stopped whatever they were doing to watch the departure. The first company had scarcely entered the woods when the order was given to halt. One of the wagons had broken down on the rough road. In his journal that evening Washington wrote, "[We] were extremely embarrassed."

The regiment pushed on to Gist's Plantation, which lay on a foothill west of Chestnut Ridge (near present-day Mount Braddock), at the end of a 13-mile road that had taken 14 days to build. This was the Ohio Company's first planned settlement, where 150 families were to be placed on a large tract of 2,500 acres.

Washington made his headquarters in one of Gist's buildings. He sent Captain Lewis with 60 men to continue the road to Red Stone Creek, only 16 miles to the northwest. And he prepared for a meeting with the Ohio Valley Indians he had invited to Gist's.

About 40 braves showed up, several of them uninvited Mingo (Ohio Valley Iroquois) who announced belligerently that they were there to report on the conference for the French. The meeting lasted 3 days, and despite the best counsel from Croghan, Montour, the Half King, and Monacatootha, it ended in failure. Washington had too few gifts and too little food to offer; the French were clearly the stronger military force; and the Six Nations Council at Onondaga had ordered the Ohio tribes to remain neutral in this quarrel between the white men over who should own the Indians' land. The Indians disappeared into the forests. The Half King and his warriors returned to their camp at the Meadows and, despite the pleas of Montour and Croghan, refused to rejoin the Virginians.

Work continued on the road for another 10 days, though the men were becoming weak and ill from their hard labors on a diet of parched corn and tough, lean, unsalted, freshly slaughtered beef. On Thursday evening, June 27,

< I . . . called the Indians together by the advice of the Half-King, presented one of the medals, and desired him to wear it in remembrance of his great father, the King of England . . . . George Washington

or the next morning, an Indian messenger trotted into camp with grim news. Chief Monacatotha, a faithful ally, had burned the village at Logstown, put his 200 people into canoes, and started up the Ohio and the Monongahela to seek English protection. Stopping at Fort Duquesne to reconnoiter, he learned that the French had received reinforcements and fresh supplies and were about to move south to attack.



Washington trusted the information, and he sent word to Captain Lewis to bring in his road builders. He also sent a messenger to Captain Mackay at the stockade inviting him to move forward to Gist's Plantation. Then Washington put his own men to preparing the settlement against an assault.

Mackay and his soldiers arrived in a hurry about 2 o'clock Saturday morning. A second Indian runner came in about the same time with word that a very large force of French and Indians had left Fort Duquesne the day before and was paddling and poling its way up the Monongahela to Red Stone Creek.

Washington called a council of officers "to consider what was most prudent and necessary to be done in the present situation of affairs." The discussion ended in a

unanimous resolution "that it was absolutely necessary to return to our Fort at the Meadows and remain there." Each of the Virginia officers signed his name to the minutes of the council.

The Virginia Regiment and the Independent Company broke camp around noon on Saturday and began to prepare for the 13-mile retreat over the mountain. Unfortunately, Washington had sent all but two of his wagons and teams back to Fort Necessity for the long-promised supplies, and now he lacked means to transport his food, tents, tools, powder, cannon, and ammunition. He appropriated two wagons and teams belonging to Croghan and threw out the furs and trade goods they contained. Some powder, ball, and shot were loaded on the officers' horses; the rest was buried or scattered in the woods. Teams of men were assigned to spell each other in carrying the nine swivel guns. Washington paid \$16 to several of his men to carry his personal baggage. A detachment started the cattle on the march.

Mackay's troops took no part in these preparations; they still would not break the rules of their trade by performing such labor without extra pay.

The column plodded wearily up the west side of Chestnut Ridge, then turned due south through narrow mountain defiles. It proceeded southeast along Chestnut Ridge and down Chalk Hill. The rest stops became longer and more frequent; the distances covered between them became shorter. Montour's woodsmen and the last few Indian scouts disappeared. Several Virginians deserted, either to go over to the French or to try to make their way back alone to the eastern settlements. The column took almost 2 days to cover the 13 miles.

One hope kept the men on their feet and driving forward: the thought that there would be supplies, food, and reinforcements waiting for them at the stockade, which had now been given the name *Fort Necessity*. But when they staggered into the clearing of the Meadows, they met with a stunning shock. There were no supplies, no reinforcements—only their own drivers with their own empty wagons.

In a council meeting at the fort, Washington and the officers decided the men were in no condition to march another 50 miles to Wills Creek. They would stay at Fort Necessity, and if the French came that far to attack, they would fight.

Shortly thereafter several wagonloads of flour arrived from Wills Creek. The drivers brought word that two companies of regular soldiers from New York had left ship at Alexandria 20 days earlier. Even at a moderate rate of march, they should soon be arriving at Fort Necessity with fresh troops, heavy cannon, and provisions.

Washington distributed a ration of flour, sent an express rider to Colonel Innes with an urgent plea for help, and put the men to strengthening the fort. This time Mackay's

troops joined in the work. The trenches were extended and improved. The swivel guns, capable of firing scatter shot effectively from 100 to 200 yards, were emplaced. The Half King watched these preparations, advised Washington to continue to retreat to Wills Creek, and silently disappeared with all his braves.

The French had in fact left Fort Duquesne at 10 o'clock Friday morning with a force of 600 French and Canadian soldiers and some 100 Indians—Hurons, Abenakis, Nipissings, Algonquins, Ottawas, French Iroquois, and some Delawares who a few weeks earlier had been allies of the English. Their leader was Capt. Louis Coulon de Villiers, older half-brother of the slain Ensign Jumonville. His orders were to "march against the English . . . in order to avenge ourselves and chastise them for having violated the most sacred laws of civilized nations."

Villiers beached his canoes and boats at Red Stone Creek, inspected the deserted Ohio Company warehouse, and, thinking of the rough terrain ahead of him, decided to leave there under guard his wheeled vehicles, cannon, and reserve provisions. He wished to travel fast and light and to engage the English before they could be reinforced.

At dawn on Monday, July 1, as the English were nearing the end of their retreat to Fort Necessity, Villiers started over the mountain trail to Gist's plantation. He encountered the road that had been so hastily abandoned 3 days earlier. In camp that night he reviewed his situation and very nearly decided to turn back to Fort Duquesne. His intelligence reports told him that an English force of 5,000 men was on its way to Washington's aid. His Indians were nervous at being so deep in enemy territory and were threatening to desert; the Algonquins did in fact leave him. But at that moment a deserter named John Ramsey, from the company that Adam Stephen had raised and commanded, walked into camp and freely told of the weakened condition and poor prospects of the English. Villiers pushed on, camped at Gist's settlement, and at dawn on Wednesday, July 3, left on the last leg of the march. Five miles from Fort Necessity he halted his column and walked to the glen where his brother and nine of his command had been killed and scalped. In his report he wrote simply, without expression of emotion, "Here I saw some bodies still remaining."

Early on the morning of Wednesday, July 3, 1754, one of Washington's scouting parties, supporting a wounded sentry, returned to Fort Necessity with information that the French were only 4 miles away. (The scouts were afflicted either with bad vision or an attack of hysteria, for they described the enemy as "a heavy, numerous body, all naked.") Work was speeded up in an effort to complete the entrenchments. Rain was falling.

The French emerged (fully clothed) in three columns from the wooded hillside on the southwest side of the fort, along the wagon road to Gist's Plantation. They halted, formed an irregular skirmish line, and began to advance across the open field.

Washington and Mackay had a force of fewer than 400 men, only 284 of whom were fit for combat. Despite the odds against them, they placed their men in dressed ranks before the trenches, ready to repel a charge. As the French advanced, the English stood as firm as trained, disciplined veterans, and they did not panic at the French war cries and "dismal Indian yells" or at a force more than twice as numerous as their own. As ordered, they held their fire. Major Stephen discharged several ineffective rounds from the swivel guns.

The French halted several hundred paces from the fort and fired a fruitless volley. Still the English held their fire. The French reloaded, continued to advance, and fired again. At this point Washington and Mackay decided that the enemy did not intend to charge across the open field, and they ordered their men to take up positions in the trenches. Responding like the veterans they were, Mackay and his company occupied the trenches most exposed to enemy fire. After advancing to within 60 yards of the English position, the French scattered to the woods to the southeast, closest to the fort. The English now returned fire at will.

Villiers wrote in his report of the battle: "As we were not acquainted with the ground, we presented our flank to the fort from which they began to cannonade us. . . . The Indians, as we also, set up the cry, and advanced to meet them: but they gave us not time to make our discharge: they filed off, and withdrew into an entrenchment which lay next to their fort. We then set about investing the fort: it was advantageously enough situated in a meadow, the wood of which was within musket shot of it. We came as close to them as it was possible, to the end that his Majesty's subjects might not be exposed without necessity: the fire was pretty brisk on both sides, and I repaired to the place which most appeared to favor a sally [from the fort]."

The French took full advantage of the fact that they could lie protected in the woods and rake the English defenses with aimed musket balls. Some of the Indians edged closer, but sharp fire from the swivel guns and the men in the entrenchments made them scurry back to cover after some casualties. None of Villiers' men ventured



again beyond the tree line. For a time they turned their fire on the grazing animals, killing all the horses, cattle, oxen, and even the camp dogs. The English had thought to slaughter all their cattle but did not do so because they lacked salt to preserve the meat.

The battle settled into a steady exchange in which the English were at a marked disadvantage. They were outnumbered, they could seldom see the enemy concealed in the woods, and they had to expose themselves when they fired from the trenches. Washington described the contest as an "unequal fight, with an enemy sheltered behind the trees, ourselves without shelter, in trenches full of water, in a settled rain, and the enemy galling [galling] us on all sides incessantly from the woods."

After their first few rounds, the swivel guns attracted a concentrated fire that silenced them. Major Stephen removed several of the logs in the stockade to provide a field of fire at ground level, but, without a solid target or a charging enemy, the swivels were ineffective, even when loaded with case or "scatter-shot."

The trenches were now knee-deep in water and soft mud. The damp powder and the dirt fouled the muskets, and there were, unfortunately, only two "worm attachments" in the entire camp with which to remove the damp charges from the musket barrels.

American casualties were mounting. Washington's Negro servant received a wound from which he later died. Ensign William La Peyronney (Washington's adjutant) and the regimental sergeant-major were disabled by wounds. Captain Lewis was twice wounded but stayed at his post. Some of the men were injured by splinters shot away from the posts of the stockade or from the storehouse within it. Four men of Stobo's company were killed and seven were wounded, the highest number of casualties incurred by any of the five Virginia companies. Mackay's Independents



were suffering even heavier losses. Lieutenant Mercier of that company was wounded, continued to fight, was wounded again, and was finally killed by a third shot as he was being carried to Dr. Craik's aid station in the stockade. In the face of such casualties, Colonel Muse disgraced himself by some act of cowardice that was later much discussed but never specifically named. One story was that he tried to flee with his men into the protection of the stockade.

During the afternoon the firing slackened, diminished by the rain and dwindling supplies of ball and powder on both sides. The combatants, in the words of the historian Francis Parkman, "could do little but gaze at each other through a grey veil of mist and rain." Toward evening, however, the rate of fire increased sharply, until it was drowned entirely by what Washington called "the most tremendous rain that can be conceived . . . that set everything afloat." Now seemed a logical time for the French and Indians to attack with bayonet and tomahawk. "Our men," Washington said, "behaved with singular intrepidity, and we determined not to ask for quarter but with our bayonets screwed, to sell our lives as dearly as possibly we could."

While waiting, some of the wretched, rain-soaked, mud-covered men discovered a source of instant courage and good cheer. They broke open the kegs of rum in the storehouse and, along with about half the regiment, proceeded to make themselves thoroughly drunk. Fortunately, the French made no assault.

Instead, around 8 o'clock—30 minutes after sunset—came an incredible call from the woods: "*Voulez-vous parler?*" ("Do you wish to negotiate?")

When this was translated for him, Washington refused to reply. He was convinced that it was some trick by which the French meant to get behind his lines and discover the weakness of his position. The French called again. No answer. They called again. This time Washington called back an answer, either in his own voice or in French by La Peyronney or Van Braam: No Frenchman would be permitted to come within his lines. There was a lull, then the French answer: The English could send an officer to their lines to discuss terms. On their word of honor, he would be allowed to return safely.

Washington agreed to negotiate on those terms. La Peyronney, despite his wound, and Van Braam left the fort together, crossed the field, and met with Captain de Villiers and his second in command.

In his report on the battle, Villiers took pains to give all the reasons that would justify his decision to give quarter to an enemy in an apparently hopeless position. He had thought of assaulting the fort, he said, and even prepared bundles of fagots to set it afire. But his ammunition was low, his powder damp, and his provisions almost gone. He had no cannon with which to destroy the fort. His French soldiers and Canadian militia were drenched from

the rain, exhausted, and "little accustomed to this military discipline." His Indians were threatening to leave him in the morning. He had received a report that "the beat of drums and the firing of cannon had been heard from a distance"—which could mean that the rumored reinforcement of 5,000 English might appear. His second in command agreed that they should parlay.

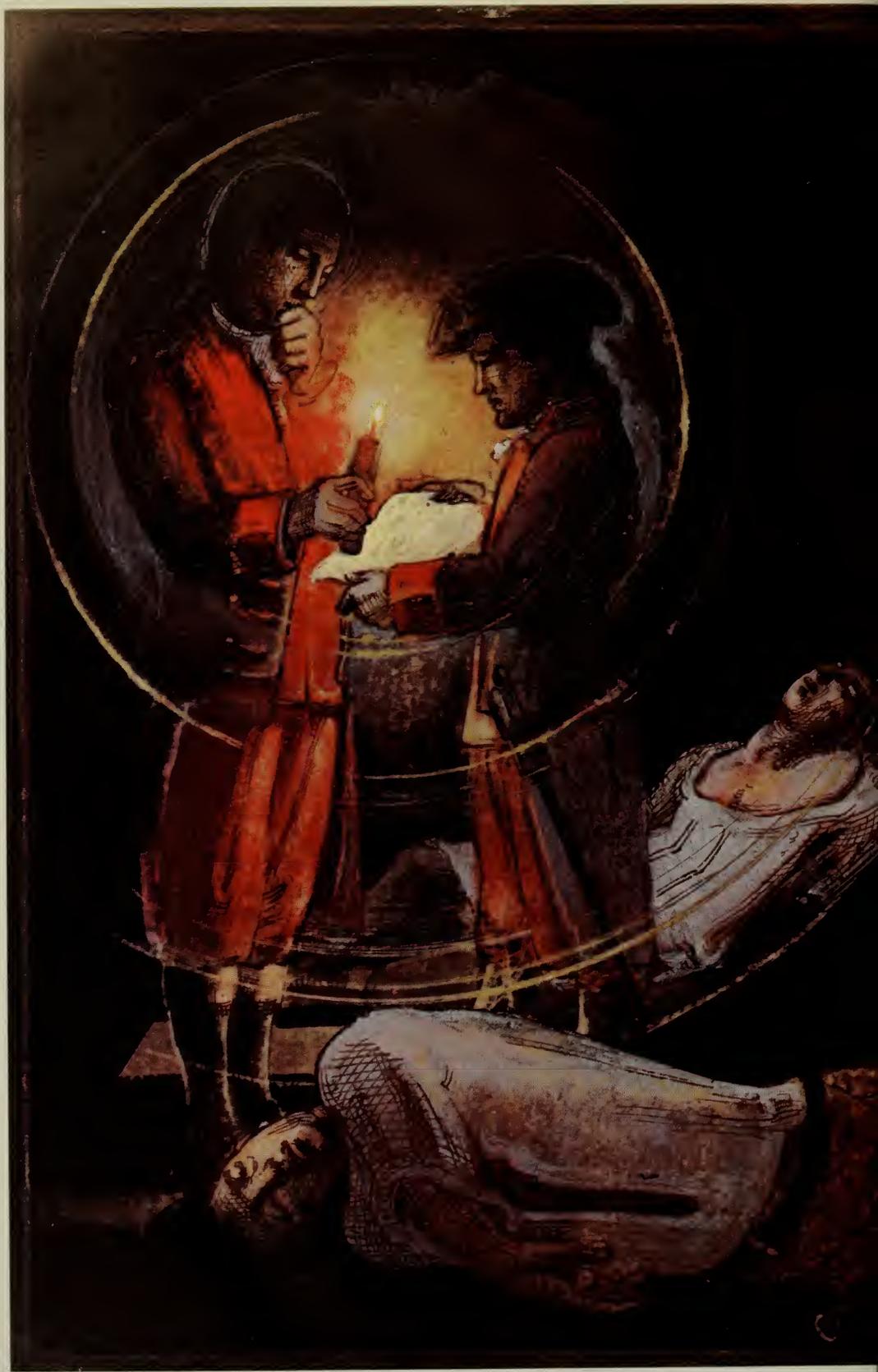
Since France and England were not at war, Villiers told La Peyronney and Van Braam, he would show mercy and permit the English to retire to their own territory rather than become prisoners of war. If they refused his offer however, and continued an "obstinate resistance," he could not guarantee to protect them from the Indians when the fort fell. A body of 400 braves, he said (exaggerating by 300), would arrive in the morning. He might not be able to control them.

La Peyronney and Van Braam returned to the stockade and conveyed Villiers' terms to Washington. Though he never said so, he must have felt mingled emotions of surprise, relief, and pleasure. One-fourth of his men were sick and another one-third lay dead or wounded. He had little food, no means of transportation, no hope of escape or victory. He had no reason to expect such favorable treatment from the enemy.

Washington instructed the two officers to return to the French lines and insist that the proposed terms be put in writing. La Peyronney seems to have collapsed by this time, for Van Braam went back alone. He was gone for what seemed a very long time. When he returned, he carried the surrender document written out in duplicate on two sheets of paper. Adam Stephen described the scene a few weeks later for the *Maryland Gazette* at Annapolis: "When Mr. Van Braam returned with the French proposals, we were obliged to take the sense of them by word of mouth: It rained so heavily that he could not give us a written translation of them; we could scarcely keep the candle light to read them; they were wrote in a bad hand, on wet and blotted paper so that no person could read them but Van Braam who had heard them from the mouth of the French officer."

Van Braam, reading aloud, translating as he went along, was working in two languages not native to him; he probably translated the French words mentally into Dutch and then into English. He may have run quickly through the preamble:

*Capitulation granted by M. de Villiers, captain of infantry and commander of troops of his most Christian Majesty, to those English troops actually in the fort of Necessity which was built on the lands of the King's dominions July the 3rd, at eight o'clock in the evening, 1754. ¶ As our intention has never been to trouble the peace and good harmony that reigns between the two friendly princes, but only to revenge . . .*



Here Van Braam came upon the words, *l'assassin*. He may never have seen the phrase before; or he may not have known that the word *assassination* existed in English; or he may not have realized that it means "to kill treacherously, to murder by secret, planned assault." Or he may simply have been unable to decipher the word and so supplied what he thought should have been there in relation to the words that followed. Even when examined today under a good light in the Montreal archives, the word is almost indecipherable; indeed, when a clerk-translator rendered it into English in Williamsburg a few weeks after the battle, he first wrote *assault*, then crossed his word out and wrote *killing*.

In any case, Van Braam, in translating the phrase *l'assassin*, spoke some commonplace word like *killing*, or *death*, or *loss*, and gave a similar reading when the verb *assassinated* appeared later. No officer raised any objection, asked any question, or made any other comment, as some most certainly would have done if the word *assassination* had been spoken.

Van Braam continued:

*. . . which has been done on one of our officers, bearer of a summons, upon his party, as also to hinder any establishment on the lands of the dominions of the King, my master; upon these considerations, we are willing to grant protection or favor, to all the English that are in the said fort, upon the conditions hereafter mentioned.*

He translated the seven conditions.

*First*, Washington and the garrison could return to their own country in peace. The French would offer no insult and would to the best of their ability restrain the Indians who were with them. *Second*, they could take with them all their belongings excepting their artillery and "munitions de guerre." *Third*, they would be granted the honors of war and could come out with drums beating and with one small cannon, "wishing to show by this means that we treat them as friends." *Fourth*, they must lower the English flag. *Fifth*, a detachment of French would receive the surrender of the garrison and take possession of the fort at daybreak. *Sixth*, since the English had no means of transportation, they could leave their baggage under guard and return for it later; but they must "give their word of honor that they will not work on any establishment either in the surrounding country or beyond the mountains during one year beginning from this day." (According to Stephen, Van Braam translated the latter condition as "not to attempt buildings or improvements on the lands of his Most Christian Majesty," and the English officers, denying that the French king had any lands there, thought it needless to dispute the point. It was not spelled out who the "they" were who must not work west of the mountains for a year, and the officers assumed that it referred only to the troops left behind to guard the stores. The point is important,



because Washington returned to the area named in less than one year and the French, by their interpretation of the condition, charged that in so doing he broke his parole.)

Finally, Washington was to turn over two of his captains to be held as hostages until all the prisoners he had taken in the Jumonville engagement were delivered to Fort Duquesne.

Washington declared at once that they must not agree to turn over their arms and ammunition; without them they would be at the mercy of the Indians on the return march. Van Braam went out for the third time to meet the French and returned with the words *munitions de guerre* crossed out on both copies. Washington agreed that Captain Mackay should sign the document first, perhaps because of his admiration for Mackay's conduct under fire. Captains Van Braam and Stobo either volunteered to be or were chosen as the hostages. They were obvious choices, since one spoke some French and both were single men without family responsibilities.

Stobo presented his sword with a flourish and a little speech to his company lieutenant, William Poulson. Van

Braam persuaded Washington to sell him his dress uniform for £13, on credit. The two men gathered up some of their belongings, made their farewells, and crossed to the French lines. There Villiers signed both copies of the surrender document, returned one to the escorting English officer, and took the two hostages into custody.

Villiers' report was self-congratulatory:

*We made the English give us in their own hands, that they had committed an assassination on us, in the camp of my brother. We had hostages as sureties for the French whom they had in their power; we compelled them to evacuate the country as belonging to the most Christian King. We obliged them to leave us their cannon, which consisted of nine pieces. We had already destroyed all their horses and cattle, and further we made them give us in their own hand that the favor we showed them was only to prove to them how greatly we desired to treat them as friends.*

The negotiations had taken some 4 hours, and it was now after midnight. The dog-tired soldiers on both sides lay down to get what sleep they could before the events of the next day.



The French marched to Fort Necessity at daybreak on July 4 and formed two facing ranks. Washington and Mackay put their men in formation and led them between the ranks to the sound of French drums. The English carried their supplies and, on their backs, their wounded comrades. The one swivel gun they were permitted as a token of war could not be transported and had to be left behind. They proceeded to a separate part of the Meadows and organized for the return to Wills Creek.

They buried their dead, 17 from Mackay's company and 13 from the Virginia companies. (It is one of the mysteries of Fort Necessity that a thorough search with modern methods and devices has failed to discover the graves.) Seventy men in all were wounded. The sergeants distributed a ration of shot and powder and scattered the rest over the wet field. They destroyed some of their baggage, selected what they thought they could carry, and put the remainder in a pile to be retrieved later. Somewhere, somehow during this time Washington's journal of the expedition was lost or stolen; it ended up in French hands.

The French marched into the fort and raised the fleur-de-lis. The number of English dead and wounded, Villiers wrote, "raised compassion in me, notwithstanding my resentment at the manner in which they had made away with my brother." He found and immediately smashed several remaining kegs of rum before the Indians could discover them. He had his men render the swivel guns useless and break up and burn the wagons. He had them pull some 55 of the palisade posts from the ground, stack them around the remaining 20 posts, and set the entire mass on fire.

The French losses were three killed, one of whom was an Indian, and 17 wounded, two of them Indians. The figures seem unbelievably low, but they are found in Villiers' report to his commanding officer, and it seems unlikely that he would give him incorrect totals. (Jean Victor Varin, the French king's comptroller in Canada, reported to a higher official on July 24, "We lost 2 Canadians . . . and had 70 wounded, most of them very lightly.") Washington and Mackay believed that the English had killed 300 French and Indians, including an officer of high rank; they so informed Dinwiddie, who sent the information on to London.

The surrender ceremonies were scarcely completed when the Indians demanded their traditional right to pillage and make captives of the defeated enemy. When Villiers refused their demands, they became unruly. The 100 Indians who had arrived during the night were highly excited and could scarcely be restrained. They broke open Dr. Craik's medicine chest, which was to have been left with the wounded, and tore apart the baggage in the pile to be left behind. Washington complained strongly to



Villiers that the Indian harrassment was a violation of their agreement; Villiers did what he could to stop it, and he released 10 Virginians who had been made prisoners by the Indians. Washington recognized a number of Delawares and Shawnees he had earlier received in his camp as allies. "Sundry of them came up," he wrote in a passage striking for the mockery it reveals, "and spoke to us, and told us they were our brothers, and asked us how we did."

It was almost 10 o'clock before Washington and Mackay gave the command to march. The men carried their arms and ammunition, some of their provisions, and their wounded. They were able to go only 3 miles that day, camping by a mountain spring in the evening. They were harrassed by Indians when they resumed the march the next day but were not openly attacked. At a suitable distance, they left the badly wounded in the care of an ensign, a sergeant, and 11 privates; they were to be picked up in the first wagons that could be obtained. The walking-wounded and the footsore moved more slowly and had to be guarded by details assigned to that duty. At least two of the men left behind to guard the seriously wounded were taken prisoner by the Indians, held at Fort Duquesne, and then sent to Canada.

When the French returned to the Forks of the Ohio, they burned Gist's settlement and all the other houses and cabins they encountered. They arrived at Fort Duquesne on July 7.

The main column of English reached the safety and comfort of Wills Creek on July 9 after 5 hard days on the road. There Washington learned that the two companies of New York regulars he had been expecting as reinforcements had never left Alexandria. Their commander had fallen ill, and the officers and men thoughtfully decided to stay with him until he recovered. They probably would not have been much help in any event, since the one barrel of powder they had was useless and they lacked tents, blankets, and provisions. The North Carolina company had arrived in Virginia with almost no arms, but it came well supplied with swine and beef cattle that it intended to sell to raise money with which to buy weapons. That company was due to arrive in Winchester almost any day.

At Wills Creek Washington had his regiment fall in for roll call. Of the 293 officers, noncommissioned officers, and privates who had assembled at the Great Meadows one week earlier, 165 were in ranks and fit for duty. Thirteen men had been killed in action, 54 were reported as wounded, 11 had been left on the road with the wounded, 29 of the walking disabled were presumed to be still on the march, 19 were missing or had deserted, and 2 had been delivered to the French as hostages.

Washington turned his regiment over to the disgraced Colonel Muse and rode on to Williamsburg with Mackay,

now his firm friend, to render an account to Dinwiddie. "Mr. Washington," Mackay was reported as saying, "was very sad company."

At some unknown moment after the return to Williamsburg, a clerk in a government office, or a scholar in his library, or simply an interested reader who understood French, looked up from the Articles of Capitulation and announced that they twice contained the signed confession that Washington and his Virginians had "assassinated" a French emissary. The shocking news raced up and down the eastern seaboard and sped across the ocean. Washington was thunderstruck. His honor and his judgment impugned, he blamed Van Braam: "We were willfully or ignorantly deceived by our interpreter." Governor Dinwiddie did a little fast improvising in his report to London: "The interpreter was a poltroon, and though an officer with us, they say he has joined the French. This is the truth, reported by two of our officers and declared on their honor."

Due allowance was made in the colonies for Washington's youth and inexperience and the shameful lack of support and direction given him. There were some who said privately that he had acted too recklessly out of a desire for glory, but there were also some who understood the remarkable way in which this young man, in his first field command, had won the esteem of his officers and of his "loose, idle fellows" and had molded them into an effective fighting force. Dinwiddie had warned his commander not "to make any hazardous attempts against a too numerous enemy." Now the governor convinced himself, and said so in his correspondence, that he had given Washington specific orders not to advance until joined by the other forces and that Washington had disobeyed him.

Washington is almost invariably criticized for positioning his fort on low ground vulnerable to musketry from hills on two sides. The criticism is not just, for no musket ball fired from those hills could have reached the fort with any effect. The distance was too great. Cannon trained down upon it, of course, would have torn it apart; but an enemy armed with cannon could have destroyed the fort no matter where it stood.

Washington, however, did make two mistakes, one of them fatal. He placed the stockade on ground so wet and poorly drained that any trenches dug for protection were almost certain to fill up with water. And the woods on the southeastern side of the fort came to within 60 yards of the stockade. This meant that enemy troops would have both protection and concealment while firing within effective musket range. A more experienced commander would certainly have cut back the woods to ground level for another 15 or 20 yards. It should be remembered, however, that Washington was working under adverse conditions, and, despite his boast to Dinwiddie on June 3, designed his fort only for temporary protection. He had no intention

of fighting a battle at the Great Meadows if he could avoid it; the real bastion was to be built at Red Stone on the Monongahela, on the far side of Chestnut Ridge.

The Virginia House of Burgesses publicly commended its regiment, praised the officers "for their late gallant and brave behavior," and gave each man a bonus of one pistole, a coin worth about \$4. It excepted two names from its citation: George Muse, who resigned his commission in disgrace, and Jacob Van Braam, who, unaware of the blame being heaped upon him by Washington and others, was innocently playing cards with the French officers in Fort Duquesne while waiting to be exchanged for the French prisoners.

The consequences of the defeat at Fort Necessity were momentous. The English lost the Indians as allies and within a few months all the tribes were either allied with the French or were neutral; within a year they were burning and pillaging the entire western frontier. The Virginia Regiment, the only protection for several thousand square miles vulnerable to attack, was now demoralized and racked by desertion. The French were strengthening their fortification at the Forks of the Ohio. The ministry at Versailles had invaluable propaganda materials: the Articles of Capitulation with its embarrassing admission of guilt, and "Colonel Washington's" private journal of the expedition. They printed both with appropriate comment in the famous pamphlet, *Mémoire contenant le précis des faits*.

Humiliation was piled upon humiliation. The Half King, having taken up residence at George Croghan's trading center in central Pennsylvania, declared, "The colonel [Washington] was a good-natured man, but had no experience; he took upon him to command the Indians as his slaves, and would have them every day upon the out scout and attack the enemy by themselves, but would by no means take advice from the Indians. He lay at one place from one full moon to the other, and made no fortifications at all, but that little thing upon the meadow, where he thought the French would come up to him in an open field; had he taken my advice, and made such fortifications as I advised him to make, he would certainly have beat the French off. But the French acted as great cowards, and the English as fools, in the engagement." The Half King went on to explain that he and his Indians alone had done all the fighting against Jumonville and his men. The Council of Virginia ruled that Washington, in guaranteeing the return of the 21 French prisoners taken in the Jumonville action, had exceeded his authority, since he had sent them east and they were no longer under his jurisdiction. When Dinwiddie reorganized the Virginians into 8 companies of regulars with no rank higher than captain, Washington, rather than accept a demotion, left the service and devoted himself to running his brother's estate at Mount Vernon.



The pitched battle at Fort Necessity did not produce a declaration of war between France and England. Technically, the two countries were still at peace in Europe, but the British took steps to recover by force of arms their territory lost to the French in North America. In February 1755 two full regiments of British troops landed in Virginia and in due course began a march to the Forks of the Ohio. Their commander was Maj. Gen. Edward Braddock, veteran of 45 years of army service and commander



in chief of all British forces in North America. He had been chosen to head a campaign in which the British and colonial Americans would attack the French forts in Nova Scotia as well as Fort Niagara on Lake Ontario, Crown Point on Lake Champlain, and Fort Duquesne on the Ohio.

Braddock's regiments were supported by some 400 auxiliary Americans and Indians, including a number of those who had marched and fought with Washington during the Fort Necessity campaign: Andrew Montour, Monacattotha, Peter Hogg, Adam Stephen, William La Peyronie, Dr. James Craik, Christopher Gist, Carolus Gustavus de Spiltdorph, the gentleman adventurer from Sweden, and

William Poulson, now a captain and still wearing Stobo's sword. Washington came out of retirement to serve without pay or rank as an aide on Braddock's staff.

The army of almost 2,400 men—the largest assemblage of troops ever seen in North America—for the most part followed Washington's "Virginia Road," leveling and clearing it to a width of 12 feet in a magnificent feat of engineering. After leaving Wills Creek, Braddock followed Washington's advice and divided his force; he left the heavier vehicles and armaments with Col. Thomas Dunbar, his second in command, and pushed ahead more rapidly with 13 pieces of artillery, 30 days' rations, a herd of cattle, and 1,459 selected men. On June 25 this column reached and passed Fort Necessity, now overgrown with weeds, the charred remnants of the palisades still visible. It made camp less than 2 miles beyond the fort, beside a stream known since as Braddock's Run.

On the morning of July 9, the force crossed the Monongahela a second time at Turtle Creek, a few miles above the Forks of the Ohio. The column had moved with great caution, according to the precepts of European command, with an advance guard well out ahead, flanking parties on each side, and scouts ranging the countryside. But the safe and unopposed second crossing of the river in splendid array, band playing, banners flying, so close to the Forks and at a place naturally suited for an ambush, led to overconfidence and carelessness. The British units crowded across the river and up a hillside in a massed column before the area had been scouted and before the high ground that commanded the route had been secured.



The confidence displayed by Braddock's men was not matched by the French. The British seemed so formidable in their advance that the French Indians were unwilling to fight, and the French commander at Fort Duquesne debated with his officers whether to burn the fort and flee or make a token resistance and surrender with the honors of war. Capt. Daniel de Beaujeu, who had arrived a few days earlier, persuaded the commander at the last moment to give him field command of the French and Canadian troops, and then won the Indians over to joining him in an attack. He started out with 900 men, three-fourths of them Indians. Near Turtle Creek, about a mile short of the ford across the Monongahela, they unexpectedly ran headlong into the advancing British column. Beaujeu was killed in the first exchange of fire.



The Canadians and the Indians began to falter and then to flee. But the second in command, Capt. Jean Dumas, achieved the most difficult feat of rallying frightened men. They fell into positions in the woods from which they could fire into Braddock's column from the front and both sides, and they began to slaughter the British soldiers.

Two points cannot be made too often, since they correct misconceptions that are deeply embedded in American folklore and are still sometimes ignored by those describing the action. Braddock was not ambushed, and he was not defeated because he followed European military tactics on the American frontier. He was defeated, rather, because he momentarily departed from those tactics in a fashion that would have been condemned by any competent military leader in Europe. Had Braddock posted skirmishers and flanking parties in an effort to determine the exact circumstances of the enemy force instead of blindly pushing his men forward to the sounds of battle, the outcome might have been totally different.

> *The General was wounded behind the shoulder, and into the Breast of which he died three days after. . . .* George Washington





*A Plan of the Field of Battle and Disposition of the Troops  
as they were on the March at the time of the Attack on the 9<sup>th</sup> of July 1755.*



**References.**

*French and Indians when discovered by the Guides,  
British Troops.*

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| <p>A Guides with 6 Light Horse,<br/>B Van of the advanced party,<br/>C Advanced party commanded<br/>by Lieut. Col. Gage 250,<br/>D The Working party command-<br/>ed by S<sup>r</sup> John S<sup>r</sup> Clair 250,<br/>E Two Field Pieces 6 Pounders,<br/>F Guard to Ditto,<br/>G Troop Waggoners,<br/>H Flank Guards,<br/><br/>Main Body of the Army<br/>I Light Horse,<br/>K Indians,</p> | <p>L Sergeants &amp; 10 Grenadiers,<br/>M Subalterns &amp; 20 Men.<br/>N 12 Pounders,<br/>O Comp<sup>y</sup> of Grenadiers,<br/>P Vanguard,<br/>Q Train of Artillery,<br/>R S<sup>r</sup> Peer Hallock,<br/>S Col. Dunbars,<br/>T Rear Guard to the whole Army,<br/>U A Hill,<br/><br/>W Ground where the prin-<br/>cipal part of the Engage-<br/>ment was fought.</p> |
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Braddock lost about 975 of his 1,459 men engaged, more than half of them being killed. William La Peyroney was killed and scalped, as were Will Poulson and Carolus de Spiltdorph. Braddock himself received a mortal wound. Washington, who distinguished himself in the engagement, helped carry the general off the field in a silk sash. (The sash is on exhibit at Mount Vernon today.) He and Dr. Craik were at the general's side when he died on the retreat. They buried him in a secret grave a mile and a half northwest of Fort Necessity.

The other half of Braddock's army, some 40 miles away and still the largest and best-equipped armed force in North America, destroyed most of its supplies, fled to Wills Creek, and then marched all the way to Philadelphia to take up "winter quarters"—in August.

Despite the affair at Fort Necessity and the clash on the Monongahela, England and France remained "legally" at peace until May 1756, when formal declarations of war were proclaimed. In the months that followed, the Ohio Valley reeled under almost incessant Indian attacks. For more than 2 years Washington struggled with inadequate forces to protect the Virginia frontier. In the fall of 1758, he took command of a brigade of colonial Americans and marched westward across the mountains of Pennsylvania with still another army, this one under Brig. Gen. John Forbes. This time the British were successful in driving the French out of the Ohio Valley. On November 25, 1758, Washington finally achieved the goal for which he had worked and fought for 5 years: he helped raise the British flag over the smoking ruins of Fort Duquesne.

Duquesne fell, then Fort Niagara and Quebec, and then Montreal in 1760. The French and Indian War ended, and though the Seven Years War continued for another 3 years in Europe, India, and the West Indies, British rule replaced the French empire in North America. The Americans were now free from any threat of French expansion and, consequently, from any need for protection from British arms. The way was clear for the American colonies to seek their independence.



Of the men who took part in the Fort Necessity campaign, many had interesting subsequent experiences or careers. Robert Stobo, while a hostage at Fort Duquesne, smuggled out a detailed scale map of the fort on the back of a letter that gave an account of French weaknesses and stated that the French commissary, La Force, was a man too valuable to the French to be returned. La Force and his fellow prisoners were held in Virginia; Stobo and his fellow hostage Van Braam were sent to Canada; and Stobo's map was given to General Braddock. When the French came upon the map among the general's captured papers, they court-martialed Stobo and sentenced him to death in a trial that attracted international attention. He made a daring escape down the St. Lawrence River, reached the British forces at Louisbourg in Nova Scotia, and returned to serve on Gen. James Wolfe's staff at the siege of Quebec. He received a hero's welcome and a £1,000 award in Williamsburg, after which he finished his life as a captain in the regular British army.

With the fall of Montreal, Jacob Van Braam was released from 6 years of not-very-rigorous confinement. He returned to Williamsburg, where the Burgesses, ashamed of the obviously false charges of treachery that had been leveled against him, received him as a friend, gave him his back pay of £828, and awarded him an additional £500 for his sufferings. He then made a career in the British army.

Andrew Lewis was captured during General Forbes' 1758 march on Fort Duquesne and was imprisoned in Quebec, where he met Stobo and Van Braam. He commanded the 800-man army of American colonials that in 1774 won a decisive victory over the Indians at Point Pleasant on the Ohio River at the mouth of the Great Kanawha. He served as a brigadier general in the American War of Independence, driving the English governor out of Virginia in the early months of the war.

George Croghan, as deputy to Sir William Johnson, the influential British Indian agent, became the second most powerful political force and the second largest landowner on the western frontier before 1776.

Capt. James Mackay retired from the army in 1755, built up a good estate in Georgia, and then moved to Rhode Island for his health. On his way back to Georgia in 1785, he fell ill in Alexandria and died, waiting in vain for a visit from Washington, who did not know of his arrival.

Dr. James Craik was for many years Washington's neighbor, friend, and personal physician. He became chief surgeon of the Continental Army during the American Revolution and in that position warned Washington of the plot of the "Conway Cabal" to replace him with Gen. Horatio Gates. He was one of the attending physicians at the death of Washington in Mount Vernon in 1799, and of Washington's widow 3 years later.

Adam Stephen served as a major general in the Revolution. On July 20, 1776, with the British army massing its

forces for an assault on New York City, he wrote to his old friend and comrade in arms, George Washington, now commander in chief of the American army fighting Great Britain. He recalled the dark and humiliating events of July 3 and 4 in 1754. Washington replied:

*I did not let the anniversary of the 3rd pass off without a grateful remembrance of the escape we had at the Meadows. The same providence that protected us . . . will, I hope, continue his mercies, and make us happy instruments in restoring peace and liberty.*

Stephen was a hero of the Battle of Brandywine, but he was found to be intoxicated during the Battle of Germantown, and Washington dismissed him from his command. He had a prosperous post-war career and an active political life in Virginia.

George Washington died at Mount Vernon on December 14, 1799, at the age of 67, after having rendered incomparable service to his country. He was a leader in the Virginia opposition to British colonial policies. He was commander in chief of the Continental Army through 8 hard years of the American War for Independence. He was a delegate to and presided over the Constitutional Convention of 1787. He was the first President of the United States. Having experienced failure, frustration, and defeat in the frontier war of 1754-1758, he was admirably prepared to cope with the problems he faced for 21 years as a national leader in war, politics, and international affairs. He was intensely ambitious as a young man, but he lived to reject, on principles of the highest honor, an invitation to become dictator and lifetime ruler of his country.

## *FORT NECESSITY AFTER 1755*

George Washington spent much time, effort, and money trying to convert his regiment's claims for 20,000 acres of bounty lands for their 1754 service into actual grants. The territory to be divided among his men was shifted from the area around the Forks of the Ohio to a less desirable region about 300 miles down the Ohio River. Washington made two trips to inspect his western land holdings in 1770 and 1784, accompanied on each journey by his friend Dr. Craik. He eventually acquired 32,373 acres of frontier land, only 3,953 of it awarded him as bounty land; much of the rest was bought from the men who had served with him in 1754. In 1794, "having, from long experience, found that landed property at a distance from the proprietor, is attended with more plague than profit," he offered to sell all his Ohio land holdings for \$3.33 per acre.

On his 1770 trip to the west, Washington bought Great Meadows, including the site of Fort Necessity, from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania for 30 pistoles (about \$120). He visited the place again in 1784. He attempted to lease the land to a tenant farmer but never succeeded in finding one who would stay and pay his rent. At his death in 1799 the land was appraised at \$1,404.

The value of the land rose considerably in 1811 when the Federal Government began to construct the National Highway, following fairly closely the line of the Braddock-Washington Road. (Present U.S. 40, in turn, follows the National Highway.) The value rose again during the 1820s when Judge Nathaniel Ewing erected Mount Washington Tavern, a large brick building near the site of Fort Necessity. One of the best, largest, and most profitable inns and stagecoach stations on the highway, it is now part of Fort Necessity National Battlefield.

The remains of Fort Necessity lay in the Great Meadows for 175 years without receiving any restoration or permanent commemoration. The site was well known to historians, however, and many visitors walked down from the National Highway or the tavern to inspect the area.

The first effort to map the remains was made in 1816 by Freeman Lewis, a professional surveyor. By that time the burned traces of the stockade had disappeared and only the ridges of the entrenchments remained. Lewis plotted these ridges in an almost triangular shape and theorized that they marked the stockade walls. He supposed that the mounds had been formed "by throwing up the earth against the palisades." His assumption that the contours of the stockade wall followed the ridges was uncritically accepted, and from 1816 until 1953 every theory about the size and shape of Fort Necessity was wrong.

To add to the confusion, most of those who examined the surface remains thought they indicated a diamond-shaped fort. Variations on the two basic themes often included bastions at the corners, or a bulging extension of the north wall to cover the stream. Proponents of each

theme pressed their convictions with fervor. The earliest post-battle visitors had reported that the fort was small and round, but most people ignored their testimony or discarded it as unreliable.

The first known disturbance of the fort site came in 1854 when a cornerstone was laid for a proposed memorial to be erected during the centennial celebration. The memorial was never built—fortunately, as it turned out.

With the stimulus of the 200th anniversary of Washington's birth, an organization of interested citizens made plans in 1932 to reproduce the original stockade. They built a large square fort, basing the design on the surface remains and a little archeological study. A firing step was constructed around the inner wall in accord with a design common to frontier fortifications. The stockade and the 2-acre tract on which it stood were deeded to the Federal Government in 1932. The next year the National Park Service took over the administration of this small area as Fort Necessity National Battlefield Site. The name was later changed to Fort Necessity National Battlefield.

In the summer of 1952, J. C. Harrington, a National Park Service archeologist, went to Fort Necessity and began one of the most fascinating and productive excavations in the annals of American historical archeology.

The logs of the 1932 stockade had begun to rot in place, and Harrington decided to attempt to solve some of the questions of Fort Necessity before rebuilding it again into its existing form. He said frankly that his aims were modest, "with little expectation of finding more than a few 'relics' and possibly the remains of certain entrenchments which, according to the records, lay outside a stockade. . . . The chance of discovering any remnant of the original stockade seemed very slight. . . . The reproduction constructed in 1932 was believed to be on the original site, and on the whole, correct as to details."

Work began in August 1952. Since the 1932 wall had been mistakenly placed on top of the trenches, Harrington was of course unable to find them. "The fact," he later wrote, "did not affect the research procedure, although there is no denying that it dampened the enthusiasm of the archeologist, particularly when the results of the first season's work were completely negative."

The missing entrenchments prompted Harrington to reconsider the entire body of available information. He faced the fact squarely that no 18th-century designer had ever piled earth up against the outside wall of a palisade. His report for 1952 on the preliminary excavations advanced tentatively the theory of a circular stockade. That theory was supported when he came upon a deposition by one of Washington's men dated 1754. The deponent was one John B. W. Shaw, 20 years of age, who claimed that he had participated in the battle. Shaw was somewhat weak on sentence structure, but his report of the battle was colorful and generally in accord with the known facts. And he

spoke with certainty of "a small stockade [sic] Fort made in a circular form round a small house."

Harrington planned his 1953 excavations on the new and bold premise that the ridges that had misled Freeman Lewis were really the remains of the entrenchments, and that the stockade was circular in shape *within* those entrenchments. That spring Harrington and his co-workers sank three trenches across the area that such a circular fort would have had to cross. Almost at once they discovered a section of disturbed and discolored earth; this marked the path of the narrow trench in which the stockade wall had been set. When they reached ground water level, each of the trench segments revealed remains of the original post ends. In recalling that discovery, Harrington said, "Nothing has ever remotely approached the thrill I had when those bands of discolored earth appeared. . . . And when we went deeper and found the first stockade post, I would not have traded it for a Pharaoh's grave ship."

The archeological team uncovered positive evidence that the stockade was circular, about 53 feet in diameter, with an opening to the southwest. It found post ends in three sections, each section about 12 feet long, around the arc of a circular wall. Further excavations showed that the original entrenchments were on the site of the ridges that for a century and a half had caused so much inaccurate comment.

The team uncovered a variety of small items dating from the time of the battle, including brass buttons, gun flints, ammunition for the swivel guns, the tip of a sword scabbard, and pieces of broken wine bottles. The most important finds, after the remains of the stockade itself, were the musket balls. More than 100 such balls, carefully studied and measured, revealed conclusively the type of shoulder weapon used. All of the balls fall into categories used by smooth-bore muskets and similar military weapons, laying to rest the conjecture that rifles were used in the battle. A representative selection of the relics uncovered during the excavations is on display in the visitor center near the battlefield.

On the basis of Harrington's findings, the present stockade was constructed in the spring of 1954 of split logs of irregular length and shape. The palisades are in the exact location of the original stockade posts. The embankments outside the fort are authentic restorations of those built by Washington's men as defense positions during the brief time between their return to the fort on July 1 and the beginning of the French attack on the morning of July 3.

Besides the reconstructed stockade and Mount Washington Tavern, already discussed, there are several other points of historical interest in the vicinity of Fort Necessity National Battlefield. Principal among these are Braddock's Grave, Jumonville Glen, and the National Road.

For half a century, General Braddock's grave remained undisturbed beneath the road bearing his name, unknown to the travelers and wagons passing over it. In 1804, however, a road crew repairing the trace near Orchard Spring uncovered what they believed to be Braddock's remains. These were reinterred on an adjacent knoll and the site is now a detached unit of the battlefield about 1 mile west on U.S. 40.

The tiny sheltered vale in which Ensign Jumonville was killed survives today relatively unchanged and proudly bears his name. Ironically, the very obscurity which originally attracted the ill-fated French patrol to this glen has saved it from the advance of modern civilization. Nestled atop Chestnut Ridge, Jumonville Glen today offers a unique opportunity to understand the true effect the landscape had on mid-18th-century military tactics.

Once the French threat to the Ohio Valley was eliminated, roads and trails heading westward experienced a new surge of traffic, which reached major proportions following the American Revolution. Small trails such as the Braddock Road, used by Washington in the Fort Necessity campaign in 1754 and by Braddock the next year, could not handle these migrations. In 1806 Congress finally appropriated funds for the construction of a major highway connecting the Eastern Seaboard with the Ohio Valley. The National Road, one of the first federally supported public works projects of an emerging nation, still carries travelers westward as present-day U.S. 40.

## APPENDICES

### *A. Articles of Capitulation*

Capitulation granted by Mons. De Villier, captain of infantry and commander of troops of his most Christian Majesty, to those English troops actually in the fort of Necessity which was built on the lands of the King's dominions July the 3rd, at eight o'clock at night, 1754.

As our intention has never been to trouble the peace and good harmony which reigns between the two friendly princes, but only to revenge the assassination which has been done on one of our officers, bearer of a summons, upon his party, as also to hinder any establishment on the lands of the dominions of the King, my master; upon these considerations, we are willing to grant protection or favor, to all the English that are in the said fort, upon the conditions hereafter mentioned.

1/ We grant the English commander to retire with all his garrisons, to return peaceably into his own country, and we promise to hinder his receiving any insult from us French, and to restrain as much as shall be in our power the Savages that are with us.

2/ He shall be permitted to withdraw and to take with him whatever belongs to them excepting the artillery, which we reserve for ourselves.

3/ We grant them the honors of war; they shall come out with drums beating, and with a small piece of cannon, wishing to show by this means that we treat them as friends.

4/ As soon as these Articles are signed by both parties they shall take down the English flag.

5/ Tomorrow at daybreak a detachment of French shall receive the surrender of the garrison and take possession of the aforesaid fort.

6/ Since the English have scarcely any horses or oxen left, they shall be allowed to hide their property, in order that they may return to seek for it after they shall have recovered their horses; for this purpose they shall be permitted to leave such number of troops as guards as they may think proper, under this condition that they give their word of honor that they will work on no establishment either in the surrounding country or beyond the Highlands during one year beginning from this day.

7/ Since the English have in their power an officer and two cadets, and, in general, all the prisoners whom they took when they assassinated Sieur de Jumonville they now promise to send them with an escort to Fort Duquesne, situated on Belle River, and to secure the safe performance of this treaty article, as well as of the treaty, Messrs. Jacob Van Braam and Robert Stobo, both Captains shall be delivered to us as hostages until the arrival of our French and Canadians herein before mentioned.

We on our part declare that we shall give an escort to send back in safety the two officers who promise us our

French in two months and a half at the latest.

Made out in duplicate on one of the posts of our block-house the same day and year as before.

James Mackay  
George Washington  
Coulon de Villiers

*B. History's Judgment on WASHINGTON  
in the JUMONVILLE AFFAIR*

Scholars, historians, and patriots have been arguing for 200 years the pros and cons of Washington's conduct in the Jumonville Affair. For the most part, opinion has followed national interest, the French and Canadians judging him with varying degrees of severity, the English and Americans justifying his action in attacking the French force.

In the early 1940s, His Eminence, William Cardinal O'Connell, archbishop of Boston, became interested in the Jumonville story and took steps to search out the truth, insofar as that was possible so long after the event. He assigned a young priest of French-Canadian ancestry, Gilbert Leduc, who was experienced in historical research, to determine on the basis of available evidence what happened near the Great Meadows on May 28, 1754. Father Leduc spent several years on a 235-page work, *Washington and "The Murder of Jumonville,"* which was published in 1943 by La Societe Historique Franco-Americaine.

Leduc concluded that Jumonville was engaged either in espionage or scouting or both; that he had sent two men back to Fort Duquesne to report on English movements; that he did not conduct himself in the manner of a man on a diplomatic mission; that the French had no eyewitness account of the entire engagement and based their account on stories told by Indians who were not there; that the French intended to deal with Washington with force, as they had already dealt with Ensign Ward at the Forks of the Ohio; and that Washington could not be fairly blamed for acting as he did.

That conclusion was supported in 1952 by the late Dr. Marcel Trudel, professor of Canadian History at Laval University in Quebec and president of the Canadian Historical Association. In an address delivered at a meeting of the *Institut d'Histoire de l'Amerique Francaise*, he attested to the soundness of Father Leduc's scholarship and research. He then cited newly discovered information in *Papiers Contrecoeur et autres Documents Concernant le Conflit Anglo-Francaise sur l'Ohio de 1745 a 1756* (The Contrecoeur Papers) Quebec, 1952. And he concluded that Jumonville was "killed in an engagement, and not assassinated, as has been claimed incorrectly for too long a time." The Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission published an abridged translation of Dr. Trudel's address in pamphlet form in 1954; it appeared in *Pennsylvania History*, Vol. XXI, pp. 351-81.

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*Fort Necessity National Battlefield is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. A park manager, whose address is Farmington, PA 15437, is in immediate charge. As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has basic responsibilities to protect and conserve our land and water, energy and minerals, fish and wildlife, park and recreation areas, and for the wise use of all those resources. The Department also has a major responsibility for American Indian reservation communities and for people who live in Island Territories under U.S. administration.*

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