

The French and Indian War

Both France and England were powerful countries. Each wanted to control the New World. As a result, between the years 1689 and 1763, France and England fought four wars. The first three wars were unimportant. *The last war had a great effect on the history of our country. It lasted from 1754 to 1763 and was called the **French and Indian War**.*

Events Leading to the French and Indian War

“The Ohio country belongs to England. The French have no right to build forts on our land,” insisted the governor of Virginia. “I shall send a messenger to the French officer at **Fort Le**

Boeuf (lə buf) and ask them to leave. Fort Le Boeuf is hundreds of miles from Virginia. Whom can I trust to take a letter that far? He certainly should be a brave man, one that is not afraid to spend weeks in the wilderness.”

*A young man from Virginia by the name of **George Washington** already had a reputation for being both wise and brave. He was chosen to deliver the message.*

Several men went with him. They left on a chilly October day. Together they crossed the mountains and watched for Indians. After weeks of traveling through the wilderness, they reached Fort Le Boeuf. The French officer took the message that young George Washington handed him from the governor of Virginia and read it. Then the French

Young George Washington was sent by the British to Fort Le Boeuf.



officer politely explained that the French had claimed this land for France. "We do not intend to give up what is ours," he told Washington.

Discouraged, the men from Virginia began their long trip home. It was now winter. The men had to battle heavy snowstorms. Once George Washington nearly drowned when he fell off a log raft into an icy river. After several weeks of hardships, Washington finally reported the bad news to the governor of Virginia.

The governor decided that there was only one thing left to do. He must raise a small army of colonists to drive the French out of the Ohio Valley. By now, George Washington's brave trip through the wilderness to Fort Le Boeuf had made him a hero among the Virginians. The governor made Washington an officer of the Virginia army. He led his men bravely, but the colonists were not trained to fight as soldiers. The French army defeated them. The year was 1754. George Washington had led the first battle of the French and Indian War.

Help Arrives from England

Seeing that the colonists could not defeat the French by themselves, the king of England sent an army of trained soldiers to America. Along with them

came **General Edward Braddock**, who would command the English army.

Colonists from the thirteen colonies were asked to volunteer. Among the volunteers was George Washington.

The English army was very fine looking in their red uniforms. They could march together in perfect step. They knew all the rules for war in Europe. The English soldiers would not think of hiding behind a tree or rock to shoot. That, to them, would be cowardly. The rules for war in Europe said that they must fight out in the open. There was only one thing wrong with their plans. This was not Europe. This was America. The Indians had their own rules for fighting a war.

The colonial soldiers had clothes made out of homespun material and buckskin. They could not march in perfect step, nor did they know the rules for fighting in Europe. Yet they knew better than anyone else the rules for fighting in America.

Washington, as well as other colonists, tried to warn General Braddock. "If you are fighting Indians, you have to fight like an Indian. Indians hide behind trees and bushes while they shoot. Your red uniforms will make fine targets."

"My men will not fight like cowards," came the answer.



General Braddock and his men marched through the forest in a narrow line.

With drums beating, General Braddock led his army through the forest. The forest was thick with trees and bushes. The English had to make a narrow road as they moved forward in order that their wagons of food and supplies could move through the forest. A long line of unprotected soldiers and wagons stretched out for miles.

Suddenly shots seemed to ring out from nowhere. The woods were full of French soldiers and Indians hiding behind trees, rocks, and bushes. The English army had not noticed them until it was too late.

The colonists jumped behind bushes and fought back Indian style. But the British soldiers fought where they stood. Because they could not see their enemy, they did not know where to aim their guns. The British soldiers were easy targets for the well-hidden In-

dians. Many were killed. Suddenly, a bullet hit General Braddock.

With their leader wounded, the British soldiers lost courage and ran. George Washington rode among them, encouraging them to keep fighting. The horse he was riding was shot out from under him. Washington quickly mounted another, and that, too, was shot. He bravely got on a third horse and kept fighting. Pieces of his coat were torn by bullets, but he himself was not hurt.

The British lost this battle. Even the courage of George Washington could not save them. At the time, George Washington was only twenty-three years old. He seemed to be a born soldier. What did he have to say about this battle?

I heard the bullets whistle, and believe me there is something charming in the sound.

Victories Come at Last

General Braddock died shortly after the battle, and the British had no great general to lead their army.

The war continued for many years. The British lost many battles. The French army was strong and had the help of many Indians. The frontier covered a large area. While the British army could not be everywhere at once, there were many Indian tribes all along the frontier who did their part in destroying homes and killing and capturing the settlers who were too spread out to fight together.

Finally the king of England sent another army to the colonies. At last, one after another of the French forts in the Ohio Valley was taken away from the French. *At last the day came when the*

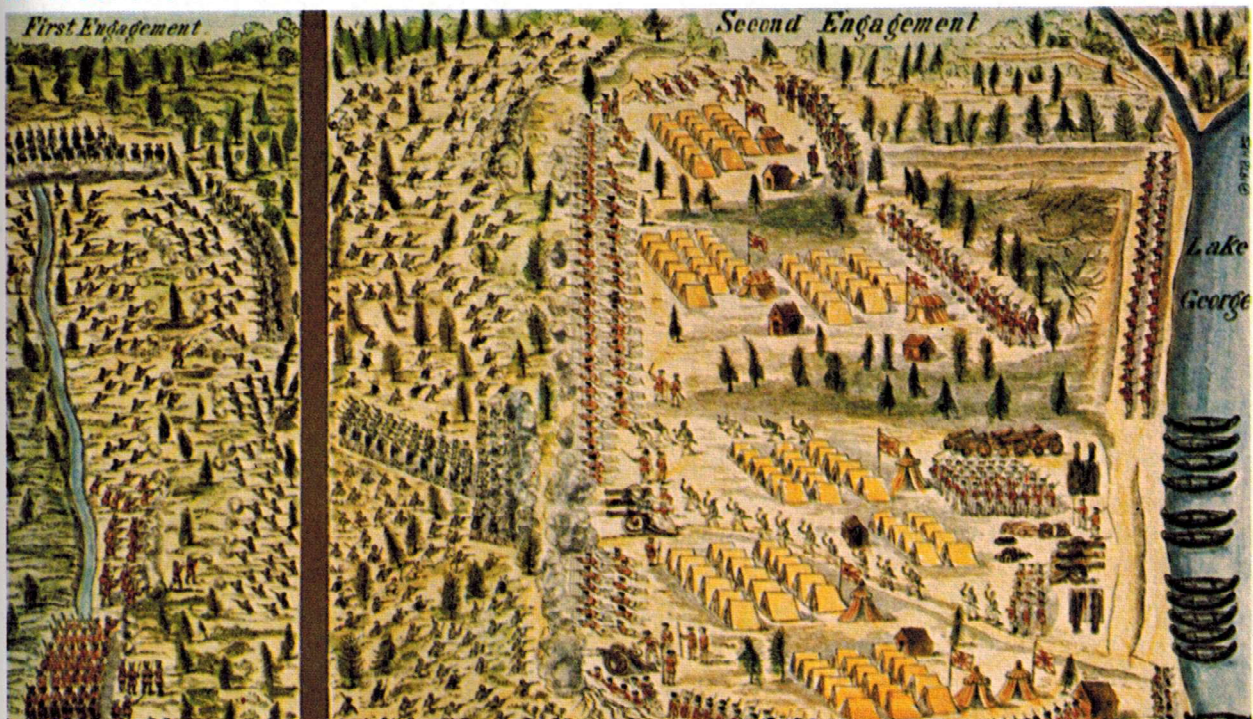
French were driven completely out of the Ohio Valley.

The French still controlled most of what is now Canada. If they were allowed to stay there, they could rebuild their strength and threaten the English colonies again. Since Quebec was the most important settlement in New France, the British decided that it must be captured. The French army must be driven out of North America. Until then, the war would not be over.

Victory at Quebec—The French and Indian War Ends

Attacking Quebec was not easy. Quebec is built high on a cliff beside the St. Lawrence River. The French thought it would be impossible for the English to climb such a steep rock without being

The British finally began to win victories. This picture shows a battle which occurred in 1755. The British are in red uniforms.



seen, so they guarded another place where they thought the English might try to attack instead.

Late one night, a line of British soldiers worked noiselessly to climb the steep rock. They were not seen or heard by the enemy. Imagine the surprise of the French the next morning when they saw nearly 5,000 British soldiers outside their city, ready to attack. This time, the French were taken by surprise. They fought but had to surrender. The British flag was raised over Quebec. *The English victory at Quebec ended the French and Indian War.*

The Importance of the French and Indian War

The French and Indian War was important to the history of our country for many reasons.

1. It answered the question: Which country would be more important in North America—France or England? The answer, of course, was England.
2. Before the war, the colonists had had no experience in fighting



British soldiers climb a steep cliff to attack the city of Quebec. The English victory at Quebec ended the French and Indian War.

wars. Their experience as soldiers in the French and Indian War would be needed when they fought during the American Revolution.

3. George Washington became a great hero to the people in all thirteen colonies. Soon they would begin to think of him as their leader.
4. More colonists began moving into the Ohio Valley. America now had more room to grow.