The Ambition of Cincinnatus

Kenneth Allen Lane
The College at Brockport, k-lane@rochester.rr.com

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.brockport.edu/hst_theses

Part of the American Politics Commons, Political History Commons, and the United States History Commons

Repository Citation
Lane, Kenneth Allen, "The Ambition of Cincinnatus" (2011). History Master's Theses. 3.
https://digitalcommons.brockport.edu/hst_theses/3

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the History at Digital Commons @Brockport. It has been accepted for inclusion in History Master's Theses by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @Brockport. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@brockport.edu.
The Ambition of Cincinnatus

by

Kenneth Allen Lane

A thesis submitted to the Department of History of the State University of New York College at Brockport in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

July 26, 2011
The Ambition of Cincinnatus

by

Kenneth Allen Lane

APPROVED BY:

[Signatures and dates]
Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge and thank the faculty at SUNY Brockport for the numerous years of mentorship and support I have enjoyed as a student since 2006. In particular the efforts of Dr. Jose Torre and Dr. Owen S. Ireland have helped to shape this work; their intellectual guidance, rigorous standards, and reinforcement of my goals has proved an invaluable asset. I would also like to thank my parents, Christopher and Patricia Lane, for their unconditional support of my goals, and their willingness to serve as a captive audience to my many early drafts. Finally, I would offer my most heartfelt gratitude to my fiancé, Krysten Collier. She aided me at every point, as a research assistant, editor, a voice of reason, and a constant moral support.
# The Ambition of Cincinnatus

## Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter I: A Young Man of Most Promising Talents</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter II: A Charge Too Great for My Youth</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter III: My Expenses Borne</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Ambition of Cincinnatus</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Abstract

George Washington was a deliberate political actor, motivated by a desire for self-aggrandizement and social status. He operated within the strictures of a patronage system, advancing his personal interest through the employment of a deferential and disinterested persona. Washington gained preferment and position at a steady pace by offering loyal service to numerous patrons, concealing his ambitions in accordance with the etiquette of Virginian politics. The maintenance of his persona developed into the superintending care of Washington's early career, as it became a prevalent trope within his letters. A combination of youthful overconfidence and numerous frustrations and failures in the field occasioned the slow deterioration of that persona. Washington tactlessly quarreled with his primary patron over issues of his proper recognition and status, causing a breach in that relationship. He eventually resigned, declaring the primary motivations for his service were rank and salary. Contravening a narrative consensus in the modern historiography, The Ambition of Cincinnatus concludes that Washington was an inventive political actor who crafted a persona of deference and disinterested service to advance his selfish ambitions.
"It is hardly exaggeration to say that Washington was pious as Numa; just as Aristides; temperate as Epictetus; patriotic as Regulus; in giving public trusts, impartial as Severus; in victory modest as Scipio; prudent as Fabius; rapid as Marcellus; undaunted as Hannibal; as Cincinnatus disinterested; to liberty firm as Cato; and respectful of the laws as Socrates." --- Mason L. Weems

The Ambition of Cincinnatus refers to the aspirations for public distinction and self-aggrandizement exhibited in the political actions of the young George Washington, as contrasted against the historical perceptions established by the modern historiography. From the onset of his career Washington consciously developed a deferential and disinterested political persona as the most effectual means to advance his self-interest within Virginia's patronage structures. He concealed his ambition for preferment in accordance with the etiquette of the political system in which he operated, relying upon the approbation of influential patrons to validate his station and degree of distinction. Washington was a deliberate political actor who was aggressive in the pursuit of social advancement, zealous in defense of his reputation, and intuitively deflected suspicions that he harbored selfish ambition.

The thesis of Ambition challenges a prevalent narrative consensus within the historiography of Washington that described him as inherently apolitical and a paragon of moral sensibilities. Contemporaries attributed a plethora of republican virtues to him, and the efforts of 19th century biographers integrated those views into historical treatments. The early panegyric texts of Mason Weems, John Marshall, and David Ramsay popularized the view of Washington as the ambitionless,

1 W.S. Baker, Character Portraits of Washington, 120.
2 See William Spohn Baker, Character Portraits of Washington: As Delineated by Historians Orators and Divines (1887) for a representative collection of contemporary descriptions of Washington.
deferential, republican paragon. Weems supplemented that imagery with intense moralizing, using fabricated tales of Washington's adolescent endeavors to form a personality deserving of praise and emulation.

The innovative character studies of Paul Leicester Ford, Worthington Chauncey Ford, and Owen Wister represented a departure from the ahistorical myth-making of Weems and a turn towards a more professional treatment of Washington's life by the 20th century. Emphasizing his personal life and character, these works delved into the details of his interpersonal relationships, his careers as a land surveyor, public servant, and politician, as well as his status as a slave owner and a farmer. Though sparse allusions to the utility of patronage and interest in Washington's early career existed in Worthington Chauncey's and Wister's texts, this new generation of authors retained fidelity to the concept of Washington's exemplary "moral dimensions." They fleshed out the stolid imagery of Weems and Marshall, developing a vibrant personality to augment the uncontested narrative of the apolitical paragon.

Rupert Hughes published *George Washington the Human Being and the Hero* in 1926 as a rejoinder against Weems' and Marshall's moral paragon. Declaring the product of the precedent literature a caricature of Washington as "an odious prig," he positioned his text as a critical analysis that would humanize the founder. Iconoclastic in tone, Hughes' biography engaged directly with Weems' fables.

---

Rejecting the story of the cheery-tree as a farce, he declared Washington's supposed inability to tell a lie, "a disability he out grew in good time." Hughes' Washington was an ambitious swell, an inadequate son, and perhaps in love with his best friend's wife. Rupert Hughes' notoriety came from the critical tone he adopted in his attempt to reduce Washington from Weems' paragon into a realistic individual with character faults, personal failings, and ambition.

Samuel Elliot Morrison's brief essay in 1932, The Young Man Washington, moderated this critical tone by attributing Hughes' critiques of Washington to the impetuousness of youth. He stated that the young man was "impatient and passionate, eager for glory in war, wealth in land, and success in love," but not inherently selfish or ambitious. Morrison theorized that Washington incorporated stoic philosophy as a core character trait after "constant social intercourse," with the neighboring Fairfax family. The interpretation found in The Young Man Washington distanced itself from both Weems' hagiographic extreme and Hughes' overly critical treatment by modifying and extending the apolitical thesis.

Douglas Southall Freeman refined this new approach in his 1948 George Washington. He offered a portrayal of Washington as a youth "of complicated character -- moral, just, patient, amiable and able to win the affection of his Captains and Lieutenants, but at the same time humorless, ambitious, [and] persistent to positive obstinacy, acquisitive, suspicious of rivals and extraordinarily sensitive." He

---

6 Hughes, George Washington the Human Being & the Hero, 24.
7 Hughes, George Washington the Human Being & the Hero, 67.
8 Morrison, The Young Man Washington, in By Land and By Sea, 162.
9 Morrison, The Young Man Washington, in By Land and By Sea, 169.
tempered that ambition however by declaring it an honest desire to be "distinguished in some measure from the common run...." Washington exhibited tactlessness as a young man primarily because he sought recognition for his exemplary merits and lacked the proper political acumen to restrain his temper.

Samuel Elliot Morrison and Douglas Southall Freeman introduced a new interpretive framework into the historiography after 1948; Washington remained a disinterested and reluctant political actor, however he required a level of experience and maturity to reach that point. Morrison exemplified this approach by claiming, "It was only through the severest self-discipline that Washington attained his characteristic poise and serenity." George Washington became a self-made paragon, a modern day Cincinnatus crafted from an aggressive youth seeking distinction through service.

Marcus Cunliffe reiterated this interpretation in his 1958 Man and Monument, declaring that Washington matured into a man free of "aggressive ambition." In his 1965 biography, George Washington: The Forge of Experience, James Thomas Flexner concluded that Washington "became one of the noblest and greatest men who ever lived," avoiding selfish ambition through a mastery of the self. Gary Wills' entry into the historiography, the 1984 George Washington and the Enlightenment, presented the founder as the literal manifestation of enlightenment philosophy. Washington became a modern version of Cincinnatus, if not in reality at least in

---

11 Morrison, The Young Man Washington, in By Land and By Sea, 162.
12 Cunliffe, George Washington: Man and Monument, 63.
public perception. Wills saw in Washington an ability to stand "for an entire people" and serve as a coherent embodiment of Revolution, nationalism, and ideology.\textsuperscript{14} The concept of a truly apolitical, self-made Washington was so well established by 2004 that Joseph Ellis reasonably asserted in his brief biography, \textit{His Excellency}, that Washington "proved clumsy and ineffectual at playing the patronage game," because he only knew how to "rely on the hard core of his own merit."\textsuperscript{15}

Lacking from the broader historiography is an interpretation of Washington as a deliberate political actor motivated by self-serving ambition. Paul K. Longmore's \textit{The Invention of George Washington} is a recent publication that critically engages with his political nature. Rejecting the narrative of disinterestedness, Longmore claimed that Washington exhibited "inventiveness as a political actor," that "amount[ed] to genius."\textsuperscript{16} John E. Ferling expanded upon Longmore's approach, declaring that Washington was "highly political," in his \textit{The Ascent of George Washington: The Hidden Political Genius of an American Icon}.\textsuperscript{17} Ferling is one of the first authors to directly argue that Washington was a deliberate political actor, one who "repeatedly comes to a reasoned judgment on complex issues and forges a strategy for their realization."\textsuperscript{18} Longmore and Ferling are some of the earliest biographers to directly engage with Washington's numerous political activities and conclude that he was one of the preeminent politicians of his era.

\textsuperscript{14} Wills, \textit{Cincinnatus: George Washington and the Enlightenment}, xxi.
\textsuperscript{15} Ellis, \textit{His Excellency}, 38.
\textsuperscript{16} Longmore, \textit{The Invention of George Washington}, ix.
\textsuperscript{17} Ferling, \textit{The Ascent of George Washington}, xx-xxi.
\textsuperscript{18} Ferling, \textit{The Ascent of George Washington}, xxi.
The thesis of this study, that Washington deliberately crafted a political persona utilizing deference and a disinterested reputation to conceal an aggressive ambition for personal aggrandizement, challenges the modern consensus of the self-made apolitical Founder. Chapter I demonstrates that Washington's initial access to political office was the result of interfamilial patronage ties, and not an exemplary and immediately recognizable personal merit. It details the formative influence of Lawrence Washington and Colonel William Fairfax in introducing Washington into the patronage political system of Virginia, and the means by which both men served as his patron. During this period Washington developed his characteristic political persona, noticeable in the solicitous letters he penned to powerful members of Virginia's Governor's Council in his numerous lobbies for preferment and position.

Chapter II outlines the period in which Washington utilized his tactful approach to its greatest effect, pursuing a concerted campaign of self-advancement after the death of Lawrence. Astutely manipulating patronage ties, Washington attained the Adjutancy of the Northern Neck, appointment as a special envoy to the French, and the post of Lieutenant Colonel to the Virginia Regiment. He expanded his patronage ties to a number of influential members of the Governor's Council, and began to accrue a respectable degree of distinction from his numerous posts. Washington also began to manifest youthful impatience and overconfidence during this period, at times overextending the narrow limits of his actual influence.

Chapter III shifts emphasis to Washington's political and military blunders during 1754. Unnerved by mounting frustrations and challenges to his authority,
Washington failed to maintain his deferential tactfulness. His interactions with Governor Dinwiddie evolved into demanding litanies as he engaged in divisive disputes over his pay and right of command. Washington's disastrous defeat at Fort Necessity, and the calculated actions he took to avoid the consequences of his failure, showcases an aggressive portion of his character that is often overlooked in the historiography.

The Ambition of Cincinnatus outlines the deliberate political maneuvers George Washington employed to advance his personal station and social status. The characteristic reputation of deference and disinterestedness, often attributed as Washington's true political character, is present as a carefully maintained political persona to conceal his aggressive ambition for self-aggrandizement. Under the stress of failures however Washington failed to maintain that persona, and on a number of occasions the core motivations of his first political career become apparent. The young George Washington engaged in a military career for the sole purpose of rank and wealth, and when denied those he impolitically denounced his patrons and resigned his position in frustration.
"I should be glad to hear that you live in perfect Harmony and good fellowship with the family at Belvoir, as it is in their power to be very serviceable upon many occasion's to us as young beginners; I would advise your visiting there often as one Step towards it the rest, if any more is necessary, your own good sense will sufficient dictate; for to that Family I am under many obligations particularly to the old Gentleman."¹

George Washington's initial access to political station was dependent upon the influence of his half-brother Lawrence and the self-serving patronage of Lawrence's father-in-law, William Fairfax. Lawrence, the eldest son of Augustine Washington Sr. and Jane Butler, had been afforded advantageous opportunities as a youth; prime among them a professional education. Enrolled in the Appleby Grammar School in England, he remained there until turning twenty, gaining the knowledge and poise of a gentleman. Having excelled at his studies he briefly returned to Virginia, meeting George for the first time before applying for and attaining a commission in the British military.² Exemplary service as a Captain under Admiral Edward Vernon in the ill-fated campaign against Spanish Cartagena in the Caribbean during 1741 awarded him a respected public reputation as a military veteran.³ Lawrence's numerous social distinctions drew the attention of the neighboring Fairfax Family of Belvoir Manor, eventually leading to his marriage to daughter of the influential Colonel William Fairfax, fifteen-year old Anne in 1743.⁴

² Chernow, Washington: A Life, 8.
Lawrence's attachment to the Fairfax family was a political, as well as personal, relationship that proved immensely profitable. The Fairfaxes descended from British nobility and drew their immense political influence from the Colonel's cousin, peer of the realm, Lord Thomas Fairfax. Lord Fairfax translated his immense wealth into political power through land holdings. Possessing an immense royal land grant, affirmed by the Privy Council as measuring "as much land as present [1735] pays quite rent to His Majesty in all the rest of Virginia," the Fairfax interest represented an insurmountable political force. William Fairfax represented that interest as the agent of Lord Fairfax in the colonies. His influence was augmented by his other political stations including seats in the House of Burgesses, the Governor's Council, and his status as a founding member and militia Colonel of Fairfax County.

Lawrence combined his own merit and distinction with service to the Fairfax interest to quickly propel him into positions of political and economic power. Shortly after his marriage to Anne Lawrence won election to the Burgesses as the representative of Fairfax County, utilized his veteran status to be appointed Adjutant General of the Virginia militia with the rank of Major, and became partners with Colonel Fairfax and numerous influential Virginia factors in the formation of the speculative Ohio Company in 1747. Established on his own manor, christened Mount Vernon in honor of the Admiral, Lawrence stood as a minor but influential member of the Virginia gentry-class before the age of thirty.

---

The death of Augustine Washington Sr., three months before Lawrence and Anne's marriage, removed the likelihood that George would be the beneficiary of similar advantages. Strong-willed and obstinate, Mary Ball Washington refused to remarry, preferring to direct her energies into the development of her son. Unlike Jane Butler's sons, George was to remain in Virginia with his mother working at a useful education in a respectable profession. His earliest remaining school exercises are manuscripts replete with practices in handwriting, mathematics, geometry and elementary legal documents. It is clear from the surviving copybooks that George was also receiving an informal education in the fundamentals of land surveying.

Notable in the copybook pages is the presence of a listing of 110-maxims, *The Rules of Civility and Decent Behavior in Company and Conversation*, likely penned before his thirteenth birthday. Washington biographers often identify the *Rules*, a collection of precepts concerning the proper exercise of restraint and civil manners in refined company, as a significant and possibly determinative factor in the development of Washington's personal character. Joseph Ellis, a modern biographer, cited the first of these maxims "Every action done in company ought to be done with some sign of respect to those that are present," inferring its correlation to the adult Washington's later public persona. Despite the prevalence of the maxims in biographical treatments as an early formative experience, Joseph Ellis is one of the

---

6 PWC, 1:2.
7 PWC, 1:1.
few that readily admits Washington may have taken little more away from the exercise of copying them than a practice in penmanship.\(^8\)

The influence of the *Rules* on Washington's development is difficult to attest. Lawrence's influence however cannot be overstated. His marriage to Anne Fairfax gained George entry to Belvoir manor, its library, and the lively company of the well educated Fairfax family. The Fairfaxes quickly embraced the younger Washington; he grew into the family favorite and befriended the Colonel's son. Eight-years his senior, George William was poised for an immensely powerful future that George Washington could never hope to experience, nonetheless the two forged a lasting friendship that extended to the eve of the American Revolution.\(^9\) George also gained the attention of Colonel Fairfax, likely due Lawrence's dedicated interest.

Lawrence Washington stood *in loco parentis* for George Washington in the absence of a father. Despite Mary Ball's designs for her son, Lawrence actively sought means of advancing George's future career path along his own example. Conspiring with Colonel Fairfax, he concocted a scheme to spring George from the influence of his mother. On September 8, 1746 George met Colonel Fairfax in Fredericksburg where the older man was working to establish and outline the boundaries of Lord Fairfax's proprietary. There the Colonel delivered two letters penned by Lawrence, one addressed to George, the other to his mother.\(^10\)

---

\(^8\) Ellis, *His Excellency*, 8-9.

\(^9\) Washington wrote numerous letters to George William Fairfax well into 1775; Refer to George Washington to George Washington to George William Fairfax, May 31, 1775. Despite describing a skirmish between American and Royal forces, Washington retains a deferential tone, bemoaning a reality in which "a brother's sword has been sheathed in a brother's breast."

The exact text of the letters no longer exists, however it is clear that Lawrence informed his half-brother of an opportunity to serve as "a midshipman aboard a royal frigate anchored in Virginia."¹¹ George responded eagerly, preparing himself for the voyage. Douglas Southall Freeman inferred that a portion of the letter likely included "a private admonition for George to hold steadily to his purpose and not let his mother know that Lawrence was urging him to do so." Freeman argued the purpose of the admonition was to outflank Mary Ball; Lawrence's letter assumedly broached the plan to her in a deferential manner, while Colonel Fairfax pressured a shared acquaintance of his and Mary's, a Doctor Spencer, to urge her "to look more favorably on the plan for George to go to sea."¹² Both Lawrence and the Colonel were actively working to determine the future of young George.

Mary Ball Washington remained immovable on the issue, ignoring the importance of the Fairfax family, the influence of an elder brother, or the requests of her son; she harbored a personal suspicion of the scheme. Despite the best efforts of Lawrence's tiny cabal, Mary refused to decide and instead appealed to her brother, Joseph, for counsel. In a letter from May 19, 1747 he rejected the idea of sending George to sea. His treatment, Joseph argued, would be equal to that of "a Negro, or rather like a dog." As a means of potential advancement he argued it would be more beneficial to "apprentice [George] to a tinker." Advancement in the merchant marine or navy meant little; Joseph concluded that even the "master of a Virginia ship,"

could barely match the comfort of a simple planter possessed of "three or four hundred acres and three or four slaves." With her brother's counsel in hand Mary Ball Washington put an end to the scheme, refusing to relent and issuing an absolute refusal to allow George to depart.

George Washington spent much of his mid-teenage years in the company of the Fairfax family at Belvoir Manor, perhaps avoiding his mother. Samuel Elliot Morrison described the Fairfaxes as "of that eighteenth-century Whig gentry who conformed outwardly to Christianity, but derived their real inspiration from Marcus Aurelius, Plutarch, and the Stoic philosophers." The Fairfax library contained varied classical tracts; we know that Washington recorded an "outline in English, of the principle Dialogues of Seneca the younger." Whether he was directly familiar with Seneca's actual writings is unknown, however he certainly knew Addison's play *Cato*.

George Washington considered *Cato* a personal favorite, routinely returning to its lines for guidance and employing them in reference or in whole in his own writings. A notable usage of such a reference occurred while George was serving with General Forbes' expeditionary force in 1758. In a letter to his best friend's wife, Sarah Fairfax, Washington declared:

> I should think my time more agreeably spent believe me, in playing a part in Cato with the Company you mention, & myself doubly happy being the Juba to such a Marcia as you must make.¹⁶

---

¹⁶ *PWC*, 6:42. Letter to Sarah Cary Fairfax, September 25, 1758.
Washington's reference placed himself in the role of Cato's son, Juba, and Sarah in the role of Juba's secreted love interest. Early biographers often omitted the letter from their works; however the works of Rupert Hughes and later writers found it essential. The implications of Washington's statement formed the foundation for Samuel Elliot Morrison's thesis in *The Young Man Washington*, and validated an unpopular theory. That Washington fell in love with his best friend's wife by his mid-twenties is almost certain, as is the likelihood that those feelings developed during his early visitations to Belvoir.

Samuel Elliot Morrison advanced the notion that George Washington incorporated stoic and republican philosophy into his personal character under the tutelage of Sarah Fairfax and the Fairfax family. Morrison argued that Sarah served as George's "fair tutor in Stoicism." Their discussions of the literature found in the Fairfax library supposedly merited Washington's full attention, as they engaged the intellect of "the love of his youth." Considered by modern biographers with tacit acceptance, the effect of Washington's infatuation with Sarah Fairfax likely deepened his connection to the family at Belvoir considerably. It extended to relationships with the other members of the family, including a close friendship with her husband, George William Fairfax.

Washington and George William were chosen to accompany James Genn on a surveying expedition into the Southern Branch of the Potomac in 1748. Likely aware of Washington's boyhood education, Fairfax provided the young man his first

---

opportunity to witness a professional surveyor. That Colonel Fairfax intended for Washington to derive some modicum of professional insights during the journey is more than likely. Neither youth found the journey enjoyable, Washington complained his "bed [was] nothing but a Little Straw -- Matted together without Sheets or anything else but only one Thread Bare blanket with double its Weight of Vermin such as Lice Fleas &c." 

Constantly hounded by drenching rains, the expedition showcased little of interest to the two men. Washington recorded a single instance of a chance encounter with "thirty odd Indians," that occasioned an opportunity to witness a war dance. Otherwise it appears that George was put to work, as he mentioned in his diary helping Genn in the task of "Laying Lots," and setting a "Boundary Line," the basic functions of a surveyor. George was being instructed in the proper methodology of a career he knew only from the copy-book practice of his adolescence, and one that held specific utility to William Fairfax.

George William and Washington departed from Genn's survey in early April, complaining that the difficulties of it had left them "all exhausted." They dined in Fredericks Town within a few days of their departure, shortly thereafter retiring to their respective homes. Washington's diary entries demonstrated that the young man found the day-to-day realities of surveying initially unappealing, though he had gained a valuable experience. Genn's instructions provided a foundation beyond

18 Diaries, 1:10, Ibid, Entry for Tuesday 15th.
19 Diaries, 1:13, Ibid, Entry for Wednesday 23rd.
20 Diaries, 1:16, Ibid, Entry for Wednesday 30th.
21 Diaries, 1:19, Ibid, Entry for Saterday 9th.
22 Diaries, 1:22-23, Ibid, Entries for Monday 11th & Wednesday the 13th. of April 1748.
Washington's informal education from which to construct a proper skill set for surveying. More importantly, the expedition indicated that William Fairfax considered George in reference to the profession, and was demonstrating a willingness to provide opportunities for his education.

The Fairfax family continued to take part in westward land speculation in the aftermath of the 1745 Privy Council decision to affirm Lord Thomas Fairfax's immense 5,282,000 acre royal grant. By 1748, a concerted effort to place the family in a central position to control the developing town of "Belhaven, on the Potomac, above Hunting Creek," had reached fruition. The General Assembly in Virginia agreed on the establishment of a new town, Alexandria, in May 1749, and placed all three Fairfax men, Lord Thomas, Colonel Fairfax, and George William, amongst the trustees. Lawrence was added in 1750.

George worked as an unofficial surveyor in the town, possibly as an assistant to the "regular Surveyor, John West, Jr." William Fairfax allowed George to contribute to the scheme by having him develop a plan for the lots in the town, an exercise that would have tested his abilities considerably. George's layouts were incorporated into Fairfax's planning, as mentioned in a letter between Lawrence and the Colonel in 1749. It is noteworthy that the entirety of George's experiences as a surveyor was provided as opportunities from William Fairfax.

23 Freeman, George Washington: A Biography, 1:188.
Lawrence Washington stood at a heightened level of significance in reference to the Fairfax interest; his communications with the Colonel concerning the planning of Alexandria and his later addition to the board of trustees underscored his greater importance. George's employment as an unofficial surveyor demonstrated his utility as a minor but reliable agent to the Fairfax interest. Lawrence however stood as a significant partner alongside the Colonel, as his addition to the board of trustees underscored his greater importance. George's status as a useful and productive agent for the Fairfax family continued through his later teenage years, and his reliability won him several direct benefits.

In mid-1749 George Washington "received a commission from the president and masters of the College of William and Mary appointing him surveyor of the newly formed Culpeper County;" he was only seventeen years old. The position required "a lengthy apprenticeship" as well as the accumulation of a "considerable experience running surveys." Washington possessed neither, and it was likely the influence of William Fairfax that won him the post.28 Fairfax required loyal agents capable of aiding in the surveying and apportionment of the vast land grant awarded to the family by the Privy Council. It is even likely that William Fairfax personally retrieved the certification for the young man on one of his many trips to Williamsburg in 1749.29

28 Ferling, The Ascent of George Washington, 12-13. Though Ferling is the only one here quoted, the reality that William Fairfax intervened to guarantee Washington an official certification is a point agreed to by most of the modern biographers, from Douglas Southall Freeman to Ron Chernow.
29 PWC, 1:9. Fairfax is the only known acquaintance of Washington's who was physically capable of retrieving the certification from the capital during 1749 according to surviving records.
When George Washington approached the justices of Culpeper County on July 20, 1749 with his commission in hand, it was the first occasion upon which the direct patronage of his neighbors at Belvoir delivered an office into his neophyte grasp. Washington took the oaths of his office without ever attending a formal class or serving the requisite period of apprenticeship necessary for the position. He quickly entered his practice, surveying a tract of 400 acres for Richard Barnes on July 22. Through the end of the year Washington surveyed over 4,200 acres for sixteen clients, most within the Fairfax proprietary of the Northern Neck region. Washington's surveys rarely took place within Culpeper County, Barnes' is the only recorded instance, as he more often worked for the "Gentlemen of the Ohio Com[pany]," the group of interested benefactors that included Lawrence and the Fairfax. One of the noticeable constants of Washington's early surveys was their direct utility and benefit to the Fairfax interest.

Mary Ball Washington had intended for her son to become a land surveyor, however it was William Fairfax that had provided George advantageous opportunities to develop the necessary skills. Lawrence's desire to guarantee the advancement of his younger brother, combined with the influence of the individuals at his disposal at Belvoir Manor, created the earliest opportunity for Washington's social advancement. His career was intrinsically linked to the Fairfax interest, as he "received a steady stream of assignments that issued from the splendid portals of Belvoir." The Fairfax

---

30 PWC, 1:33. Footnote 5. Quoted from Howe, Historical Collections of Virginia, 237. As the editors of the PWC state, the original commission was held in the Library at William and Mary, where it was destroyed in the fire of 1859. There are no known remaining copies.
31 PWC, 1:20.
32 PWC, 1:45. Memorandum, 1749-1750.
tracts "covered small, easily measureable parcels that could be surveyed in a single
day," producing maximum profit for a minimum of effort. By October 20, 1750 at
the age of eighteen Washington purchased his first "four hundred and fifty three
acres" in Frederick County, granted directly by Lord Thomas Fairfax.

Henry Lee replaced George Washington as the official surveyor of Culpepper
County in November 1750. Washington's loss of the position likely stemmed from his
neglect of the county's residents, as well as the expansion of his own scope of
opportunities. Lacking the position and the official authority it carried, Washington
nonetheless continued to engage in surveys in numerous counties under the Fairfax
proprietary, indicating that "no one challenged the legitimacy of his work" while it
was done under the auspices of Lord Thomas Fairfax. Surveying packets were issued
from the "Proprietary land office at Belvoir," and addressed George directly, signed
by Colonel William or George William. The young Washington represented a loyal
agent in their speculative acreage deals, and he served himself best when he adhered
to and performed capably under the expectations of his neighbors at Belvoir.

George's utility to the Fairfax family would likely have remained limited to
his position as a trusted surveyor if not for the accelerated decline in his brother's
health. Lawrence had suffered from a persistent cough for many years. The cough
transformed from a nuisance into a major health issue in 1749, worrying Lawrence to
the point that he was forced "to relinquish his seat in the House of Burgesses," under

---

34 PWC, 1:47-48. Land Grant, from Thomas, Lord Fairfax.
35 PWC, 1:9-10.
the specter of a "telltale symptom of tuberculosis." Though concerned he retained his other positions until, finally in 1751, he ceded his position as Adjutant General in 1751 to his Deputy. Lawrence's coughing fits worsened, prompting an immediate search for a remedy. George dutifully postponed his surveying duties to look after his brother. Lawrence's ailment cost the Fairfaxes both Washingtons as the brothers set out for Barbados in September 1751, hoping that the warmer climate would improve Lawrence's health. George's departure from surveying Ohio Company tracts must have gone little noticed in comparison to the sudden absence of Virginia's Adjutant General and William Fairfax's son-in-law.

In Barbados, the Washingtons were the guests of Gedney Clarke, "a prominent Barbados merchant and planter," whom had married into the Fairfax family. Clarke's connection with the Fairfaxes, and his willingness to serve as host for Lawrence, demonstrated once more the far-reaching influence of the family at Belvoir. Initial word from a Dr. Hillary that Lawrence's ailment was "not so fixed but that a cure might be effectually made" produced short-lived hope that faded along with his health. George also fell ill on the trip, he was "strongly attacked with the small pox," in the middle of November, though his outbreak was mild and quickly abated. Though George mended, Lawrence's health did not.

The Barbados venture failed miserably. Lawrence's health remained in its deteriorating state. In a letter to William Fairfax, Lawrence declared, "This climate

---

38 Diaries, 1:25.
39 Diaries, 1:36. *Voyage to Barbados, Entry for 16 Nov.*
has not afforded the relief I expected from it," and instead considered a new trip to the Bermudas as an alternative. The singular boon gained by the excursion came in the form of George's successful recovery from small pox.

Financially strained without the normal income from his surveys, George was forced to return to Virginia in December 1751. The return voyage was not enjoyable, as he fell ill once more. Recovering before arrival, Washington stopped in Williamsburg before travelling home. Lawrence had provided his younger brother with "letters of reference to Robert Dinwiddie, the new lieutenant governor," and instructed him to introduce himself. Dinwiddie, a member of the Ohio Company and the former "Surveyor General of the Southern Colonies," was an old acquaintance of Lawrence's. Dinwiddie invited George to dine with him, likely inquiring after the health of his absentee Adjutant. Neither man could realize the importance the other would play in the development of their personal fortunes in the years to come. For the time however, it sufficed that a friend of the Fairfaxes and the brother of Lawrence Washington was made known to the new lieutenant governor.

George immediately returned to his surveying duties in February 1752, canvassing nearly 4,000 acres before the end of March. His finances rebounded quickly, and Washington accrued enough profit to warrant the purchase of a further 552 acres of land, this time in Frederick County. George was not one to retain a large sum of savings; he continuously placed his money to some useful expenditure.

40 Diaries, 1:33.
42 Freeman, George Washington: A Biography, 1:257.
43 PWC, 1:31.
most often in the procurement of land. In this practice he was mirroring Lawrence, seeking to establish his own stately manor after the fashion of Mount Vernon. Further copying the social attitudes of his elder brother, George sought to emulate his rise in Virginia's social hierarchy through his own marriage into a wealthy family.

Dismissed as an exercise in "adolescent idiocy" by biographer James Thomas Flexner, Washington's youthful poetry demonstrates an early attention to the women in his sphere, and his numerous attempts to gain their attention and affection. As of May 1752 Washington's gaze had fallen upon Elizabeth Fauntleroy. William Fauntleroy, her father, owned an impressive 1,000 acre estate on the Rappahannock and had served as a Justice of the Peace and in the House of Burgesses; a marriage there would have increased Washington's holdings considerably. Betsy seemingly rejected the youth however, as is apparent in his address to her father William. Claiming distraction from business in Frederick County and weakened health, George declared his intentions to continue his pursuit of a "revocation of the former, cruel sentence," he had received in her rejection. The sentence was upheld, and Washington failed in his attempts, though it is noteworthy that he was demonstrating a measured apprehension of the social utility found in marriage.

As George sought to advance himself after the image of his elder brother, Lawrence's deterioration began to rapidly advance. Referring to himself as a "criminal condemned, though not without hopes of reprieve," his confidence in finding a cure in either Barbados or the Bermudas dwindled. Lawrence next declared

"The unhappy state of health which I labor under makes me uncertain as to my return [to Virginia]. If I grow worse I shall hurry home to my grave."46 Lawrence was becoming increasingly aware that his short life was coming to an end, finally returning to Virginia in June "with his death sentence written on his face."47 His thoughts immediately turned to placing his affairs in order.

Lawrence immediately began the slow process of earmarking specific tracts of lands and financial holdings to members of his family and discharging his duties. As a trustee of the town of Alexandria, a stock holder in the Ohio Company, and the Adjutant of the Virginia Militia, as well as holder of inherited lands from his father and his own properties the task was not inconsiderable. Lawrence successfully transferred "three lots in Fredericksburg" he held under his father's will to George, and hastily completed his own will before finally passing away on July 26, 1752.48 Amongst the executors named by Lawrence were Colonel William Fairfax, George William Fairfax, and George Washington.49

One of the more notable clauses of Lawrence's will was a stipulation that in the event of the untimely deaths of both Lawrence's wife and daughter without heir, George was to inherit everything. Issued from the "natural love and affection" Lawrence bore his brother the clause was an overt recognition that George stood almost as a son to him, second only to Anne and Sarah in love of family.50 At the time

46 Freeman, George Washington: A Biography, I:263.
of its writing neither Lawrence nor George could have predicted the early passing of both. George would become the master of Mount Vernon before long.

Lawrence's death caused immediate repercussions within the political arena in which he so capably served the Fairfax interest. William Fairfax and Governor Dinwiddie sought to retain Lawrence's services literally until he vacated his offices upon death. He remained listed under the "Commission of the peace...for Fairfax County," by the Governor's Council as late as June 11, 1752.51 Most importantly was Lawrence's position as Adjutant General of the Virginia Militia. Though George Muse had discharged the duties of the office since at least the fall of 1751, it remained officially Lawrence's until his death.

Discussions concerning the disposition of the Adjutancy had taken place within the Governor's Council by "the early spring of 1752."52 In session November 6, 1752, the Council held that "finding by Experience the Insufficiency of one, fully to discharge a Business of so much Importance, it was proposed and agreed to divide the Colony into four Districts."53 Numerous considerations likely attributed to the decision; however dissatisfaction with Lawrence's services could not be realistically amongst them. Lawrence's record from 1751 until his death was one of rampant absenteeism, an inability to discharge his duties, and a total reliance upon George Muse to ensure the proper conduct of the office. The Council retained a legitimate recourse, in either requesting Lawrence's resignation or outright replacing him with

---

51 Va. Exec. JLS., V:400.
52 PWC, I:51, Footnote 3.
Muse, by citing his failing health. However, the records demonstrate no indication that the Council was prepared to replace Lawrence so long as he still drew breath.

The Adjutancy of the Virginia Militia was a non-commissioned rank tasked with "instructing the Officers and Soldiers in the Use and Exercise of their Arms in bringing the Militia to a more regular Discipline, and fitting it for Service." The office carried with it a colonial rank of Major and an annual salary of £100.\textsuperscript{54} It served a logistical purpose during conflicts; the officer would raise and train the militia. These conflicts most often amounted to responding, far too late for direct action, to reports of Indian raids on the frontier. In the interim between conflicts the Adjutancy represented a £100 salary and a modicum of public recognition.

Dinwiddie and the Council determined to divide the Adjutancy into four separate posts, each attached to a geographic district in Virginia. The move represented an attempt by the Governor to multiply the influence of his patronage after the loss of such a stalwart advocate to the Governor's Council as Lawrence Washington. To replace Lawrence the Council appointed four men; Thomas Bentley "for the Frontier District," William Fitzhugh "for the Northern Neck and Eastern Shore," and George Muse for "the Middle Neck." The final nominee, "for the Southern District," was George Washington.\textsuperscript{55} At the age of twenty, with absolutely no military experience, no training as an officer and a career as a land surveyor, to argue Washington was grossly unqualified for the position would have been an understatement.

\textsuperscript{54} Va. Exec. JLS., V:412. 
\textsuperscript{55} Va. Exec. JLS., V:412-413.
The retention of George Muse as an Adjutant was a testament to his success as Lawrence's Deputy. The selection of William Fitzhugh to serve in the most politically important region, including the counties of "Westmoreland, King George, Stafford, Prince William, [and] Fairfax," also fit perfectly with his perceived potential.\textsuperscript{56} A compatriot of Lawrence's from the Cartagena campaign, Fitzhugh was a military veteran, member of an influential family, and held a seat in the House of Burgesses.\textsuperscript{57} In comparison his political resume matched Lawrence's the most. George was the odd man out, the only candidate without a professional resume. Only a personal connection to the Governor or Council could explain his presence.

George retained contacts with only two individuals on the Council, Governor Dinwiddie and William Fairfax. Of the two, only the venerable old Colonel Fairfax retained enough familiarity and contact with George to conceivably put his name into contention. It would require the political influence of Fairfax to overcome the obvious, and deserved, reservations the inclusion of a twenty year old neophyte to replace Lawrence Washington and serve beside military veterans elicited. Without authoritative support George could not hope to have succeeded in his bid to become Adjutant.

George's bid to succeed his late brother apparently began before Lawrence's death, and perhaps upon his instruction. Henry Cabot Lodge was one of the earliest Washington biographers to notice that Lawrence had invited two men, George Muse and Jacob Van Braam, to Mount Vernon for the express purpose of grooming his

\textsuperscript{56} Va. Exec. JLS., V:413.
\textsuperscript{57} PWC, 1:51, Footnote 1.
brother. Deputy Adjutant Muse instructed George in the "art of war, tactics, and the manual of arms." Van Braam, a Dutch swords master and sometimes mercenary, taught "fencing and sword exercise." These short lessons represented the totality of George's training, though Lawrence was likely aware they were enough.

Lawrence and William Fairfax had attempted to align George's future along a martial path in 1748; they failed. Mary Ball Washington's refusal to part with her eldest son afforded him a priceless opportunity, engagement as one of the Fairfax's most trusted clients. The patron-client relationship between George Washington and William Fairfax was evident in the former's elevation to Surveyor in Culpepper County. Receipt of favored surveys from the land office at Belvoir, signed by his good friend George William, testified to the continued integrity of that relationship. Loyalty, specifically the kind existing between patron and client connected George and the Fairfax as much as familiarity and friendship.

Lawrence Washington understood that his time was coming to an end in early 1752, just as he likely understood that his passing would create a distinct opportunity. George could be confident in his political connections; few twenty year olds could consider themselves the personal friends of one of the more influential members of the Governor's Council. Attaching Muse and Van Braam to George's sphere of acquaintances placed two veteran military men, and more importantly two of Lawrence's political allies, at his brother's disposal. Lawrence ensured, to the best of his remaining ability, that George had the resources to launch himself into the

military, if he chose to do so. Considering the strength of their relationship, a compelling motivation for George to realize the lost potential of his brother, as he described him, this "young man of most promising talents," quickly manifested itself.59

George Washington launched his first campaign for self-advancement on June 10, 1752. He utilized Virginia's patronage system of influence and reputation to his advantage, addressing a letter directly to Governor Dinwiddie as a known friend of William Fairfax and the brother of the late-Adjutant. George declared his intention to seek nomination for one of the District Adjutancy positions, specifically requesting the preferred position of the Northern Neck. George was fully aware of William Fitzhugh's appointment for the position. He purposefully aligned himself as a competitor to Fitzhugh's candidacy thanks to a vital piece of information. George had learned of a deficiency in his competition's credentials. Fitzhugh had married Ann Frisby Rousby of Maryland in 1752, and would be required to shift his permanent residence to Maryland. He could retain the Adjutancy only if the Council approved of his retaining a "partial residence" in Stafford County.60

George's appeal to Governor Dinwiddie reads as a carefully crafted political act. First, he took pains to identify Fitzhugh's residency issues as an impediment to his discharging the office's duties. Remarking that even Fitzhugh considered it unlikely that the Council would overlook his residency dilemma ("if he can obtain it [the post] on the terms he proposes; which he hardly expects will be granted Him...")

60 PWC, 1:51. Footnote 1.
George immediately declared his intention for the position. Deferential in his demeanor he properly offered personal loyalty in exchange for the rank; "If I could have the Honour of attaining that, in case Colo. Fitzhugh does not...[I] should take the greatest pleasure in punctually obeying, from time to time, your Honour's commands."61

Deference to a potential patron came naturally from George's pen as he seemingly understood how to clothe his solicitous requests in a self-deprecating and supplicating manner. Declaring that "I am sensible my best endeavors will not be wanting," he closed by defraying his requests stating "could I presume Your Honour had not in view a more deserving Person I flatter myself I should meet with the approbation of the Gentlemen of the Council."62 Washington was at once direct in his ambition to attain the Adjutancy of the Northern Neck, sharp in his engagement with the deficiencies of his direct competition, and properly respectful in communication with his superior. He masterfully maneuvered within the dictums of patron-based politics, demonstrating an astute political character.

George received a commission as Adjutant General of the Southern District, with the accompanying rank of Major, December 13, 1752.63 Though he failed to attain his chosen post, his success in the lobby was impressive. Lacking any experience to buttress his application, Washington benefitted from his attachment and friendship to the influential William Fairfax. Fairfax, a highly respected member of

63 PWC, 1:53. Though the actual letter containing the commission is missing from the collections (see the footnote in the citation for an explanation of the exact date), the extant nomination and description of Washington's new position is found in the November 3, 1752 Executive Journal entry.
the Governor's Council, likely exerted his immense political clout in Washington's favor. That George represented a potential replacement to Lawrence in the Fairfax interest probably influenced his decision.\footnote{One of the few points of nearly unanimous consensus within the modern Washington historiography is that Fairfax exercised some informal pressure on Governor Dinwiddie to guarantee Washington's selection. Beyond a single dinner in December of 1751 with the Governor, George was a complete unknown to the other members of the Council. As a twenty year old land surveyor who's greatest reputation at the time was a local recognition of his ability to ride well, to argue, as early biographers had, that Washington was selected due to his innate talents is purely teleological and unrealistic.}

Virginia's Adjutancy was a political sinecure, essentially a tool for the Governor to reward loyal agents of his interests. Lawrence Washington retained both his rank and salary as Adjutant for the duration of his absence. George Washington likewise retained both his rank and salary despite times of neglect for the counties under his jurisdiction. Douglas Southall Freeman acknowledged that despite a decision by the Governor to hold a general muster for the militia in September 1753, "surviving records show," that Washington "did not visit in 1753 any of the Counties under his care."\footnote{Freeman, \textit{George Washington: A Biography}, 1:269-270.} The Adjutancy was perfunctory in nature, and Washington treated it accordingly.

Lawrence's death motivated George to engage in a rapid advancement of his own political fortunes. Alongside his lobby for the Adjutancy he also pursued membership in a new Masonic Lodge in Fredericksburg. George paid an initiation fee of "£2, 3s" on November 4, 1752 and was inducted as an "Entered Apprentice" in the Masonic Order.\footnote{Freeman, \textit{George Washington: A Biography}, 1:267.} By the fall of 1753 George had attained the status of "Master
Mason" at the new lodge. In combination with his own estate, the Adjutancy, and his newfound membership Washington was compiling a respectable resume as a member of Virginia's developing elite. If he were patterning himself after Lawrence only three things were missing: public recognition for military heroism, a seat in the Burgesses, and marriage into a financially and politically relevant family.

Lawrence's career served as a model of advancement for Washington. However, George did not meet with the immediate successes enjoyed by his late brother. Despite successfully attaining a rank beyond his qualifications, George wore his disappointment in failing to attain the Northern Neck district openly. Convinced that Fitzhugh's residency dilemma should have disqualified him for the Adjutancy of the Northern Neck, George persisted in his lobby for the position after Fitzhugh's installation as Adjutant. By February 1753 Washington had engaged in a second writing campaign, this time directed at members of the Governor's Council.

William Nelson, President of the Governor's Council, was the initial target of the renewed campaign. On February 12, 1753 he received a letter in which George expressed "a Desire to be removed to the Adjutancy of the Northern Neck," and very likely included a deferential plea for support. Nelson responded positively, saying "I think the Thing so reasonable that I wish you may succeed," though he warned Washington of the pending application of two other qualified candidates. Nelson committed himself to supporting the request, rather ironically claiming, "Reason I

68 PWC, 1:55. 1753 Letter Note Found: Washington's Letter to William Nelson is missing from the collection, and we are only aware of its existence due to Nelson's passing reference to its date and contents.
hope will always prevail at the Board over Interest & Favour," before declaring "upon which Principle You may expect all the Service that can be done in you in the Affair by the Secretary," as well as himself.\(^69\) The Secretary was Thomas Nelson, William's brother and fellow member of the Governor's Council.\(^70\)

Washington had been a beneficiary of William Fairfax's political machinations for years, beginning when George was fourteen. Now, at the age of twenty, Major Washington had successfully attracted the attention and support of William and Thomas Nelson, and positioned himself as a significant officer under Governor Dinwiddie. Together Washington counted three of the ten regular Council members and the Governor as individuals he felt comfortable directly addressing concerning his personal advancement. Despite Washington's newfound patrons however Fitzhugh retained possession of the Northern Neck for the remainder of the year. As late as October 27, 1753 Washington's official title remained, "George Washington Esq. Adjutant for the Southern District."\(^71\) At some time before August 1754 he did receive his desired post, though by that point Washington's relationships with the members of the Governor's Council had changed drastically.\(^72\)

At the age of twenty-one George Washington had successfully lobbied for and received a political post carrying both social and political relevancy; Major and Adjutant General of the Militia, Mason, and master of over 4,000 acres, he was

\(^70\) PWC, 1:55. Footnote 3.
\(^71\) Va. Exec. JLS., V:444.
\(^72\) PWC, 1:192-193. Letter to Robert Dinwiddie, August 21, 1754. Washington makes explicit mention of sharing his duties "for the Northern Neck." It is not known when he supplanted Fitzhugh, however it was likely during the Virginia Regiment's Ohio Expedition.
situated as a member of Virginia's gentry class.\textsuperscript{73} Public perception slowly built as one of his major concerns, and he placed considerable emphasis into building an appropriate image. Fashion served as one means of controlling his image, and Washington began issuing detailed instructions on the make of his clothing to the point of determining the number of button holes to appear on his lapel.\textsuperscript{74} What Washington lacked, and what he sought, was a distinction beyond that of a common planter or holder of a middling political office. What he required, and what Lawrence had benefitted greatly from, was a war.

On April 12, 1753 Governor Dinwiddie convened the Council, with William Fairfax and the Nelsons in attendance, to receive a report from William Trent, an Ohio Company Agent operating in the Ohio territories. Trent reported that he had lost "one Dennis Reardon and his Man" to an attack by the "French or their Indians." Dinwiddie convened the meeting to stress what he perceived as an aggressive trend from French influence in the Ohio region, one that threatened, amongst other things, the integrity of Ohio Company interests and Virginia's border security. William Fairfax volunteered and was appointed as a special ambassador to the loyal Indians of the region to determine the seriousness of a possible French threat.\textsuperscript{75}

\textsuperscript{73} Freeman, \textit{George Washington: A Biography}, 1:269. Freeman points out that in combination with his holdings in the Deep Run Tract, Ferry Farm, and his purchases in Frederick County and the Shenandoah Valley Washington by the age of twenty one held legal control of 4,291 acres of land. Not too long after he would add to that total the 2,500 acre Mount Vernon Estate.

\textsuperscript{74} WWR, 17. Design for a Coat, 1749-1750.

\textsuperscript{75} Va. Exec. Jls., 419-420.
Fairfax's return report reinforced Dinwiddie's concerns. The French "Governor of Canada" had issued a threat to "extend the French Settlement on the Branches of the Mississippi," violating English sovereignty and more directly "prevent[ing] [English] Trade." Reinforcing those remarks were reports from other colonies that described a "formidable Number of French and their Indians" moving into the Ohio region. This information was confirmed by reports from the Governor of New York, reporting the sighting of "an Army of French and Indians" moving South.

The Ohio Country represented the largest available land that Virginian speculators could attain, both the Fairfax interest and the Ohio Company drew immense wealth from surveying, purchasing, and selling tracts from within its boundaries. The Council was heavily involved in the economic interest, in June 1753 it had granted leave to over a dozen influential Virginian gentry, including Councilmember Richard Corbin and Adjutant Fitzhugh, to "take up and survey," three tracts amounting to a total of 190,000 acres "on the Waters of the Mississippi." Fairfax's report indicated that the French, if serious in their declaration, would soon place that interest at risk.

The Governor's Council reconvened on October 22, 1753 to receive instructions from the Lord of Trade in England. Dinwiddie, Fairfax, and both William and Thomas Nelson were in attendance with the other council members. The Board of

---

Trade directly approved of Dinwiddie's desires to meet the French directly. "His Majesty," King George II approved the appropriation of "Thirty Cannon" to be placed in English forts "erected on the River Ohio as soon as the Nature of the Service will admit."79 The King's order for the creation of English Forts on the Ohio River mirrored the threat of the French Governor in Canada to establish a series of fortifications blocking English access to the Mississippi. The decision of the King and Board of Trade ensured the beginning of a conflict on Virginia's west border, unless proper diplomatic exchanges could be established to resolve the situation. At the next Council meeting, five days later, the Governor informed the members that "George Washington Esq. Adjutant General for the Southern District, had offered himself to" act as a special messenger to the French. His offer was accepted immediately.

How George had learned of the proceedings in the Council concerning the French controversy is unknown, though the timing of his offer to Governor Dinwiddie was entirely too perfect to be considered a coincidence. The conspicuous absence of William Fairfax on the Council at the October 27th meeting, as well as his appointment to the Committee overseeing Washington's diplomatic mission may lend credence to the notion that he informed the young man of the opportunity.80 However, it must also be noted that both Thomas and William Nelson had attended the meeting of October 22, and either could have relayed the proceedings.

It is a significant point to note that one cannot identify who informed Washington of the opportunity to meet the French because, as of 1753, he had

multiple political contacts at the highest echelons of Virginia's government. It is equally as possible that Governor Dinwiddie himself offered the opportunity in an attempt to secure the interest of his holdings in the Ohio Company. Indeed, many of Dinwiddie's political adversaries would later make that very charge concerning Washington's selection and later report.  

Major Washington had found an opportunity to gain a unique distinction in the eyes of the Governor's Council and the rest of the colony in his mission to the French. Completely bereft of any beneficial experience, questions concerning his selection were present. Washington claimed that he had offered himself to a post, "I believe few or none would have undertaken." In reality he had proactively offered himself for a post few if any were aware was then available. Political patronage certainly played a role in its attainment, and considering the relationship Washington enjoyed with William Fairfax, it is most likely the elder statesman had manipulated the French controversy to their mutual benefit. Interestingly, the appointment of Washington as special envoy placed William Fairfax as chairman over the influential committee overseeing the diplomatic exchange while concurrently placing Washington into direct contact with Council members Richard Corbin and Philip Ludwell. The young Major intelligently took note of these men, later identifying them as possible patrons and potential allies in his pursuit for higher rank.

Washington's trip to the Ohio region was equal parts diplomatic foray and strategic espionage. The official commission from Governor Dinwiddie declared

82 PWC, 1:352. Letter to Augustine Washington, August 2, 1755.
Washington, Governor Dinwiddie's "express messenger," with a limited mission to "deliver [his] Letter & Message" to the French Commandant and to wait upon an answer for no more than a single week.\textsuperscript{83} A companion letter outlined the private details of his purpose however. Washington was to contact the influential Native leader known as the Half King, Tanacharison, whom had spoken with the French Commandant personally, along with the sachems at the encampment of Logstown. He was to demonstrate Dinwiddie's public support of their alliance, and to ask for an appropriate military escort.\textsuperscript{84} The meeting with Tanacharison was planned in response to the increasing worries reported to the Governor's Council over Indian misgivings related to French incursions. Washington was to be the Governor's personal assurance to the allied tribes of a strong English alliance.

The secondary clause of Dinwiddie's letter contained detailed instructions as to specific subjects Washington was to gain detailed information on. The mixture of rumors concerning French encampments and fortifications in the Ohio originating from Ohio Company-man William Trent lacked specificity. Washington was to personally "enquire into the Numbers & Force of the French on the Ohio," their ability to draw reinforcements from Canada, and "the Difficulties & Conveniences of Communication, & the Time requir'd for it."\textsuperscript{85} He was also to discover what he could concerning "Forts the French have erected, & where; How they are Garrison'd & appointed, & what is their Distance from each other, & from Logstown." Major

\textsuperscript{83} PWC, 1:58. Commission from Robert Dinwiddie, October 30, 1753.
\textsuperscript{84} PWC, 1:60. Instructions from Robert Dinwiddie, October 30, 1753.
\textsuperscript{85} PWC, 1:60. Instructions from Robert Dinwiddie, October 30, 1753.
Washington was to utilize the protection of a diplomatic missive and an armed guard to outline the strategic, logistical, and tactical capabilities of the French forces.

George's expedition to the French Commandant was his first experience as a commander. Requiring a translator, George did not speak any foreign languages, he immediately engaged Jacob Van Braam for the duty. Together the pair travelled to Alexandria where they purchased the necessary supplies and hired a number of men and a pair of "Indian Traders." Amongst the hires was Christopher Gist, an Ohio Company Agent. Accompanied by Van Braam, his tutor and one of Lawrence's oldest allies, Washington gathered his small contingent and set out for the Indian stronghold of Logstown and the meeting with the Half King Tanacharison.

Washington kept a journal of his experiences throughout the journey, likely as the basis for the official report he undoubtedly would be required to present to the Governor and the Council upon his return. In comparison to his diary from 1747 one notices a far more mature and professional demeanor in George's writing. The complaints over frontier travel were no longer present. Perhaps informed by his unknown patron of the mutual desire of the King and Governor to establish English forts in the region, George detailed potential strategic locations for the situation of a fortification along the forks of the Alleghany and Monongahela rivers. His technical expertise as a surveyor proved immensely useful in such matters, allowing the otherwise considered novice to appear authoritative upon military matters.

86 WWR, 17. Journey to the French Commandant
87 Anderson, Crucible of War, 43.
88 WWR, 18. Journey to the French Commandant
At the age of twenty-one George Washington was entering the stage of international politics, carrying a rank and office owed to the efforts of his brother Lawrence and friend William Fairfax, and accompanied by one of Lawrence's most trusted veteran compatriots. George was filling the role that would have undoubtedly been Lawrence's had his elder brother survived his bout with tuberculosis. Instead, fortune and misfortune alike, paired with the influential interest of powerful factors had delivered a momentous opportunity for distinction and recognition into Washington's neophyte grasp.
"In a conversation at Green Spring you gave me some room to hope for a commission above that of a Major, and to be ranked among the chief officers of this expedition. The command of the whole forces I neither look for, expect, nor desire; for I must be impartial enough to confess, it is a charge too great for my youth and inexperience to be entrusted with. Knowing this I have too sincere a love for my country, to undertake that which may tend to the prejudice of it."

— George Washington to Richard Corbin, April/March 1754

By 1754 George Washington had developed an astute capability to utilize a deferential and disinterested persona to cloak his ambitious pursuit of political preferment and public recognition under the patronage of William Fairfax and Governor Dinwiddie. Though that persona remained in its early stages of development during the mission as a special envoy to the French in 1753, Washington promoted the maintenance of his public character as a core concern of his career. Disinterested service, deferential interactions with his patrons, manipulation of patronage ties, and a professional presentation formed the core strategies of a concerted political campaign of self-advancement that began in earnest with Lawrence's death. Utilizing the nascent version of that persona to great effect in attaining the Adjutancy of the Northern Neck, and again in being appointed special envoy, Washington rarely encountered failure in his early political lobbies.

The initial objective of his mission to the French entailed a diplomatic entreaty to the sachems of the Six Nations. Logstown, an Indian stronghold and settlement in the Ohio Country, would host the meeting. Surprisingly the first to arrive were a band of deserters from the French army. Washington capably engaged

---

1 PWC, 1:351-354. Letter to Richard Corbin, April/March 1754.
the men for information, receiving a detailed description of an imposing French force as his boon. The Major learned that the French position in the region was well established; four fortifications with their attendant companies of thirty or forty men each and an arsenal of cannons forming a defensive line to the west. A mobile offensive force of thirty-five additional companies was stationed at a superiorly armed fort in New Orleans. Washington entered the conference at Logstown under orders to reiterate British claims of superiority in the area, with the full knowledge that a force of over fifteen hundred French soldiers defended the same claims from the French Governor of Canada.

Tanacharison, styled the Half King as he professed suzerainty over the region, was the first chief to arrive at Logstown. He left an indelible impression on the young Washington as virulently anti-French and headstrong. The Half King regaled the Virginians with his account of personally confronting the French Commandant. Labeling the French "the Disturber in this Land" he dismissed their diplomatic overtures to the tribes as disingenuous diplomatic musings. Washington found Tanacharison's description of the Commandant's reply directly related to his mission; rebuffing the Half King as a nuisance, a "Mosquito; for Indians are such as those," he threatened war in the Ohio Region. Claiming the command of "Forces sufficient" to overcome any resistance and "tread under my Feet all that stand in Opposition

---

together with their Alliances," the Commandant voiced a threat that mirrored Governor Dinwiddie's suspicions. 4

The Commandant's remarks carried the clear implication that he was prepared to contest with both the Six Nations as well as their British allies if he met with resistance in the Ohio Region or along the Mississippi. The information gained from the deserters confirmed that he commanded forces capable of enforcing that decree. Fearing the consequences of Tanacharison's exchange, Washington sought an immediate conference with the other sachems. He hoped to accelerate the pace of his mission, and speak with the French directly.

The conference at Logstown proved to be an exercise in delay; Washington was forced to wait until the next day to address the sachems. Eventually gaining an audience he declared the purpose of his mission of "great Importance" and sought both their "Advice & Assistance." The Major directly requested a guide to direct him to the French, provisions for the journey, and warrior to provide an armed escort. 5 The requests, if acceded to, would represent a political statement of serious ramifications were Washington to arrive at Fort LeBoeuf flanked by the united representatives of the Six Nations and their warriors. Tanacharison immediately declared his intention to accompany Washington. He sought a ceremonial break with the French, and required the delivery of a certain Speech-belt of Wampum for that

5 WWR, 22. Journey to the French Commandant.
purpose. The delay of a day for its arrival reinforced the reticence of the other sachems; they refused to issue an immediate decision.\textsuperscript{6}

Major Washington's mission called for expediency, and though Tanacharison's support was a vindication of a shared animosity for the French, the delay of the other sachems was cause for concern. Washington pressed, perhaps impoliticly, to depart with Tanacharison without a final deliberation and without the Speech-belt. The Half King however proved intractable, refusing to consent to the Major. Washington, for his part, proved incapable of reasoning with him, finding it "impossible to get off without affronting him in the most egregious manner."\textsuperscript{7} This incongruence in the relationship between Washington and Tanacharison, the former's inability to gain any modicum of control over or concession from the latter, would prove a decisive disadvantage to the Virginian in the weeks and months ahead.

Concern for relations with the Six Nations kept the Virginian embassy stationed in Logstown for a further four days. The significance of the return of the Speech-Belts quickly dawned upon Washington, as it represented "the abolishing of Agreements; & giving this up was shaking of all Dependence upon the French."\textsuperscript{8} Washington perceived it as the symbolic gesture he had originally requested, an opportunity for the Six Nations to reaffirm their allegiance to the British. Deciding to patiently await their arrival, Washington spent the intervening time attempting to press the recalcitrant Tanacharison and other sachems for greater support.

\textsuperscript{6} WWR, 23. Journey to the French Commandant.
\textsuperscript{7} WWR, 23-24. Journey to the French Commandant.
\textsuperscript{8} WWR, 25. Journey to the French Commandant.
Washington departed from Logstown on October 30th. Through a number of discussions with Tanacharison and the other sachems he realized that the cause for the delay held more to do with the indecision and the apprehension of the Six Nations than any symbolic tradition. Tanacharison commanded only the Mingos; the Singess' sachem refused to support Washington's mission, ostensibly due to a sickness in the family. Washington was firmly convinced that the "sickness" from which they suffered was "fear of the French." Furthermore, despite Tanacharison's vehement support the remaining sachems only authorized "three of their Chiefs," including the Half King, "with one of their best hunters," to accompany the embassy. Despite a promising beginning, Washington withdrew from Logstown after nearly a week of delays with only a handful of allies, and the selection of the Half King as principle representative of the Six Nations. He had gained little more than a token gesture of indifference.

The group arrived at the Indian town of Venango on December 4th, knowing of a small detachment of French stationed there. Washington met with the French commander, Captain Joncaire, without Tanacharison in attendance. The attempt to separate the Indians and the French was deliberate, as Washington did not extend the Captain's invitation to attend dinner to Tanacharison and the other chiefs. Wine was plentiful during the meal, and George's usual reluctance to partake of it in respectable company served him well. Before long the alcohol "soon banished the restraint which at first appeared in their conversation." The French openly avowed their "absolute

---

Design to take Possession of the Ohio," and their fervent belief that success was assured due to the "too slow & dilatory" preparations of the British.\textsuperscript{10}

Educated in deferential restraint in the midst of respectable company, either through childhood recitations of the \textit{Maxims of Civility} or his own experiences at Belvoir Manor, George Washington's ability to remain in control of his own faculties proved his greatest asset during his interactions with the French. Confirmation of the French designs, as well as of the size and scope of French forces in the region, fulfilled the greater part of Dinwiddie's instructions. All that remained was to address the French Commandant. Tanacharison, however, proved to be distraction.

Joncaire became aware of the Indians' presence the next day, relaying to Washington his concern that he "did not make free to bring him in before." Tanacharison's recent exchange with a French officer likely gave pause to the idea of introducing the two men, however he had little choice. Demonstrating an advanced grasp of Indian-relations and the politics of the Ohio Region, Washington recognized Joncaire as a "Person of very great influence among the Indians," and an individual that "had lately used all possible means to draw" the interest and support of the Six Nations "over to their [the French] interest." Joncaire plied Tanacharison and his allies with talk, "trifling Presents," and most importantly "applied Liquors so fast, that they were soon rendered incapable of the Business they came about notwithstanding the Caution" he had recommended.\textsuperscript{11} Washington was in the midst of his first conflict

\textsuperscript{10} WWR, 26. Journey to the French Commandant.
\textsuperscript{11} WWR, 27. Journey to the French Commandant.
with the French, and Tanacharison was more amenable to wine than to the young Virginian's advice.

Sober, Tanacharison approached Washington the next day ready to proceed with the business at hand. Joncaire attended his guests, and listened intently as Tanacharison reiterated his accusations against the French. At this juncture however he presented the Captain with the Speech Belt, a ritualistic severing of ties that was lacking from the original exchange. Whereas the French commander had demanded Tanacharison return the Belt in order to recognize his intentions, Joncaire tactfully declined to receive it.12

Joncaire immediately returned to his previous attempts at building a relationship with the Indians, and Washington felt it necessary to send his own interpreter, John Davison, with the explicit instructions "not to be out of their company." As the group prepared to depart for the final meeting with the French Commandant, Washington found it increasingly difficult to convince his Indian allies to accompany him. Eventually it required "great persuasion" on the part of his guide Christopher Gist to separate the chiefs and the French.13 Washington was increasingly aware of the danger represented in the ease by which Joncaire separated him from Tanacharison. His inability to compel restraint from his allies would represent a challenge as they entered Fort LeBoeuf.

Captain Jacques Legardeur de Saint-Pierre, the Commandant of the French forces in the Ohio, received Major Washington and Tanacharison courteously at Fort

LeBoeuf in December. Tactfully he requested they await the arrival of a Captain Riparti, commander of a nearby fort, before Washington delivered his missive.\textsuperscript{14} The young Major recognized the delay for its true purpose, as he found "many Plots concerted to retard the Indians business, & prevent them from returning with me."\textsuperscript{15} Aware of the designs, Washington "endeavored all in my power to frustrate their schemes."\textsuperscript{16} At the same time he took the delay as an opportunity to survey the fortifications. He recorded a detailed blueprint of Fort LeBoeuf in his Journal, including the sizes of the palisades, number and location of cannon mountings, "Doctor's Lodgings, & the Commander's private Store."\textsuperscript{17}

Commandant Legardeur proved very capable in his diplomatic entreaties to the Indians; Tanacharison reported to the young Washington that the Frenchman had likewise refused the Speech-Belt. Instead, he had protested the act, making "many fair Promises of Love & Friendship." Legardeur declared his intentions to "live in Peace & trade amicably" with the Six Nations, in proof of which he dispatched an officer with various "Goods" to Logstown.\textsuperscript{18} In bringing Tanacharison and the other chiefs along Washington had created an opportunity for the French to rebuild their relationship with the Six Nations, as well as test the integrity of their loyalty to the British.

After delivering Dinwiddie's letter Washington found the expediency of Legardeur's reply suspicious. The Commandant reiterated, perhaps more

\textsuperscript{14} WWR, 28. Journey to the French Commandant.
\textsuperscript{15} WWR, 29-30. Journey to the French Commandant.
\textsuperscript{16} WWR, 30. Journey to the French Commandant.
\textsuperscript{17} WWR, 29. Journey to the French Commandant.
\textsuperscript{18} WWR, 30. Journey to the French Commandant.
diplomatically, the same claims presented to Tanacharison as threats from the previous Commandant and included a veiled threat declaring his authorization to defend the possessions from British incursion. Thusly answered, the bluntness and speed of the reply beckoned Washington to begin his return journey to Williamsburg immediately. Tanacharison's party however sought to remain as the French continued to lavish a number of gifts upon the Indians.

Washington recognized the redoubled efforts of the French to separate Tanacharison from his own departure. His inability to compel his allies to accompany him brought forth great "Anxiety" in the young Major. He understood that "leaving...[Tanacharison] here" would provide the French "the Opportunity they aimed at" to intensify their designs. Tanacharison however sought to remain, if only for a short while longer. Consenting from lack of any tactic to reverse the Half King's decision, Washington relented for the moment, and instead determined to set the group onto the return path the next day.¹⁹

The limitations of Washington's influence became apparent in the next few days. Finally successful in detaching his allies from the French interest at Fort LeBoeuf the group travelled uneventfully until they reached Venango. White Thunder, one of the chiefs, injured himself and became "sick & unable to walk."²⁰ The Indian party determined to remain in Venango until White Thunder healed, and upon further investigation Washington found that Tanacharison "intended to stay a day or two." Incapable of delaying his mission any further the young Major was

unable to remain with his allies, leaving them once more to the designs of Captain Joncaire.\textsuperscript{21} Hoping that Tanacharison's personal hatred for the French would counteract the Captain's wine, Washington set out for Williamsburg without his allies.

Washington returned to Virginia on January 11, 1754 and immediately travelled to Belvoir Manor, the home of the Fairfax family. The young Major wrote in his journal the purpose of the visitation was simply "to take necessary rest."\textsuperscript{22} The proximity of his own home indicates that once again the young man was demonstrating his affinity for the Fairfax family, if not specifically a certain member of that group. Samuel Elliot Morrison's theories concerning the boy's emotional state conjures images of the young man proudly regaling the details of his journey to Sally Fairfax in an attempt to impress upon her his newfound worldly achievements. Washington travelled to Williamsburg the next day to meet with the Governor's Council.

Dinwiddie convened the Governor's Council on January 21st to review the response from Commandant Legardeur, of Washington's known political allies only William and Thomas Nelson were in attendance.\textsuperscript{23} The Frenchman's absolute rejection of the summons to retreat firmly aligned with the Governor's own designs. The Governor had retained a British vessel, the \textit{Speedwell}, at port pending the return of Washington and his missive. The \textit{Speedwell} immediately set sail for London,

\textsuperscript{21} WWR, 32. Journey to the French Commandant.
\textsuperscript{22} WWR, 34. Journey to the French Commandant.
bearing letters to the Board of Trade.\textsuperscript{24} The Governor's chosen course of action was clear, Virginia was preparing for armed conflict.

Washington received praise from an unexpected source in reference to the mission to Fort LeBoeuf. Commandant Legardeur spoke highly of the Major's "Quality, and great Merit."\textsuperscript{25} It was a point upon which the Governor and his council agreed. In consideration of the French maneuvers in the Ohio, as well as their stated aim to remain, the Council recommended "his Honour to order a Draught of One Hundred Men out of the Militia in the Counties of Frederick, and Augusta."\textsuperscript{26} Frederick and Augusta counties were within the Frontier District of Adjutant Thomas Bentley; normally Bentley would assume command of militiamen raised within those regions.\textsuperscript{27} Ignoring the nominal district commander, the Council instead advised the appointment of the "chief Command be given to Major Washington."\textsuperscript{28}

During his mission to the French Washington recognized that Joncaire and Legardeur had treated Tanacharison and the chiefs of the Six Nations as pawns in a greater political drama. His best efforts had blunted the French designs throughout his journey. One wonders if Washington was likewise capable of recognizing that Governor Dinwiddie was now employing him in much the same manner. The Council advised Dinwiddie to reconvene the prorogued Assembly early in February to force a

\textsuperscript{24} PWC, 1:63, Editorial Note.
\textsuperscript{26} Va. Exec. Jls., 5:460.
\textsuperscript{27} Va. Exec. Jls., 5:412.
vote on monetary support for Washington's mission and gain authorization for the raising of a larger force.\textsuperscript{29} Dinwiddie faced numerous impediments to that design.

The Governor and the leaders of the Assembly remained deadlocked on the pistole fee controversy throughout the French crisis. Dinwiddie was technically entitled to collect a single pistole, approximately sixteen shillings, as a fee for "setting his seal and signature on patents for lands granted from the King's domain." The House of Burgesses had traditionally blocked the collection of the fee on the grounds that it violated their authority as the sole "representatives of the freeholders" with the sole right to consent to the levy of a tax. Dinwiddie refuted tradition and had sought to collect the fee through the fiat of executive prerogative.\textsuperscript{30} Understandably, the Burgesses would not consent to award the Governor further monetary funds unless he demonstrated a clear and necessary impetus for their appropriation.

Dinwiddie utilized Major Washington's Journal and the French Commandant's response as a political tool to force the hand of the Burgesses. To the chagrin of the young man whom would spend his life editing and revising even his most basic letters, the sudden publication of his Journal represented an unwelcome surprise. Allotted a single day to prepare his writings for general publication, he affixed a hurried preface to its pages:

"As it was thought advisable by his Honour the Governor to have the following Account of my Proceedings to and from the French on Ohio, committed to Print; I think I can do no less than apologize, in some Measure, for the numberless Imperfections of it."

\textsuperscript{29} Va. Exec. Jls., 5:460.
\textsuperscript{30} Anderson, \textit{Crucible of War}, 40.
There intervened but one Day between my Arrival in Williamsburg, and the Time for the Council's Meeting, for me to prepare and transcribe, from the rough Minutes I had taken from my Travels, this Journal; the writing of which only was sufficient to employ me closely the whole Time, consequently admitted of no Leisure to consult of a new and proper Form to offer it in, or to correct or amend the Diction of the old: Neither was I apprised, nor did in the least conceive, when I wrote this for his Honor's Perusal, that it ever would be published, or even have more than a cursory Reading; till I was informed, at the Meeting of the present General Assembly, that it was already in the Press.

There is nothing can recommend it to the Public but this. Those Things which came under the Notice of my own Observation, I have been explicit and just in a Recital of: -- Those which I have gathered from Report, I have been particular cautious not to augment, but collected Opinions of the several Intelligencers, and selected from the whole, the most probable and consistent account.  

George's preface served as an indicator of the growing concerns he paid to public perception of his abilities and character. Aware of the deficiencies in his writing, and fearful of the criticisms likely to come from them, Washington crafted a supplicating and deferential disclaimer. Avowing that the hurried nature of the Journal's publication presented a ragged and unprofessional piece to the public, he laid the blame for its poor state on Dinwiddie's impatience. Implying his own efforts were cut short, Washington bluntly remarked that he wholeheartedly supported the substantive content of the text. The preface represented a measured effort by Washington at molding public perception of his abilities, a telltale sign of his attention to political imagery.

Dinwiddie informed the Council on February 14th that the Lords of Trade in England had recommended that the Governors of "Pennsylvania, Maryland, New

---

Hampshire, Massachusetts Bay, and New Jersey, send Commissioners to be joined with those of New York and Virginia," to "urge their respective Assemblies to make proper provision" for a meeting and alliance with the Six Nations. Colonial governments were to align themselves as a single unit with the Indians, a clear indication presaging a military alliance against the French. Virginia's House of Burgesses reconvened upon the same day, presented with Dinwiddie's arguments for the immediate appropriation of funds for the preservation of violated British sovereignty in the Ohio. Dinwiddie's missive was built principally from the intelligence gathered by Major Washington, and included his Journal alongside the reply from Commandant Legardeur as the principle pieces of evidence.

The Governor pressed the case against the French strenuously, catering to the Burgesses' patriotic sensibilities in defense of "the Dignity of the Crown," their resolve in being affronted and threatened by "Fifteen Hundred [French-]Men, with their Indians in Friendship with them," as well as their moral outrage at the detainment and imprisonment of their "Traders." Dinwiddie informed the Burgesses that his duty as the Crown's agent in Virginia would not abide him to stand by as "unjustifiable Insults of the French, the Cruel and barbarous Murder" of innocent settlers and traders, and other "Barbarities on our Fellow Subjects," were committed. Thus, Dinwiddie informed the members that he had taken proactive steps, including

---

33 JHB, 8:175.
34 JHB, 8:175.
the raising of the militia, orders to construct a British fortification "at the Forks of the Monongahela," and the establishment of a logistical center for munitions.\textsuperscript{35}

The centrality of Washington's Journal as a piece of evidence in Dinwiddie's appeal to the Burgesses vaulted the young man into a position of political significance hitherto unattained. Initially however, that position carried with it intense scrutiny. Writing in 1757 to the Earl of Loudoun John Campbell, Washington remarked that some individuals considered his reports "a Fiction." Specifically, he interpreted criticisms as paranoia that his Journal served a role in a greater "Scheme to promote the Interest of a Private Company (by many Gentlemen that had a share in Government)." Washington ascribed the dilatory decisions of the Burgesses to the "Incredulity and strange Infatuation" many perceived in the agreement between Governor Dinwiddie, the Ohio Company's interests, and his report.\textsuperscript{36}

Members of the Burgesses held ample reasons to doubt the veracity of Washington's Journal. A brief review of both his and the Governor's past actions demonstrated an obvious connection to Ohio Company interests. William Trent, the Ohio Company agent whom had complained on numerous occasions of altercations between his men and French-allied Indians to the Governor's Council, was provided a commission as a Captain and empowered to "raise what Traders and other Men he can to annoy the Enemy."\textsuperscript{37} William Fairfax and Dinwiddie had sought a means to commission Trent with the authority to raise forces against the French as early as

\textsuperscript{35} JHB, 8:176.
\textsuperscript{36} PWC, 4:79.
August 1753; Washington’s report finally provided the legitimizing cause. Along with Trent numerous individuals attached to the Ohio Company found advantageous military commands awaiting them.

John Carlyle received appointment as the “Commissary of Provisions” in the same order that appointed Washington and Trent. Carlyle was an “Alexandria merchant and a member of the Ohio Company.” Furthermore, he enjoyed a close relationship to William Fairfax through his wife, Sarah Fairfax, the old Colonel’s daughter and the late Lawrence Washington’s sister-in-law. One could not look upon Carlyle’s appointment without the assumption that family and Company ties played a role. Reinforcing that notion was the revelation in Dinwiddie’s address to the Burgesses that Carlyle would operate for the time being from Alexandria, the Ohio Company venture the Fairfaxes and the Washington brothers helped establish.

The influence of William Fairfax and the connection between Washington's career and Ohio Company interests drew the attention of astute observers as well as that of Dinwiddie's political adversaries. Charges that interest and patronage had played a role in the selection of Company men as the chief military officers of the forthcoming expedition gained political traction. Accusations that Washington's Journal served as a repayment to the Governor and the Council for his elevation to Adjutant likewise prevailed in some circles. Washington recognized the source of the criticisms, though he rejected them entirely. Fortuitously the realities of the situation

---

40 PWC, 1:66. Footnote 5.
41 JHB, 8:176.
in the Ohio benefited Washington immensely, as he had essentially provided a legitimate reason for Virginia to fund an expedition guaranteeing the rights of the Ohio Company and the Fairfax proprietary. For their parts, Fairfax and Dinwiddie likely saw Washington as a loyal replacement for Lawrence, as the younger man had accomplished in a few short weeks what the interested factors of the Council had sought for years.

While Washington had provided Dinwiddie with the evidence required to seize the Ohio in defense of British rights, the Governor could not compel the Burgesses into action. Captain Joncaire’s intoxicated observation that the British often proved too “dilatory” in their attendance to matters of importance in the Ohio proved predictive. The House of Burgesses spent nearly a week in deliberations until finally authorizing £10,000 for the militia. The Burgesses also awarded Washington “Fifty Pounds...to testify our Approbation of his Proceedings on his Journey to the Ohio.”\(^{42}\) Though likely welcome, Washington sought something beyond a monetary reward for his service. Tasked with raising a force of militia to march out in defense of the fort he had recommended constructed on the Monongahela, the young Major shifted his attentions to a different arena.

Governor Dinwiddie had inexplicably placed Washington at a rate for a Captain’s pay of “8s per day” after his return to Williamsburg.\(^{43}\) He retained his rank of Major, as well as his post as Adjutant General, and assumedly his annual salary of £100. The reason for the discrepancy in Washington’s active duty pay is unknown.

\(^{42}\) JHB, 8:182-183.

\(^{43}\) WWF, 1:44. Footnote 2.
Dinwiddie had recently attempted to address the “very unequally proportioned” pay scale for the militia with the Burgesses, apparently without success. For the moment, it escaped Washington’s direct concern. Recognizing an opportunity, he instead attempted to translate his newfound political stature into self-advancement.

In a very forthright letter to Councilmember Richard Corbin he directly lobbied for an immediate promotion. Corbin apparently intimated a possibility for Washington to “be ranked among the chief officers of this expedition.” For his part, the young man sensibly rejected the notion of applying to the rank of Colonel; “The command of the whole forces is what I neither look for, expect nor desire; for I must be impartial enough to confess, it is a charge too great for my youth and inexperience to be entrusted with.” It is interesting to note that Washington cited his youth and inexperience as invalidating a command rank, whilst neither seemingly barred his application to serve as Major and Adjutant General a mere year earlier.

Washington’s letter to Corbin combined an ambition for advancement with a deferential and self-abasing commentary. Recognizing his own deficiencies he declared “I have too sincere a love for my country, to undertake that which may tend to the prejudice of it.” Despite fearing command of the forces could produce ill-effects for Virginia and Great Britain he continued, arguing that “under a skillful commander...[and] with my own application and diligent study of my duty, I shall be able to... render myself worthy of the promotion I shall be favored with now.”

---

44 JHB, 8:175.
45 PWC, 1:70. Letter to Richard Corbin, February-March 1754.
46 Washington is referring to his current Commission as a Major; see WWF, 44 Footnote 1 and PWC, 1:71 for a discussion of its chronological placement.
directly requested a promotion to “Lieutenant-colonel,” his campaign based in nothing more than a single successful mission and the biased interest of Richard Corbin.  

The exact dating of Washington's application to Corbin is uncertain; Worthington Chauncey Ford placed it "early in March," likely after the selection of Joshua Fry as Commander in Chief of the Virginia Regiment. Fry's appointment was likely "known in Alexandria a few days," into March. Dinwiddie addressed Colonel Fry in a letter as the commander of the militia early that month, making no mention of Washington's pending application as his second in command. The likelihood that news of a selection for commander of the militia spread before Washington addressed himself to Corbin lends one to the realization that, while the young Major did not seek the highest rank available in the expedition, he did petition the Council for promotion to the highest rank remaining.

With his application still pending, Washington set about his duties of raising the militia forces ordered by the Governor. Operating in Frederick County he met with "a largely unsuccessful attempt to raise men," and instead relocated his efforts to Alexandria. There he found recruits willing to join the militia; however he found them "much in want of" basic supplies, including weapons and uniforms. Appealing to the Governor, Washington indicated his fervent belief that uniforms were essential; "if I may be so bold but to offer my opinion I can't think but the good effects it may

47 PWC, 1:70. Letter to Richard Corbin, February-March 1754.
48 WWF, 1:43. Footnote 2.
produce will sufficiently recompense" the costs. Continuing he argued that proper dress would serve to impress upon the Indians a "much higher conception of our power and greatness." Apparently, the "shabby and ragged appearance of the French common Soldiers make affords great matter for ridicule amongst the Indians."\(^{51}\)

When and where Washington observed the opinions of the Six Nations concerning the appearances of the French is unknown. According to his own journal he lacked the time, in between explaining himself to the sachems at Logstown and battling over Tanacharison's attention against French liquors, to draw such knowledge from them. It is more likely that the Major, as a young man always concerned with his own dress, pressed heavily to ensure his men appeared the professionals he desired them to be. A more pressing concern however, addressed to Washington and through him to Dinwiddie, was the matter of "who is to be pay Master and time for payment," for the men.\(^{52}\)

Two days after this original missive, Washington dispatched a second. Declaring his success in increasing his "number of men to about 25," he launched into a litany of complaints concerning uniforms and pay. The men, he described, "are of those loose, idle persons that are quite destitute of house and home, and I may truly say many of them of clothes." Obviously annoyed, the young Major explained that his men continued their "general Clamor" over the pay issue, as they were aware of "it to be usual for His Majesty's soldiers to be paid once a week."\(^{53}\)

\(^{52}\) PWC, 1:72. Letter to Robert Dinwiddie, March 7, 1754.
\(^{53}\) PWC, 1:73. Letter to Robert Dinwiddie, March 9, 1754.
Apparently Washington's men were "perpetually teasing" him to be outfitted at their own expense. For his part he informed Dinwiddie that "I am not able to advance the money," and redoubled his efforts to have "A certain part of their pay...deducted and appropriated to that use." The tenor of the letter, as the previous, remained critical and a touch agitated. Perhaps in awareness of it, Washington closed by saying "I must here in time put a kirb to my requests," as he feared he was being "too importunate," and "as troublesome to your Honor, as the soldiers are to me."

Conceding his trust in the Governor's good judgment, he ended his litany.

The time in Alexandria represented George's first attempt to raise and manage a force of militia. Obviously disappointed at the quality of the men at his disposal, it is interesting to note that the Adjutant felt it necessary to unburden his difficulties upon the Governor not once, but twice. Dinwiddie found the complaints warranted, promising Washington the arrival of funds was imminent and appointing a paymaster. Furthermore he issued "no Objection to the soldiers being in a uniform dress," however he was far more concerned with reports of French advancements. There would be "not time to get them made," as it was imperative Washington "march what soldiers [he had] enlisted immediately to the Ohio." The militia was to rendezvous with Colonel Fry in preparation for the expedition. 54

The command structure Dinwiddie outlined for the Regiment appointed John Carlyle, stationed in Alexandria, as the paymaster with the rank of Major. Adjutant Muse had been dispatched to join the forces with a commission as a "Major at 10s a

---

54 PWC, 1:75. Letter from Robert Dinwiddie, March 15, 1754.
day." After reading of these developments Washington found himself awarded the post of second in command, with "a commission for Lieutenant Colonel, pay 12s a day."\(^55\) Richard Corbin's influence apparently inclined towards Washington's benefit, who now notably outranked Lawrence's old Deputy-Adjutant, as well as each of the commissioned Ohio Company agents.

Lieutenant Colonel Washington was quick to address the Governor in thanks for his promotion, declaring his hope that "my future behavior will sufficiently testify the true sense I have of the kindness."\(^56\) For the Governor the elevation represented a natural progression in his client's development, and one that presented little chance for error. As a Major George had retained the services of Jacob Van Braam with a rank of Lieutenant, who continued in the attempts at raising troops in Fredericks County and Augusta.\(^57\) With Muse's promotion Washington remained in the company, and assuredly retained the support of, his boyhood tutors. Captain Trent, operating in the Ohio territory was a veteran of the region and was to act as the vanguard of any militia action, while Colonel Fry retained overall command. Two independent companies of men dispatched from New York and the Carolinas under the command of veteran officers were to join Washington's forces, buttressing the strength of his militia.\(^58\) The officer corps of the Regiment seemed designed to specifically counter the inexperience of its second in command.

\(^{55}\) PWC, 1:75-76. Letter from Robert Dinwiddie, March 15, 1754.
\(^{56}\) PWC, 1:78. Letter to Robert Dinwiddie, March 20, 1754.
\(^{58}\) PWC, 1:76. Letter from Robert Dinwiddie, March 15, 1754.
Alongside the combination of these units Governor Dinwiddie continued to press Lord Holderness and the Lords of Trade for "a Regiment of Regular Forces."\(^{59}\) The Governor had remarked that Washington should have no "trouble of commanding a company," even as a Lieutenant Colonel; based upon his preparations that seemed to be Dinwiddie's design. Despite the commission, Washington's principle duties lay within the logistical arena; raising, equipping, and disciplining militiamen.\(^{60}\) Combat was expected, however it is not difficult to argue Dinwiddie did not intend the young man to command the whole of the forces during the campaign.

Captain Trent and his forces had rendezvoused with Tanacharison in early February to begin construction of the fort at the forks of the Monongahela, Washington's chosen site. Trent found his Indian allies less numerous however, as recent events amidst the Six Nations had dealt a serious blow to Tanacharison's authority with the sachems. The success of Trent and Governor Dinwiddie's resistance to the French represented his last hope of retaining suzerainty over the other tribes. In reality Tanacharison's influence was already lost, "the Shawnees, the Delaware's, and most of the Mingos were already ignoring him," he kept little more than his hatred of the French as motivation.\(^{61}\)

The construction quickly exhausted its store of supplies, forcing Captain Trent into a dangerous predicament. Disillusioned with the British in the presence of overwhelming French forces the hunters of the nearby Delaware tribes refused to hunt

---

\(^{59}\) The Official Records of Robert Dinwiddie, 1:93-94, Governor Dinwiddie to Lord Holderness March 12, 1754, & 1:99, Governor Dinwiddie to the Lords of Trade, March 12, 1754.

\(^{60}\) PWC, 1:76. Letter from Robert Dinwiddie, March 15, 1754.

\(^{61}\) Anderson, Crucible of War, 46-47.
for or trade with the Virginians. With no other options Trent set out personally on an expedition to resupply his men, leaving an inexperienced Ensign Ward in command.\textsuperscript{62} Trent's supply issues were emblematic of the entire endeavor. Both Washington and Dinwiddie began to face similar difficulties in their own preparations. The Lieutenant Colonel found it increasingly difficult to locate the proper transportation for the few supplies he had attained. He described "the difficulty of getting wagons" as "almost insurmountable."\textsuperscript{63} Washington's forces departed for Trent's fort nonetheless.

Dinwiddie's attempts to gather the forces of neighboring colonies to Virginia's aide proved equally as stymied. While North Carolina proved a staunch ally, raising three hundred men for support, the Governor reported to the Earl of Holderness that "Maryland and Pennsylvania have not as of yet given any supplies."\textsuperscript{64} Blaming the interdiction of his plans on the Assemblies of both colonies, Dinwiddie redoubled his efforts to engage allied Indian tribes in his cause.\textsuperscript{65}

Washington departed from Alexandria on April 2. His forces consisted of 120 soldiers and their officers. Jacob Van Braam, now a colonial Lieutenant under George, commanded one of the two Companies.\textsuperscript{66} Dinwiddie's original instruction to march for the Ohio came on March 15; logistical issues had delayed the force a full two weeks.\textsuperscript{67} The regiment travelled with a dozen wagons weighed down by supplies,

\textsuperscript{62} Anderson,\emph{ Crucible of War}, 47.  
\textsuperscript{63} PWC, 1:82. Letter to Thomas Cresap, April 18, 1754.  
\textsuperscript{64} The Official Records of Robert Dinwiddie, 1:133-134. Governor Dinwiddie to the Earl of Holderness, April 27, 1754.  
\textsuperscript{65} The Official Records of Robert Dinwiddie, 1:131-133.  
\textsuperscript{66} Diaries, 1:174. Entry for April 2.  
\textsuperscript{67} PWC, 1:75. Letter from Robert Dinwiddie, March 15, 1754.
forcing Washington's men to cut a pathway through the Alleghenies.\(^{68}\) Washington's forces stopped only long enough to receive reinforcements from a small company of militia under the command of Captain Adam Stephen.\(^{69}\) Two weeks into the journey an express messenger from Captain Trent made contact with Washington's forces. Trent requested "Reinforcement with all speed as he hourly expected a body of 800 French."\(^{70}\) Little could be done for Trent's men, as the next day Ensign Ward himself arrived with news that the French had overtaken his position and seized the fort.\(^{71}\)

Under the command of Captain Claude-Pierre Pécaudy, seigneur de Contrecoeur, Legardeur's successor as Commandant, a force of five hundred to a thousand French soldiers launched from Venango and besieged Ward's paltry unit of a few dozen men. Operating under the orders of the new French Governor-General Duquesne, Contrecoeur sought to expel the British presence without bloodshed. Though capable of slaughtering the ill-equipped force, Contrecoeur offered Ensign Ward an opportunity to surrender and retreat. Intelligently, he accepted.\(^{72}\) Without casualties, Ward withdrew his men. Tanacharison vehemently denounced the French and the withdrawal, declaring "that he ordered that Fort, and laid the first log of it himself." He followed Ward's lead however, abandoning the position, while the

\(^{68}\) Cleland, *George Washington in the Ohio Valley*, 68. See Footnote 5: The number of wagons in Washington's command is misprinted as "two" in the modern Diaries derived from the *Memorial Edition* of Washington's Journal. The French copy attained by Contrecoeur lists the total as 12, and considering the number of men, is the more likely of the two numbers.

\(^{69}\) Diaries, 1:176.

\(^{70}\) Diaries, 1:177. Entry for April 19.

\(^{71}\) Diaries. 1:177. Entry for April 20.

\(^{72}\) Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 47-49.
French proceeded to transform the makeshift stockade of the Ohio Company into a fully apportioned military fortification, christened Fort Duquesne.\textsuperscript{73}

Ward's intelligence in-hand, Washington launched a peculiar effort on his own behalf. Apparently aware of Dinwiddie's attempts to recruit aide from neighboring colonies, the young Lieutenant Colonel violated both decorum and the prerogatives of his rank in dispatching two letters. Circumventing both Colonel Fry, his superior officer, and Governor Dinwiddie, his Commander in Chief, Washington penned missives directly to James Hamilton and Horatio Sharpe, the Governors of Pennsylvania and Maryland respectively. Presumptuous, solicitous, and overconfident, it is noteworthy that the young Lieutenant Colonel felt his political significance advanced enough to lecture a pair of Royal Governors.

Washington cited Hamilton's well known reputation for "your Honor's great zeal for his majesty's service; and for all out interests in the present occasion," as reason for addressing him directly. Lauding the Governor with a reputation for patriotic fervor, Washington entreated Hamilton to demonstrate it as "the Indians expect some assistance from you and I am persuaded you will take proper notice of [it] and of their unshaken fidelity."\textsuperscript{74} Sharpe received a markedly similar letter. Washington declared the Governor was known to him for his "great zeal for his majesty's service, and for all our interests on the present occasion." As Hamilton, Sharpe was entreated to "take proper notice of the Indian's," support and their

\textsuperscript{73} Anderson, \textit{Crucible of War}, 49.
\textsuperscript{74} PWC, 1:83-84. Letter to James Hamilton, April 24, 1754.
"unshaken fidelity."\textsuperscript{75} Identical phrasing adorned both letters indicating Washington consciously penned the pair to the same purpose: providing an impetus for the Governors to support both Virginia's efforts and those of Tanacharison's loyal Indians, utilizing the specter of French invasion as motivation.

Washington's report to Dinwiddie informed the Governor of the proceedings in the Ohio as well as his own outreach to Maryland and Pennsylvania. Having considered his timing, "the Assembly of Maryland was to sit in five days time, and the Pennsylvania Assembly [was] now sitting," he designed his letters to give "them timely notice something must be done which would turn to the advantage of this Expedition."\textsuperscript{76} Washington was highly aware of the political proceedings surrounding his circumstances, demonstrating an astute capability to pressure specific individuals, upon specific topics, to gain an advantage.

Disregarding his commanding officer once more, Washington seized the initiative and decided to march his forces further into the region, hoping to establish a defensible fortification at the Ohio Company storehouses of Red Creek.\textsuperscript{77} The task itself presented the greatest challenge of the moment, as the Lieutenant Colonel informed Dinwiddie that "the difficulty I have met with in marching has been greater than I expect to encounter on Ohio...surrounded by the enemy." The young man was returning to his litany of complaints, this time identifying the failures of Major Carlyle to properly supply the militia with wagons. Declaring that the few wagons he

\textsuperscript{75} PWC, 1:85-86. Letter to Horatio Sharpe, April 24, 1754.
\textsuperscript{76} PWC, 1:89. Letter to Robert Dinwiddie, April 25, 1754.
\textsuperscript{77} PWC, 1:89. Letter to Robert Dinwiddie, April 25, 1754.
had attained were "so illly provided...that we could not travel with them without
soldiers assisting them up the hills." 78

Governor Dinwiddie was already aware of the difficulties in supplying the
expedition, Washington's complaints stemmed from an entirely different origin than
logistics. In January 1754 Dinwiddie had informed Major Carlyle that, in reference to
an Act of the Assembly he was empowered "on occasion to impress Boats, Sloops,
Wagons, Carts, Horses, or anything else that is necessary for the safe conveyance of
provisions or stores, for the due execution of the expedition." 79 Normally, only an
officer of the local militia retained such authority, thereby necessitating Dinwiddie's
direct empowerment of the Major. Technically, as County Lieutenant, Fairfax
retained the responsibility for impressing supplies. 80 During his attempts to raise
supplies, Washington had found Carlyle and Fairfax reticent in efforts to force the
impressment of the wagons; therefore he took it upon his personal authority to act in
their stead. That action was manifestly illegal.

Writing to Dinwiddie, the Lieutenant Colonel conceded "I doubt not but in
some points I may have strained the law." Washington acted confidently however,
because as his motivation was "to expedite the march," he hoped that he would be
"supported in it should my authority be questioned." Confident in exceeding his
mandate, as he surmised only the "intermeddling" of "some busy body" would
produce an actual complaint, Washington clearly assumed the protection and support

79 The Official Records of Robert Dinwiddie, 1:54. Commission of Major John Carlyle, January 27,
1754.
80 Freeman, George Washington: A Biography, 1:347.
of the Governor. It is noteworthy that in the midst of an arduous march with ill equipped and little trained soldiers into the untamed Ohio region, where as many as a thousand Frenchmen awaited, foremost in Washington's mind was the possibility that in his absence someone may malign his character to the Governor or the Assembly. Concern for his public image had grown into the superintending care of his young career.

The Governor's Council reinforced the trust Washington held in the Governor by declaring that "his Conduct in General has been approved of." More importantly however, the Council stated that it preferred "the Caution [Washington had] taken in halting at Red Stone Creek." Dinwiddie declared the "march of our forces delayed by unfortunate circumstances," indicating that the Lieutenant Colonel's actions were free from scrutiny. He also informed Washington of the impending arrival of independent companies from South Carolina, North Carolina, and New York. Dinwiddie ordered Washington to remain at Red Creek until he gathered "a sufficient body to secure yourself and cannon." The Governor intended for Washington to await the reinforcements commanded by Colonels Fry and Innes before setting off to the Monongahela. Proceeding, the militia returned to the arduous task of cutting a path through the Alleghenies, clearing the way for Fry's promised artillery.

Progress was excruciatingly slow and Washington found numerous points upon which to express his dissatisfaction to Dinwiddie. Relegated once more to a

---

81 PWC, 89. Letter to Governor Dinwiddie, April 25, 1754.
plodding pace due to the lack of wagons, he targeted Captain Trent's failures as the font of the inconvenience.\textsuperscript{85} The Ohio Company agent had fallen into extreme disfavor after the fall of the Forks fortification, the Governor had himself declared Trent should suffer a Court Martial under Colonel Fry for abandoning Ensign Ward.\textsuperscript{86} Washington found him a suitable scapegoat for his difficulties, though both Major Carlyle and he arguably shared responsibility for the difficulties. Washington's denunciation of Trent as an impediment to the mission likely derived from the mounting demands of the Ohio Company men in his employ.

As the Virginians cut a road through the dense forestry of the Ohio region, Washington sought to engage Trent's men to expedite the process. They refused, claiming that the Lieutenant Colonel could not afford their services. Washington complained to Dinwiddie that "the Officers," assumedly Trent and his command staff, "imprudently promised them \textit{Two Schillings per Day}," and "they now refuse to serve for less pay."\textsuperscript{87} Governor Dinwiddie had previously established the pay rate for the militia; private soldiers received only $8d$ per day. Trent's men were demanding half a Lieutenant's salary from Washington.\textsuperscript{88} The Lieutenant Colonel reasoned he could not accede to their demands without dealing a considerable blow to the morale of his own men, and therefore determined to release them from his detachment. "I found them

\textsuperscript{85} PWC, 1:93. Letter to Robert Dinwiddie, May 9, 1754.
\textsuperscript{86} PWC, 1:92. Letter from Robert Dinwiddie, May 4, 1754.
\textsuperscript{87} PWC, 190-91. Footnote 4, Missing excerpt from Washington's Letter to Dinwiddie, April 25, 1754.
\textsuperscript{88} The Official Records of Robert Dinwiddie, 1:112-116. The Letters to Major Carlyle and Governor Sharpe clearly outline the pay scale for the entire regiment: Washington, as Lieutenant Colonel, earned 12s 6d per day, Majors received 10s, Captains 8s, and Lieutenants 4s. The private men earned only 8d. Trent's pay scale indicated private funding, likely in his capacity as Ohio Company Agent.
rather injurious to the other men," he declared. Without them Washington's forces continued apace at two to four miles per day.\textsuperscript{89}

Washington continued to justify his decision to remove Trent's men from his service in subsequent letters to the Governor. Shifting his tone however, he claimed it had been their "refractory behavior" that "did oblige me to separate them from the other soldiers."\textsuperscript{90} The issue at hand however demonstrated an inability on the young Lieutenant Colonel's part to find a suitable resolution to his difficulties with the men. Washington could not be sure of his right of command over Trent's soldiers as "there was some uncertainty" whether they had "been raised as militia or volunteers."\textsuperscript{91} Pay remained the central contention for Washington; he made no effort to attain a grant to employ Trent's men as volunteers, seemingly out of a refusal to provide them with the compensation they sought. It was an issue that became increasingly onerous within his command.

Persistent complaints motivated Washington to sympathize with his men, and eventually convinced him to become their advocate. The officers drew up a litany of complaints, which Washington then forwarded to the Governor stating "I am heartily concerned, that the officers have such a real cause to complain of the Committee's resolves; and still more to find my inclinations prone to second their just grievances."\textsuperscript{92} Washington claimed his men considered the resolves of Council discriminatory and unjust, to the point that "Nothing prevents their throwing down

\textsuperscript{89} PWC, 1:94. Letter to Robert Dinwiddie, May 9, 1754.
\textsuperscript{90} PWC, 1:97. Letter to Robert Dinwiddie, May 18, 1754.
\textsuperscript{91} PWC, 1:96. Footnote 6.
\textsuperscript{92} PWC, 1:98. Letter to Robert Dinwiddie, May 18, 1754.
their commissions...but the approaching danger, which has too far engaged their honor to recede." The men claimed a willingness to "assist with their best endeavors voluntarily...without receiving the gratuity allowed by the resolves of the Committee."\(^93\)

Surprisingly Washington launched into his own independent litany; "Giving up my commission is quite contrary to my intention," however the young man declared his personal desire to "serve voluntarily," demonstrating full solidarity with his officers. He engaged momentarily in a direct complaint concerning the disparity he saw with Royally Commissioned officers, "especially when it is well known, we must undergo double their hardship," a foolish sentiment for a commanding officer daily expecting reinforcements from two such companies. According to the Lieutenant Colonel he could "enumerate a thousand difficulties," that created "so many clogs upon the expedition, that I quite despair of success."\(^94\)

What Washington sought to avoid was a direct attack upon the Governor's dedication to the Regiment. Both the men, "with gratitude and thanks to your Honor, whose good intentions of serving us we are all well assured," and he recognized how Dinwiddie must "reflect on these things, and are sensible of the hardships we must necessarily encounter."\(^95\) Affirming that he "really believe[s], were it as much in your power, as it is your inclination, we should be treated as gentleman and officers," Washington attempted to blunt the force of the barbs. He refused however to decrease

the frequency and intensity of the complaints, declaring "by no means upon the present pay," was he willing to continue as commander. "Be the consequence what it will, I am determined not to leave the regiment, but to be amongst the last men that quit the Ohio, even if I serve as a private volunteer, which I greatly prefer to the establishment we are now upon."96

Apparently Washington had written of his mounting concerns over the expedition to Colonel Fairfax before his letter to the Governor. Though the letter is missing, he explained that it contained "the motives that occasion" his sudden shift in demeanor, and refused to reiterate them to the Governor directly.97 George Washington had held the rank of Lieutenant Colonel for a sparse three months before his declaration of a desire to serve without pay if necessary. Bereft of his usually deferential manner, demanding, and once more presumptuous of Dinwiddie's reaction, the young man was clearly stressing the limits of his political relationships. Interestingly, Washington penned a third letter in late May, this one directed towards Colonel Fry, in which he failed to mention any of the difficulties. Instead, it contained very forthright recommendations from the young Virginian on how to properly retain the alliances of the sachems. At twenty two, and with little actual experience, Washington had begun to exhibit an amazing sense of self-assuredness. Though he did ask to be "excused for offering my opinion so freely," he was determined that his course was the correct one.98

96 PWC, 1:100. Letter to Robert Dinwiddie, May 18, 1754.
Dinwiddie found both the complaints of the officers and Washington's diatribe distasteful, and bordering on mutinous. In a dispatch to Colonel Fry he warned that "I conceive there is some discontent crept into the detachment under Colo. Washington; I think it not well founded, and I desire you would endeavor, by all prudent methods, to prevent so dangerous an evil spreading among them." Fry was charged with reforming the morale of the regiment "without letting it be known that I have mentioned it to you," and to proceed "with great discretion" while safeguarding his own men from Washington's sentiments. In dealing with the Lieutenant Colonel, Dinwiddie was direct.

The Governor proceeded to lambast Washington's complaints as "ill timed," and "not altogether founded in such real cause as I am sorry to find you think they are." Complaints over pay were foolish, and "should have been made before engaging in the service." The men "very well knew the terms on which they were to serve & were satisfied then with it." Dinwiddie found the numerous complaints over discriminatory pay wholly unfounded, citing the inadequate understanding on the part of Washington and his officers that "an Officer in England is obliged to many more expenses than you are, [and] that the difference of his pay is over balanced by them." Dinwiddie rejected nearly all of the men's complaints, issuing a remonstrance by writing "I have no complaints of this kind from Colo. Fry or his Corps, & I hope you will take care not to let them know anything of your

Dissatisfaction," and instructing Washington to order his officers to likewise restrain their complaints to themselves.\textsuperscript{102}

The Governor was far more specific in his reaction to Washington. Generally remarking that there was no real cause "for quitting the Service or laying down Commissions that have been earnestly solicited & were granted," Dinwiddie apparently alluded to Washington's own political campaign for his current rank. On a more personal level he expressed "both concern & surprise, to find a gentleman whom I so particularly considered, & from whom I had so great expectations & hopes, appear so differently from himself." Washington had obviously stepped beyond the bounds of his relationship with Robert Dinwiddie, and the Governor took this opportunity to confront the younger man with his mistake. Offering an opportunity to reassess his complaints, the Governor indicated that the importance of the mission should "engage you to think nothing less than resigning your command or countenancing in any sort the discontent that could never be more unseasonable or pernicious than at present."\textsuperscript{103}

Dinwiddie's decision to provide Washington an opportunity to abandon his strident determination that his treatment was discriminatory and abusive was, at the least, a charitable attempt to reassert the proper decorum into their patron-client relationship. The young Washington had strenuously pursued numerous appointments in the Virginia military, and Dinwiddie had assented to each, elevating him to Major and Adjutant General, special envoy to the French, and Lieutenant Colonel. By the

\textsuperscript{102} PWC, 103. Letter from Robert Dinwiddie, May 25, 1754.
\textsuperscript{103} PWC, 103. Letter from Robert Dinwiddie, May 25, 1754.
early spring of 1754 the young man had begun to demonstrate a distinctively overestimated sense of self-worth; issuing recommendations as a self-avowed expert and presuming the responses of his superior officers, the members of the Governor's Council, and Royal Governor's beyond his personal and political sphere. The influence of Dinwiddie, Fairfax, and numerous powerful patrons had allowed him to expand his horizons of influence by assuming their support. Now, faced with a challenge from Dinwiddie declaring he had finally breached the bounds of his allowances, Washington's reaction was to intensify his complaints, and reiterate his justifications thereof:

"To answer your Honour's Letter...I shall begin with assuring you, that nothing was farther from my intention than to recede, thò I then pressed and still desire that my Services may be voluntary rather than on the present Pay -- I am much concerned that your Honour should seem to charge me with ingratitude for your generous, and my underserved favors..."  

That Washington now felt he had merited greater respect and recognition than he was receiving from Dinwiddie and the Council was evident. He likewise refused to accede to the charge of ingratitude, which he declared "nothing... [was] a greater stranger to my Breast, or a Sin that my Soul more abhors than that black and detestable" state. Washington claimed that he now pursued a line of protest that he had earlier received no satisfaction from. Referring to a previous exchange, apparently before his commission as Lieutenant Colonel, Dinwiddie had informed the young man that the standard rate for the rank was 15s, whereas a Major would receive

---

12s 6d. Instead Washington received, upon his commission, the latter salary with the former rank. This incongruence, ignoring of course his continued salary of £100 a year as Adjutant General, he explained "induced me to acquaint Colo. Fairfax with my intention of resigning," at Alexandria. 105

Fairfax dissuaded the young man from his course of action by promising he would address the issue with the Governor, at a time when the Speaker of the House of Burgesses likewise considered the pay too insignificant. 106 That Washington was laying the blame for the salary differential at a lack of action on the part of Dinwiddie was grossly out of turn. Acting upon Major Washington's report from Fort LeBoeuf in February Dinwiddie had declared in his own presentation to the Burgesses "I think proper to observe to you, that the Pay is very unequally proportioned, being too high for the Soldier, and too low for the Officer." 107

He continued, disagreeing with the Burgesses' inclinations concerning payment, instead declaring "I think it would be better to pay the Militia in Money than Tobacco." 108 The Virginia Regiment had the misfortune of being constituted amidst a disagreement between the House and the Governor concerning the Pistole Fee, and the appropriation of treasury funds, in which ironically Dinwiddie remained their stalwart advocate. Washington's implication that Dinwiddie was responsible for misleading him on the matter of salaries must have rankled the elderly gentleman considerably.

107 JHB, 8:176.
108 JHB, 8:177.
Conscious of his orders to inform the men to cease their complaints, Washington made clear his distaste for Dinwiddie's decision to reject the Officer's resolves. Holding loyally to his feeling upon the matter, Washington declared, "Nevertheless, I have communicated your Honor's Sentiments to them; and as far as I could put on the Hypocrite, set forth the advantages that may accrue, and advised them to accept the terms, as a refusal might reflect dishonor upon their character."

Issuing a surprisingly sharp rejoinder, he continued declaring "I am very sensible of the pernicious consequence that will attend their resigning," as he held a "tolerable knowledge of the country," and considered himself qualified to judge the results of possible failure.109

Washington advanced his dissatisfaction with Dinwiddie openly, at points utilizing knowledge gained in private discussions with Colonel Fairfax as justification for his position. Finally, the Lieutenant Colonel declared "My pay according to the British Establishment & common exchange is near 22s per Day." The scale he referred to however set the rate for Royally Commissioned Officers, a distinction Washington refused to acknowledge as justifiable. Recognizing that Dinwiddie was not to bend at this point, he maintained "I would not have your Honor imagine from this, that I have said all these things to have the Pay increased - but to justify myself, and show your Honour that our complaints are not frivolous, but are founded upon

---

strict reason: for my part it is a matter almost indifferent whether I serve for full pay, or as a generous Volunteer."\textsuperscript{110}

Overconfident in his own importance Washington failed to maintain the deferential demeanor that had served him so well early in his relationship with Dinwiddie. Ambitious and self-assured, the Lieutenant Colonel had overstepped the narrow limits of his station on a number of occasions. Washington had exceeded his mandate and illegally impressed private property at Alexandria out of frustration, had likewise petitioned a pair of Royal Governors in an attempt to compel their support, and now he had launched an aggressive campaign against his primary patron for a pay increase. Washington went so far as to actually inform Dinwiddie of what his proper pay should be, before reiterating his threats to resign.

Washington's actions demonstrated that he was perhaps too young to maintain the deferential political demeanor in which he approached his patrons under the stress of an actual campaign. Confident in his abilities he had allowed the subtlety and respect to drain from writing, transforming concerns and requests into diatribes and demands. Washington persisted in his demands despite the warnings from the Governor, relenting in his complaints only long enough to report that he had launched a preemptive strike against a small French force in conjunction with Tanacharison. Replacing his deferential and supplicating mode with a self-assured tone Washington was attempting to seize preferment and recognition from his patron, by force of arms if necessary.

"I was employed to go a journey in the Winter (when I believe few or none would have undertaken it) and what did I get by it? my expenses borne! I was then appointed with trifling Pay to conduct an handful of Men to the Ohio. What did I get by this? Why, after putting myself to a considerable expense in equipping and providing Necessaries for the Campaign --I went out, was soundly beaten, lost them all-- came in, and had my Commission taken from me..."

-- George to John Augustine Washington, August 2, 1755.¹

Washington's deferential tactfulness disintegrated under the pressure of challenges to his desire for self-advancement and frustration in his pursuit of further preferment. Aggressive ambition for distinction, both politically and within the ranks of the military, bluntly manifested itself as he foolishly sought to wield disinterestedness as a weapon. Governor Dinwiddie recoiled from Washington's threats to resign, scolding the youth for his impertinence and charitably offering an opportunity for him to reconsider his stance. Demonstrating the dominance of his youthful overconfidence, Washington launched an unprovoked attack upon a French contingent, perhaps in the hopes of taking by force the recognition he was now denied by his principle patron.

The Virginia regiment paused on May 24 at the Great Meadows, "a marshy clearing perhaps a mile long by a quarter mile wide, tucked between the hills that flanked two imposing mountains." Awaiting the arrival of Tanacharison, and engaging in the dispute with Dinwiddie, the Lieutenant Colonel ordered the construction of a makeshift encampment, later christened Fort Necessity.²

² Anderson, Crucible of War, 52.
Christopher Gist, Washington's guide to Fort LeBoeuf, arrived at the camp a few days later reporting on an advancing group of French. An express from Tanacharison arrived shortly thereafter, confirming the information and revealing the location of their camp.³

Washington and Tanacharison conferred upon a proper course of action, deciding to "go hand in hand and strike the French."⁴ Together the forces "formed...for an Engagement, marching one after the other, in the Indian Manner." Advancing early in the morning, the detachment managed to surround the French before being noticed. A paltry attempt at resistance was subdued as a pair of successive volleys from Washington's muskets cowed the French into surrendering.⁵ The engagement lasted a quarter hour leaving the Commander, Monsieur De Jumonville and nine others killed.⁶ It was a resounding and efficient victory.

Washington described the assault in both his diary and in an official report to Governor Dinwiddie. According to his report the battle was a textbook example of a well organized ambush, executed with discipline and speed. The Lieutenant Colonel had taken a number of officers captive and proved he was capable of commanding a detachment under fire. Washington however was tentative in his reports back to the Governor, writing sparsely of the details and repeatedly claiming his actions were proper. As the French officers began to complain, it became obvious why. They maintained that their mission had been as an escort to a diplomatic messenger, the

⁵ Diaries, 1:195 Entries for May 1754.
slain Commander Jumonville. Washington rejected the notion, claiming the French arguments an "absurdity," and a "pretext...too glaring" to be credited. 7

Declaring the French officers "spies," and describing their camp as a "skulking place" designed for concealment, Washington sought to cast his preemptive strike as defensive in nature. 8 This was necessary, as Dinwiddie's initial instructions clearly ordered the then-Major to "act on the Defensive," and only take action in the process of "any attempts...made to obstruct the Works or interrupt our settlements." 9 With Captain Trent's fort overtaken, and the Works ceased, Washington had been ordered to retreat to the Red Stone Creek storehouse and await reinforcements. 10 The decision to pause at the Meadows, and to construct a semi-permanent fortification there, rested solely upon Washington's prerogative as the commander in the field. The Lieutenant Colonel was entirely responsible for the events in the Great Meadows, and he sought to legitimize his actions immediately.

Washington endeavored to convince Dinwiddie that his decision to launch a preemptive strike was justified. Citing the agreement of his officers that the French were "sent as spies rather than anything else," and Tanacharison who rejected French claims as "mere pretence," Washington dismissed French claims to innocence as lies. 11 In numerous letters he reiterated his belief that "[the French] were sent as spies, and were ordered to wait near us till they were truly informed of our

9 PWC, 1:65. Instructions to be observed by Major George Washington on the Expedition to the Ohio, January 1754.
intentions, situation, strength, &ca and were to have acquainted the Commander therewith and laid lurking near for Reinforcements before they served the Summons, if at all."12

Washington's concerted efforts to defend the attack on Jumonville's command indicated an immense deal of insecurity over the proceedings. In the long-term, the assault on placed the Virginian forces in dire peril. Demonstrating a full awareness of the immediate consequences of his actions he informed Dinwiddie that "I shall expect every hour to be attacked by unequal numbers."13 Washington requested immediate reinforcement from Colonel Fry, remarking "you can be in no manner of danger in your March, for the French must pass our Camp."14 Washington had placed his men firmly in the path of the assembled French forces in the Ohio, and had provided them a reason to strike.

Though aware of the danger he had placed his forces in, Washington retained a confident demeanor. To his brother John Augustine he was prideful, declaring "...the right wing where I stood was exposed to & received all the enemy's fire and was the part where the man was killed & the rest wounded. I can with truth assure you, I heard Bullets whistle and believe me there was something charming in the sound."15 Famously, George II remarked of Washington's statements, "He would not say so, if he had been used to hear many."16

---

12 PWC, 1:116. Letter to Robert Dinwiddie, May 29, 1754. (2nd Letter of the Same Date & Recipient)
16 PWC, 1:119. Endnote 1. Quoted from Walpole, Memoirs, 1:400.
Retaining some of the prideful demeanor he exhibited to his brother, Washington assured the Governor "let them come what hour they will - and this is as much as I can promise - but my best endeavors shall not be wanting to deserve more, I doubt not but you hear I am beaten, but you will at the same time hear that we have done our duty in fighting as long as there was a possibility of hope."\(^\text{17}\) Washington appeared resigned to the fate of facing an overwhelming enemy force, and likely being defeated in the process. However, defense of a decision that was likely to result in the surrender of his first command was not the sole motivator for Washington's posturing in his letters. Though not readily apparent to Colonel Fry or Governor Dinwiddie, Washington had omitted a number of details concerning the battle that resulted in Jumonville's death. Washington never detailed the full engagement in writing, and the only clue he left of the true events of that morning assault were found in his diary. A single passage, omitted from his official report, stated, "The Indians scalped the dead..."\(^\text{18}\)

The battle of Great Meadows and the death of Captain Jumonville were the opening shots of the Seven Years' War. Understandably, British and French interpretations of the event varied widely. Utilizing Washington's sparse description of events, Governor Dinwiddie reported to the English Lords of Trade that "The Breach was begun by the French in taking our Fort, and this little skirmish was by

---

\(^{18}\) Diaries, 1:195. Entries for May 1754.
the Half-King and their Indians. We were as Auxiliaries to them, as my Order to the Commander of our forces was to be on the defensive."

Commandant Contrecoeur, the French Commander in the Ohio, relayed a different story and procession of events to Governor Duquesne. Utilizing the accounts of a pair of survivors, a regular soldier and an allied Indian warrior, he compiled what would become the official French account. That version diverged from Washington's after the moment of initial volleys:

"Mr. de Jumonville, by his interpreter, told them to desist, that he had something to tell them. Upon which they ceased firing. Then Mr. de Jumonville ordered the Summons which I [Contrecoeur] had sent them to retire, to be read...The Indians who were present when the thing was done, say, that Mr. de Jumonville was killed by a Musket-Shot in the Head, whilst they were reading the Summons; and the English would afterwards have killed all our Men, had not the Indians who were present, by rushing between them and the English, prevented their design."

Governor Duquesne received a report that described an unprovoked ambush and the summary execution of a diplomatic messenger by bloodthirsty Virginian forces under the command of Lieutenant Colonel George Washington. Commandant Contrecoeur understandably sought vengeance against what he understood to be "not a battle, but an ambush followed by a massacre."

Though damning, the French account contained a number of incongruences that failed to account for Captain Jumonville's earlier actions, or Washington's repeated assertions that the Frenchman was a spy. Ironically, Jumonville's orders

---

19 The Official Records of Robert Dinwiddie, 1:206. Governor Dinwiddie to the Lords of Trade, June 18, 1754.
20 PWC, 1:114. Note 12, Letter from Commandant Contrecoeur to Governor Duquesne, June 2, 1754.
21 Anderson, Crusible of War, 54.
mirrored the instructions carried by a young Major Washington months before. Contrecoeur dispatched Captain Jumonville with orders to deliver a Summons for Washington's regiment to remove itself from the vicinity of the newly-christened Fort Duquesne. In the process Jumonville was instructed to gather what information he could concerning the intentions, position, and disposition of Washington's forces.22 Major Washington's instructions concerning his own mission to Fort LeBoeuf were nearly identical; Jumonville's mission mimicked that earlier endeavor.

In his letters to Dinwiddie, Washington's description of Jumonville shadowing his forces, and making camp in a "skulking place" were consistent with the maneuvers of a commander attempting to scout and gather intelligence for a greater force. Washington's continued assertion that he believed Jumonville was not prepared to deliver his Summons was also accurate, as the Captain had avoided numerous opportunities to contact Washington's forces directly. Furthermore, after the battle of the Meadows Washington purportedly gained access to Jumonville's orders, which outlined "Instructions to reconnoiter the Country, Roads, Creeks," and more.23

Washington clearly recognized Jumonville's mission as one of strategic espionage hidden under the veil of a diplomatic missive, likely due to his successful completion of a similar mission to Fort LeBoeuf. The young commander also emphasized the necessity of taking the French officers "as prisoners," blatantly identifying their usage of "the Name of Ambassador" as a cover.24

---

22 Anderson, Crucible of War, 52.
therefore was justified in his preemptive strike, yet if his design was to capture the French officers, the question concerning the circumstances of Jumonville's apparent assassination remained unanswered. The key however, lay in the French contention that Tanacharison's Indians had protected the remainder of Jumonville's men from English barbarity.

George Washington's relationship with the Half King Tanacharison retained two constants throughout their brief interactions; Washington lacked the ability to compel his Indian ally to action or inaction, as demonstrated time and time again during the mission to Fort LeBoeuf, and Tanacharison himself demonstrated an unbending and uncompromising hatred of the French. Combined, this knowledge of the Half King invalidated the supposed eye-witness account of Contrecoeur's Indian warrior, leaving the likely scenario at the Great Meadows to be the one detailed by Private John Shaw on August 21 to the Governor of South Carolina:

"...It being early in the morning some of them [the French] were asleep and some eating, but having heard a noise they were immediately in great confusion and betook themselves to their arms and as this deponent has head, one of [the French] fired a Gun upon which Col Washington gave the word for all his Men to fire. Several of them [the French] being killed, the Rest betook themselves to flight, but our Indians [Tanacharison's warriors] having gone round the French when they saw them immediately fled back to the English and delivered up their arms desiring quarter which was accordingly promised them. Some time after the Indians came up the Half King took his Tomahawk and split the head of the French Captain having first asked if he was an Englishman and having been told he was a French Man. He then took out his Brains and washed his Hands with them and then scalped them...the Frenchmen who were killed in Number about 13 or 14 and the head of one stuck upon a Stick for none of them were buried..."25

25 Anderson, Crucible of War, 55.
Gruesome in its details, Shaw's account neatly matches the descriptions of Contrecoeur's French survivor, Washington's perception of Jumonville's mission and his own intention to force a French surrender, and the Indian custom to leave the bodies of their victims unburied on the field of battle.²⁶

Lieutenant Colonel Washington's inability to control or interdict Tanacharison allowed an otherwise successful rout of a possibly hostile force to devolve into the massacre of an unarmed diplomatic envoy. It is understandable then that he exempted a majority of the details of his first "victory" from his official report. Washington used his letters as a form of public damage control, hoping to avoid the inevitable tarnishing of his image that would result from the truth.

Governor Dinwiddie responded to Washington's official report of Jumonville's death declaring it "very agreeable," and interpreting it as a victory demonstrating the great merit of Virginian forces.²⁷ The news travelled quickly, Washington received a congratulatory letter from Charles Carter. Carter, the Chairman of the Burgesses Committee that authorized the initial £10,000 fund for the expedition declared "I heartily congratulate you and all the brave gentlemen that were of the company." Interestingly, Carter continued by remarking "I had this affair in the beginning much at heart and you are witness to the share I had in promoting the Bill for defending our Frontiers and you may depend I shall be always ready to serve such brave men to the

²⁷ PWC, 1:119. Letter from Robert Dinwiddie, June 1, 1754.
utmost of my power."\textsuperscript{28} Washington's victory identified him as an agent of some significance in Virginian politics, so much so that Carter was now extending an apparent offer of political backing.

Recognized as an impromptu victory at home, abroad the Massacre of Jumonville Glen was recognized for what it truly was, a blunder that forced a conflict upon two of the world's greatest empires. Lord Albemarle in London remarked that "\textit{Washington} and many such may have courage and resolution...but they have no knowledge or experience in our [military] profession." Sir Horace Walpole summed up the incident declaring, "The volley fired by a young Virginian in the backwoods of America set the world on fire."\textsuperscript{29}

Dinwiddie and Washington had not resolved their dispute over the pay rates for the officer corps, and the Jumonville incident provided only a short reprieve. The moment the official report was logged the pair returned to their quarrel. Dinwiddie for his part argued that he "heartily wish[ed] that yourself & Officers had not at this time discovered an uneasiness on account of your pay." His concern was heightened due in part to the delay of Colonel Fry's arrival.\textsuperscript{30} The Governor seemed to be impatiently awaiting the point at which Fry would take direct command of the Regiment, and assumedly put an end to the complaints of the officers. Though congratulatory in his remarks concerning Washington's victory, Dinwiddie had set into motion events that would relieve the young man of his preeminent position in the field.

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{28} PWC, 1:128. Letter from Charles Carter, June 5, 1754.
\footnote{29} Chernow, \textit{Washington: A Life}, 45.
\footnote{30} PWC, 1:121. Letter from Robert Dinwiddie, June 2, 1754.
\end{footnotes}
Fate unexpectedly intervened, invalidating Dinwiddie's plans as Colonel Joshua Fry fell from his horse in late May. The veteran Colonel had previously broken his collar bone and his ribs from a similar fall at Logstown in October 1752.\(^{31}\) Likely exasperating those injuries on this occasion, the Colonel died on May 31.\(^{32}\) With little choice remaining, Dinwiddie informed Colonel George Washington of his good fortune. George Muse, marching with Fry's detachment, would replace him in position as Lieutenant Colonel.\(^{33}\)

Governor Dinwiddie reiterated his desire to see Washington's command subsumed by the imminent arrival of a senior officer, despite the death of Fry. In this case, he referred to "Colo. James Innes, an old experienced officer," who was "daily expected." Innes' appointment as the Commander in Chief of all inter-colonial forces for the Ohio Expedition was a measured and deliberate maneuver on Dinwiddie's part. As he explained to Washington, "The Captains & Officers of the Independent Companies, having their Commissions signed by His Majesty, imagine they claim a distinguished rank & being long trained in Arms expect suitable regards."\(^{34}\)

The Governor was aware of an extant disagreement, undecided by any authority in America or London, concerning the right of command between Royally Commissioned Officers and Colonial militia. He had previously warned Colonel Fry that "it is not usual to have the regular forces under His Majesty's immediate Commission to be under the command of an Officer in America appointed by any of

\(^{31}\) Memoirs of Colonel Joshua Fry, 32.
\(^{32}\) PWC, 1:127. Note 1.
\(^{33}\) PWC, 1:126. Letter from Robert Dinwiddie, June 4, 1754.
\(^{34}\) PWC, 1:126-127. Letter from Robert Dinwiddie, June 4, 1754.
the Governors." Describing the officers of the Independent Companies as "jealous of their own honor," he instructed Fry to "receive their advice with candor." 35

Dinwiddie had intended to provide the command of the Virginia Regiment to Colonel Innes from its inception; however a short sickness delayed Innes' ability to serve and forced the selection of Fry as interim commander. 36 Though Dinwiddie's partiality to Innes likely stemmed somewhat from their shared Scottish heritage Innes' Royal Commission as Captain from the failed Cartagena campaign inclined his selection on professional grounds. 37 Colonel Innes, a Royal Captain (ret.) could not be countermanded by the officers of the Independent Companies by virtue of their Royal Commissions, though by virtue of his own, and his militia rank, he could easily compel their obedience.

Colonel Washington was instructed to "show [the Captains] particular marks of esteem, which will avoid such causes of uneasiness as otherwise might obstruct His Majesty's Service," until the arrival of Colonel Innes. 38 Washington assumingly understood the difficulties represented by the absence of his commander, and the impending arrival of Captain McKay and the Independent Company. As he promised the Governor, "I shall myself, and will endeavor to make my Officers show Captain McKay all the respect due to his Rank & merit." However, driving to the heart of the matter he directly challenged the imprecise wording of Dinwiddie's missive, "[I

37 PWC, 1:127. Note 2.
would have been] particularly obliged if your Honor had declared whether he was under my Command, or Independent of it." 39

Dinwiddie lacked the authority to answer Washington's question decisively, and for his part he understood the limitations of his own authority. The Governor sought a resolution through Innes' imminent arrival. His instructions were to reiterate the "proper discipline among the officers and soldiers... whereby each Officer may know and perform their respective duties." 40 Notably, the perfect selection for the commander of the Virginia Regiment was someone with both a militia rank and the distinction of a Royal Commission. The situation likely reminded Dinwiddie of the loss of Lawrence Washington, and George's previous disruptive arguments further indicated the stark differences in the two men.

Washington had upon numerous occasions ensured his political patrons that he sought to serve "under the Command of an experienced Officer and a Man of sense." 41 Initially, he had referred to Joshua Fry as this man of sense; next it was to be Colonel Innes. The first of the British veterans to reach his encampment however was Captain McKay. Relaying to the Governor that "I am much at a loss to know how to act, or proceed in regard to his company," Washington invoked the dispute Dinwiddie had ardently counseled each of the officers against. 42

Washington and McKay quickly engaged each other, each armed with the belief of their own superiority in rank and right of command. McKay retained his

men in a distinct body, removed from the Virginia Regiment, and refused incorporation under Washington's command. The Colonel declared to Dinwiddie "I have not offered to control him in anything, or showed that I claimed a superior command, but in giving the Parole & Countersign." The contradiction of this statement however is blatant, as the defining of the signs and countersigns within a body of soldiers to determine friend and foe is the responsibility of the field commander. Were McKay to accept Washington's instructions he would be overtly acknowledging the young Colonel as his superior officer. Understandably, McKay refused.

As described to Dinwiddie, McKay argued that "He thinks Your Honor has not a power to give commissions that will command him." In that opinion, the Captain was likely correct. Dinwiddie had recognized the impropriety of allowing colonial officers to command holders of a Royal Commission. Lacking an authoritative resolution he had requested Washington "not to let some Punctilios about command" disrupt the expedition. The Colonel however demanded respect for his rank, and sought Dinwiddie's support to attain it from the reticent Captain.

Washington demonstrated no interest in compromising with Captain McKay; instead he implored Dinwiddie to validate the assumption of superiority he had already manifested. Despite retaining a private relationship "in the most perfect harmony" with McKay, the young Virginian recommended that "his absence would

tend to the public advantage." Furthermore, assuming the forthcoming response of the Governor, Washington declared "I am very confident your Honor will see the absurdity & consider the effects of Captain McKay's having the direction of the Regiment."\textsuperscript{46}

In an unwelcome rendering of the difficulties surrounding the attempted incorporation of Trent's men into the Regiment, Washington relayed the refusal of McKay to order his men to continue working on Washington's road. Though necessary for the expedition's wagon train, McKay declared himself incapable of compelling his men to work on the road for less than "a Shilling Sterling a Day."\textsuperscript{47}

The pay rate of the commissioned officers and their men represented a prohibitive limit of Washington's ability to engage them for certain duties.

Washington requested an immediate decision from Dinwiddie to reinforce his authority and overrule McKay's resistance. The Colonel complained that allowing the continuance of their current state of indecision, or worse, advancing McKay to command of the whole body would be considered "the hardest thing in life," and it would declare him and his officers "neither...entitled to the Pay or Rank of Soldiers."

Returning to his own resolution to the disputes with Trent's men, Washington determined that physical separation of the two companies would serve him best. The Colonel ordered a march of his company \textit{away} from McKay's reinforcements to

\textsuperscript{46} PWC, 1:137. Letter to Robert Dinwiddie, June 10, 1754.
\textsuperscript{47} PWC, 1:137. Letter to Robert Dinwiddie, June 10, 1754.
alleviate their personal dispute over command.48 Explaining himself to Dinwiddie, Washington remarked:

"I hope from what has been said your Honor will see the necessity of giving speedy orders on this head. And I am sensible you will consider the Evil tendency that will accompany Captain McKay's commanding for I am sorry to observe this is what we always hoped to enjoy -- the Rank of Officers which to me Sir is much dearer than the Pay."49

Lieutenant Colonel George Muse and a force of two hundred militiamen had joined the regiment at the Great Meadows the day before McKay's arrival.50 Emboldened by the near tripling of his effective fighting force, Washington left McKay's regulars to garrison Fort Necessity and set out personally for Red Stone Creek. Ignoring the Independent Company as essentially useless, he boasted to Dinwiddie that "we shall have the whole credit as none others have assisted."51 Finding the march immensely difficult, and losing numerous baggage wagons in the process, the Regiment returned to the excruciatingly slow pace it had suffered before pausing at the Great Meadows.52

The Virginia Regiment eventually arrived at Christopher Gist's settlement at Red Stone Creek, where Washington planned to convene a council of the Ohio Indian tribes. Forty representatives from the Six Nations, including Tanacharison, responded to Washington's summons receive the English request for aide.53 The Colonel's pleas for support fell upon deaf ears however. French power in the Ohio had overawed

---

many of the tribes, drawing indecision from most, and inducing the Delawares to abandon their English allies entirely.\textsuperscript{54}

Intelligence from the Delawares that "there were Sixteen Hundred French, and Seven Hundred Indians on their march, to reinforce those at" Fort Duquesne alarmed the young Colonel.\textsuperscript{55} Eventual word that a massing French force had departed from the Fort and was en route finally convinced Washington to abandon Red Stone Creek, and any thought of further Indian support. Perhaps overconfident in his march towards French fortifications before, the Colonel now prudently ordered a retreat back to the Great Meadows, and a rendezvous with Captain McKay's company. Dismissing claims of French strength as "soldier's discourse" he matched their bravado with his own overconfidence, declaring that within Fort Necessity, "I shall not fear the attack of 500 men."\textsuperscript{56} Prudence, not alarm, motivated Washington's retreat.

Washington's willingness to return to Fort Necessity likely also stemmed from the arrival of a letter from Governor Dinwiddie on June 25. Dinwiddie had taken the dispute over ranking and rights of command seriously, conferring with Governor Horatio Sharpe to determine a suitable outcome. To "quell the great Feud subsisting between the Independent Companies and our Forces in regard to rank," Dinwiddie had developed a novel reorganization of the Ohio Expedition's command staff. The plan reaffirmed Colonel Washington's status as Innes' second in command. However,

\textsuperscript{54} Diaries, 1:204. Entry for June 20, 1754.
\textsuperscript{55} Diaries, 1:207. Entry for June 21, 1754.
in concessions to the Royal Officers, Dinwiddie provided the senior Captain from New York, Thomas Clarke, and Captain McKay commissions as Lieutenant Colonels, with the pair serving as the third and forth in command, respectively.  

The plan was nothing short of masterful. Dinwiddie had outmaneuvered McKay by attaining the consent of Captain Clarke to serve under Washington. As the senior of the two men, Clarke's acceptance of a colonial Colonel's superior rank compelled McKay's cooperation out of respect and deference for his colleague. Dinwiddie reorganized the command staff in such a manner that refusal to follow Washington's command would be clear insubordination, in the presence of multiple superior officers. It is also noteworthy that Dinwiddie's plan equated a Royally Commissioned Captain to a militia Lieutenant Colonel, a position Washington had exceeded due only to the untimely death of Joshua Fry. The appointments were to be brevet only; temporary field commissions that served as "Feathers in their Caps & to prevent any ill blood in regard to rank." They would not however affect the disparities in pay; Dinwiddie's plans mended bruised egos only.

The return march of the Virginia Regiment to Fort Necessity devolved into a hurried and chaotic affair. Washington's failure to establish a traversable road, one which he routinely blamed on the exorbitant cost of the labor, cost him dearly. Wagons, which had been in short supply since the Regiment marshaled in Alexandria, broke down at an alarming rate. The difficulty of the original marches finally took

---

57 The Official Records of Robert Dinwiddie, 1: 212. Governor Dinwiddie to Governor Sharpe, June 20, 1754.
their toll, and "so many draft animals died that the men themselves were forced to
drag or push wagon loads of supplies and cannon a distance of about twenty miles in
two days' time."59 When Washington's forces returned to the Great Meadows they
were exhausted beyond their ability to continue.

The Virginia Regiment retired to the faux protection of what Tanacharison
had derisively deemed "that little thing upon the Meadow."60 Necessity was a mere
fifty feet in diameter, consisting of a "small Stocado [(Stockade)] Fort made in a
circular form round a small house that stood in the middle of it to keep [the]
Provisions and Ammunition in."61 It was too small to hold more than "sixty or
seventy men," the remainder would be forced to take up station outside of its walls.62
For that purpose a circular trench surrounding the fort was dug approximately eight-
yards from the walls, and roughly two feet deep.63 Surrounded by a small clearing
expanded to some sixty yards out,64 and buttressed against hills, Necessity was
"dangerously vulnerable to enfilading fire."65

Washington's inexperience and general lack of strategic planning placed his
forces at an immense disadvantage. Stemming from his and Major Carlyle's failures
in Alexandria to apportion suitable numbers of wagons for cargo carrying, his own
failures in coming to terms with Trent's and McKay's men to aide in the cutting of a
path through the Alleghenies, and his refusal at numerous junctures to remain passive

59 Anderson, Crucible of War, 62.
60 Anderson, Crucible of War, 60.
62 Anderson, Crucible of War, 59.
63 PWC, 1:126. Note 12.
64 Ellis, His Excellency, 16.
65 Anderson, Crucible of War, 59.
and await further reinforcements all contributed to exact a serious toll on Washington's men. By July 1, their final arrivals at Fort Necessity, "only three hundred of the four hundred men" under his command were combat ready.66

The French contingent arrayed against the Virginians, "six hundred French regulars and Canadian militiamen, together with about a hundred Indian allies, represented an overwhelming force. Contrecoeur had placed Captain Louis Coulon de Villiers in command; the brother of the slain Jumonville, Villiers obviously sought revenge.67 Traveling "in pirogues up the Monongahela to the mouth of Red Stone Creek," the French easily found Washington's incomplete road and followed it down to the Great Meadows. Driving rains convinced Villiers to pause his forces on July 2, allowing him some moments to reconnoiter the spot of Jumonville Glen; Villiers' description of the Glen as "the place where my Brother had been assassinated," lends some insight into his mindset. He was clearly engaged in a mission to deliver a violent reprisal against his brother's murders.68

The driving rains that gave Villiers a moment to pause and reflect upon his motivations transformed Washington's trenches into a moat surrounding Necessity. Already exhausted men stood drenched as they awaited the imminent arrival of the assault. For his part the young Colonel apparently expected a textbook battle fought in the open if boggy fields of the Meadow, ordering his men out in formation.69 The veteran Villiers however refused the invitation, taking instead advantage of the poorly

66 Anderson, Crucible of War, 63.
67 Anderson, Crucible of War, 62.
68 PWC, 1:158.
69 Anderson, Crucible of War, 62-63.
prepared clearing to turn Fort Necessity into a killing field. Washington ordered his men to fall back to their trenches as French musket fire raked his companies from the tree line. Driving rain and musket balls poured into the shallow trenches for eight hours, as Washington's men huddled in half-flooded trenches, unable to return fire thanks to soaked muskets and too few tools to repair them.\(^{70}\)

As the Colonel watched night fall over Fort Necessity it must have been obvious to the young commander that his men faced a massacre at the hands of the French. Fully one third of his men had been killed or wounded by the day's fighting. Strained discipline degraded further, as under the cover of darkness Washington's militia broke into the store house, seeking out liquor. Captain Adam Stephen remarked that as many as "one-half of our Men got drunk," leaving an already weakened force crippled. Unable to retreat, and without the means to hold out until the arrival of Colonel Innes, the twenty-two year old Washington was at the mercy of the French.\(^{71}\) Amazingly Washington declared in his official report that "we determined not to ask for Quarter, but with our Bayonets screwed, to sell our Lives as dearly as possibly we could."\(^{72}\)

Captain Villiers, a respectable veteran of the French military, appealed to the better part of valor and offered Washington's men mercy. At eight o'clock that evening the withering fire from the tree line abated, and in its stead came an invitation for the English to negotiate the terms of their surrender. Washington dispatched Jacob

\(^{70}\) Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 63.

\(^{71}\) Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 63.

Van Braam, his trusted compatriot and long-time translator, to hear the offer. Explaining that he had succeeded in avenging the death of his brother, Villiers demanded that the English sign "articles of capitulation...withdraw from the Ohio Country and pledge not to return within the space of a year...repatriate the prisoners they had taken [at Jumonville Glen], and to leave two officers as hostages at Fort Duquesne," as insurance. In exchange Washington and McKay were afforded "all the Honors of war," and allowed a retreat "with all [their] Stores, Effects, and Baggage." Only the otherwise useless swivel cannons, which had been dragged by the Regiment from Alexandria to Red Stone Creek and back again to the Great Meadows, would be left behind.

Captain Villiers' explanation for the offered terms recognized a fact that Washington had seemingly forgotten; England and France were not as of yet officially at war. Therefore, the Captain explained "as we were come only to revenge my Brother's Assassination, and to oblige [the English] to quit the Lands of the King our Master...we agreed to grant them Capitulation." The Virginia Regiment was offered a full retreat in part because Villiers concluded "it was not proper to make Prisoners in a Time of Peace," as Washington had of the men at Jumonville Glen. Despite Washington's official bravado to fight until the end, his officers found the offered terms "no disagreeable news to us."

---

73 Anderson, Crucible of War, 64.  
76 PWC, 1:164. Note 5.
On July 4, 1754, Colonel George Washington and Captain McKay led their remaining men away from Fort Necessity under the hoisted English flag and to the beat of drums. Of the three hundred combatants under his command, Washington had lost thirty men, and now escorted a further seventy wounded to Wills Creek. Jacob Van Braam was not with the detachment, he and a Captain Robert Stobo had remained behind as captives under the terms of the capitulation, awaiting the exchange of French officers at Fort Duquesne. The men under Washington suffered a further indignity as a force of one hundred allied French Indians accosted the retreat, "pilfering [the] baggage," and otherwise menacing the survivors. Adding yet more insult the English officers noticed that the Indians working with the French were indeed "our own Indians, Shawnesses, Delawares, and Mingos." Tanacharison's influence over the sachems had disintegrated, and the French stood supreme in the Ohio Region.

Washington entered Wills Creek on July 9th; behind him the burnt remains of Fort Necessity and Christopher Gist's Red Creek Store House were already cold. Fort Duquesne stood reinforced upon the site the young man had once recommended to Governor Dinwiddie, and his own men were deserting en masse. The Colonel expected desertions to mount "every night," as he believed the men "will desert

---

77 PWC, 1:167. Translation of the Articles of Capitulation.
81 Anderson, Crucible of War, 65.
whenever they have an opportunity." Surrounded by his own wounded, unable to clothe or house what men remained, Washington stood utterly defeated.\textsuperscript{82}

Governor Dinwiddie's Ohio Expedition had rested upon Colonel Washington's Virginia Regiment, and its ability to blunt French advances while maintaining the loyalty of the Six Nation's sachems. The formation of the Expedition itself had required the Governor to engage in protracted political wrangling with the House of Burgesses, neighboring Governors and Assemblies, and the Lords of Trade in England. Throughout, the charge of economic interest as the motivating influence, thanks to Dinwiddie's involvement with the Ohio Company and his reliance upon numerous agents and attaches of the Company, had dogged his efforts. His political future rested upon the news from Fort Necessity. Word of the devastating failure of his charges left him understandably chagrined. Dinwiddie immediately summoned Washington and McKay to Williamsburg, to answer for their actions in person.

The two weeks ride from Wills Creek to the Capital afforded necessary opportunities for both parties. Dinwiddie utilized the interim to begin the process of affixing blame, or perhaps redirecting it from himself. His initial response inclined him to levy his anger against the dilatory support of Colonel Innes and the neighboring colonies. To Innes, the Governor declared "the misfortune attending our Expedition is entirely owing to the delay of your forces, and more particularly the two Independent Companies from [New York.]"\textsuperscript{83} To James Ambercromby he

\textsuperscript{82} PWC, 1:186-187. Letter to William Fairfax, August 11, 1754.
\textsuperscript{83} The Official Records of Robert Dinwiddie, 1:232. Governor Dinwiddie to Colonel Innes, July 20, 1754.
complained of a pervasive "Infatuation that too much prevails on this [Continent], by the [Governments] asserting separate [Interests] and not acting as Subjects to one Prince." Interestingly, of Washington and McKay, Dinwiddie only remarked that they "bore the whole brunt of the Action, and considering their few Numbers, they behaved with great resolution... [and] I think they acquired much Honor."\(^{84}\)

Horatio Sharpe, the Governor of Maryland and Dinwiddie's long-time ally and advocate, issued a different assessment of the commanders. He publically "excoriated Washington for impulsive behavior.\(^{85}\) The opinion of Washington as a reckless, and perhaps vainglorious, commander took root within Dinwiddie's mind as well. Eventually, he convinced himself that his own orders to Washington were "by no means to attack the Enemy till the whole Forces were joined."\(^{86}\) Attaching responsibility for the initial engagement upon the youthful aggressiveness of Washington proved the least of Dinwiddie's concerns.

As the young commanders of the Virginia Regiment entered Williamsburg they found themselves the subjects of an international controversy. The French had publicized their own version of the events in the Ohio Country, along with the text of the Articles of Capitulation. Though exaggeration and misinformation were considered an inherent component of Villiers' report of the Battle of Fort Necessity, Article VII of the Capitulation proved a damning indictment of Washington's conduct: "Que comme les Anglois ont en leur pouvoir un officier, deux Cadets et

\(^{84}\) The Official Records of Robert Dinwiddie, 1:237. Governor Dinwiddie to James Ambercromby, July 24, 1754.


\(^{86}\) The Official Records of Robert Dinwiddie, 1:255. Governor Dinwiddie to Governor Hamilton & 1:258. Governor Dinwiddie to Governor Sharpe, July 31, 1754.
Généralment les prisonniers qui'ils nois ont faits dans l'assasinat du Sr de Jumonville...: translated into English, and with the signatures of George Washington and James McKay affixed beneath, was the phrase "And as the English have in their Power, one Officer, two Cadets, and most of the Prisoners made at the Assassination of M. de Jumonville..." 87

The Articles of Capitulation represented material and irrevocable proof that the death of Jumonville was an unprovoked assassination of a diplomatic messenger. For any that doubted such claims, Washington's signature was further reinforced by the entries in his diary, found abandoned in the ruins of Necessity. 88 Combined the two pieces of information seemingly left Washington with little recourse but to concede his blame in the incident and accept full responsibility. Instead, Washington in concord with his officers marshaled a concerted defense of their actions, claiming ignorance of the Articles and victory at Necessity.

Washington's official account of the Capitulation of Fort Necessity strains the limits of credulity, and when analyzed against the backdrop of the letters and exchanges that preceded the incident provides a unique perspective into his political character. In his account, Washington's three hundred men retreated to the Great Meadows with the intention of forming a defensive line from which to repulse the oncoming French. As the hundreds of French soldiers approached from beyond

---

87 PWC, 1:166-167. The Articles of Capitulation
88 The original text of Washington's diary has never been found, as the pages captured by the French were apparently lost or destroyed after it was translated from English. What modern historians utilize as Washington's Diary is derived from the copy in possession of Contrecoeur and the French Memorial that presented the diary as a piece of evidence in their grievances against England in the legitimization for their actions in the Seven Year's War.
musket range, firing "without any Effect," in an attempt to "intimidate, or draw our Fire," Washington calmly formed his men into lines in front of his trenches.  

The French refused to engage Washington's men in a direct conflict, instead opting to advance "in a very irregular manner," to make "a second Discharge;" it became clear to the Colonel that his adversary "had no Intention of attacking us in the open Field," instead preferring the safety of the tree line. Washington's orders at this point were for his men to open fire. However, according to his and his officers' accounts his stratagem for a unified assault against the French lines was "circumvented by 'the cowardice of his Next Officer,' Lt. Col. George Muse." Landon Carter recalled that "instead of bringing up the 2d division to make the Attack with the first, [Muse] marched them or rather frightened them back into the trenches." The refusal of Muse to reinforce the Colonel's men forced the latter to retire to the trenches. Washington argued that Muses' cowardice, not withering French fire, a poorly prepared field of battle, and an inexperienced commander's desire to fight in the open, forced his men to spend the next eight-hours in cramped and flooded trenches.

Captain Villiers' decision to parley was interpreted by Washington as the result of significant casualties inflicted by his men. Though he reported only thirty dead and seventy wounded, the young Colonel cited the "Number killed and wounded

---

of the Enemy... [was] above three hundred." Washington claimed to have dealt Villiers a "considerable blow," one so strong as to "induce them to call first for a Parley, knowing, as they perfectly did, the Circumstances we were in."^92

Washington's interpretation of the Articles of Capitulation makes sense only if he truly believed his men had leveled the battle to an equal fight. Outnumbered three to one, he claimed his men took three French soldiers for every one of his killed or wounded. Thus, it is perfectly reasonable to assume that Washington's assertion that the two commanders agreed to a coordinated retreat, to retire "without Molestation, they back to their Fort at Monongahela, and we to Wills Creek," fit the occasion.^93

The Articles of Capitulation he argued must represent a maneuver of subterfuge on the part of Villiers, and a moment of foolish inadequacy on the part of the Colonel's translator.

Captain Adam Stephen issued the fundamental argument of the officers concerning the signing of the Articles of Capitulation. Jacob Van Braam served as the sole interpreter for Washington and his officers. The negotiations took place near midnight, in the middle of a torrential downpour, relegating transmission of the articles to "Word of Mouth," only. Stephen claimed that "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." According to him "there was no

such Word as Assassination mentioned."\(^{94}\) Stephen argued the officers were ignorant of what they signed, necessarily alleviating their responsibility for the content.

Washington brought forth harsher criticism. Of the man that his late brother introduced to him to teach him fencing, and whom accompanied him on each of his military endeavors as a loyal friend and ally, the young Colonel declared "That we were willfully, or ignorantly, deceived by our interpreter in regard to the word assassination, I do aver, and will to my dying moment."\(^{95}\) Claiming ignorance throughout, Washington targeted Van Braam for censure.

Jacob Van Braam had served with distinction with Lawrence Washington in the failed expedition to Cartagena, instructed George Washington in the mechanics of swordsmanship, accompanied him as a friend and interpreter in his mission to Fort LeBoeuf, and served as an officer under Washington in the Virginia Regiment. Despite their history, the lack of any previous complaints of his service, and awarded officer's rank on Washington's recommendation, Van Braam was declared at best a fool, and at worst a willful deceiver of the Regiment's officers. Declaring his old friend, "a Dutchman, little acquainted with the English tongue," George explained to Dinwiddie that "whatever his motives were for so doing, certain it is, he called it the death, or the loss, of the Sieur Jumonville."\(^{96}\) To his knowledge, Washington never signed his name to Articles stipulating the assassination of the French ensign.

\(^{96}\) PWC, 1:170. George Washington to -. Undated. [c. 1757].
Washington and McKay's version of the events at Necessity were, from the modern perspective, clearly a gross exaggeration of the battle. Omitted were the details of the hurried and exhausting retreat from Gist's storehouse that left a quarter of Washington's men unfit for duty, the reality that Fort Necessity was never meant to be a defensive installation for the Regiment, or the disastrous loss of discipline amongst the men, resulting in quite a few drunken soldiers throughout the night. French losses did not approach the numbers Washington asserted, Villiers' men enjoyed near perfect protection from reprisal volleys, and the Captain recorded "2 men killed, 17 seriously wounded," as the total of his casualties. The decision to offer Articles of Capitulation were likely inclined by Villiers' desire to have a written admission of guilt concerning his brother's death, as well as his own suspicions concerning the location of possible reinforcements for the Virginians.

Washington's account of Fort Necessity, including the condemnations of George Muse and Jacob Van Braam, became the widely accepted version of events in Virginia. Horatio Sharpe remarked that once "circumstances were made known," Washington's "Reputation [was once] again revived." The House of Burgesses offered official honors to "Colonel George Washington, Captain Mackay of his Majesty's independent Company, and Officers under his Command," for their "late gallant and brave behavior in the defense of their country." Freed from the specter of being remembered as the commander whom launched a war with France by

98 PWC, 1:216. Letter from Horatio Sharpe, October 1, 1754.
99 JHB, 8:198. Friday, August 30, 1754.
assassinating a diplomat, Washington was instead regarded as the patriotic commander of a valiant, if doomed, effort to oppose the onslaught of the French.

Conspicuously absent from the list of officers thanked by the House of Burgesses were the names of Lt. Colonel George Muse and Captain Jacob Van Braam. It should not escape noting that Washington avoided censure and maintained, if not supplemented, his public reputation by destroying the public reputations of two of Lawrence Washington's most trusted compatriots. Jacob Van Braam was denounced by Landon Carter as "that rascal...a poor juggling servant." George Muse was declared a coward, and his career and reputation passed beyond revitalization. George Washington, the man whom nearly led four-hundred novice militiamen into a massacre at the Great Meadows, was the subject of adulation from the House of Burgesses and the Governor's Council.

Governor Dinwiddie accepted Washington and McKay's iteration of events at face value. He seemingly ignored the near-insubordinate complaints concerning the pay rates of the officers, refusals of Washington to work with Trent's men, or compromise with Captain McKay, and the loss of both the Fort at the Monongahela and the Red Stone Creek storehouse, for one reason. Despite the immense strategic and tactical blunders of Colonel Washington's first command, he had delivered what Dinwiddie wanted most, Crown support for a war in the Ohio. A flurry of letters describing the French offensive from Dinwiddie's desk to the Lords of Trade in

100 PWC, 1:171. Note 2.
England helped to secure the King's approval for "a plan to send two regiments...to America under the command of Major General Edward Braddock."\(^{101}\)

Governor Dinwiddie met the news of General Braddock's imminent arrival with elation and confidence. He immediately resolved to dispatch the Regiment back into the Ohio Country, ordering Colonel Innes to raise a force of four hundred, "march...over the Allegheny Mountains, and if you think it impractical to dispossess the French of the Fort they now possess...build a fort," to counter its position.\(^{102}\) Far from receiving censure for his previous failures, Washington received orders to "get your regiment completed to 300 men," and rendezvous with Innes. With a force of seven hundred, Dinwiddie thought it practical for Innes and Washington to meet the French head on. To further indicate his approbation of the twenty-two year olds' conduct, Dinwiddie enclosed George's commission as a Colonel with the orders.\(^{103}\)

Washington found Dinwiddie's confidence that the Virginia Regiment could be prepared to either seize Fort Duquesne or erect a counterpart to it before the onset of winter misplaced and premature. Interestingly, whereas only a few months earlier he would have engaged the Governor directly upon that point, the young man redirected his frustration to a more reliable source. William Fairfax, the youth's oldest and most influential political ally received a multi-page letter of grievances on August 11. In an apparently mocking tone, mimicking the official orders of the Governor, the

\(^{101}\) Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 68.
\(^{102}\) The Official Records of Robert Dinwiddie, 1:261. Governor Dinwiddie to Colonel Innes, August 1, 1754.
\(^{103}\) PWC, 1:181. Letter from Robert Dinwiddie, August 1, 1754. Technically, upon the death of Colonel Joshua Fry, George Washington was provided with a brevet commission as Colonel. The actual commission promoting him to Colonel did not arrive until the August 1st letter, well after Washington had assumed the rights and proverbial responsibilities of the rank.
young man asserted that "the state of our forces, is, alone, sufficiently opposed to the measure," as to make Dinwiddie's planned expedition "morally impossible."\textsuperscript{104}

Washington complained of an entire lack of logistical support, akin to his initial failed expedition in the spring.\textsuperscript{105} Morale amongst the men was at a weakened state, as the disasters of the original expedition "are yet fresh in their memories." Desertion once again ran rampant in the ranks; upon the occasion of the letter to Fairfax the young Colonel could report the recent loss of six soldiers.\textsuperscript{106} In fact, Washington would face issues with desertion throughout the month, motivating him to post advertisements in Alexandria offering up to two pistoles, almost £2, for the capture and return of his men.\textsuperscript{107}

Washington allowed the passage of another week before finally addressing his concerns to the Governor. In a much too familiar litany he complained that his men were "now Naked and can't get credit even for a Hat, and are teasing the Officer's every day to furnish them," and that a number were deserting. Those officers under his command that were due promotions were becoming uneasy with the delay in the arrival of their commissions, and as always the superintending concern "about their Pay," resurfaced.\textsuperscript{108} The same issues that had hounded Washington, and with which he had hounded the Governor, returned in full force. The difference however, is that the young Colonel restrained both the duration and tenor of his complaints at this

\textsuperscript{104} PWC, 1:184. Letter to William Fairfax, August 11, 1754.
\textsuperscript{105} PWC, 1:184-185. Letter to William Fairfax, August 11, 1754.
\textsuperscript{106} PWC, 1:186. Letter to William Fairfax, August 11, 1754.
\textsuperscript{107} PWC, 1:196. Advertisement, August 28, 1754.
\textsuperscript{108} PWC, 190-191. Letter to Robert Dinwiddie, August 20, 1754.
juncture. He seemingly sought to avoid altogether frustrating Dinwiddie, perhaps out of fear of the consequences for himself.

A point upon which Washington refused to address briefly concerned the arrival of Colin Campbell, appointed his Deputy Adjutant by the Council. Campbell had overseen two of the counties under Washington's neglected post as Adjutant during the campaign, and for his efforts had been paid £30 from the Colonel's annual salary. When he arrived at Alexandria Campbell informed the Colonel that he, according to the Governor, was to be paid half again of Washington's remaining salary. Astonished, Washington immediately penned a complaint to Dinwiddie, declaring "I hope your honor gave [him] no room to expect this." Citing the payments to Muse's Deputy, of £40, Washington characterized the request as near extortion, claiming he could "get a Person whom I have taken great pain myself to teach...for the same that other's give." 109

Dinwiddie placed considerable effort into providing the necessaries of the coming campaign and addressing Washington's concerns. Those officers due new commissions received them. Notably, Adam Stephen, one of the more outspoken in the denunciations of Muse and Van Braam, replaced the former as Lieutenant Colonel. 110 Dinwiddie endorsed a bill to raise £20,000 for the financing and support of the expedition; disagreements between the Governor and the Burgesses however doomed it to failure. 111 Facing this failure, Dinwiddie authorized Major Carlyle, the

111 JHB, 8:202-203. Wednesday, September 4th, 1754.
long serving logistical officer, to select supplies and "purchase them on Credit."\footnote{112}{The Official Records of Robert Dinwiddie, 1:318. Governor Dinwiddie to Major Carlyle, September 11, 1754.}

Though Washington had considered the new expedition impractical and the Governor's understanding of his state of affairs misplaced, Dinwiddie was dedicated to launching the new campaign. Informing the Colonel of these proceedings, the Governor sought to assuage Washington's concerns for his men. However, much to the young man's distaste, he confirmed that Deputy Campbell was to be paid £50, "annually from your Salary as Adjutant."\footnote{113}{PWC, 1:207. Letter from Robert Dinwiddie, September 11, 1754.}

Washington spent the next month in Alexandria raising the force Dinwiddie had ordered in preparation for a fall expedition against Fort Duquesne. The Governor however harbored well founded fears concerning the arrival of General Braddock's regiments. Recognizing that it would be necessary to raise "10 Companies of 200 Men each," he foresaw unavoidable and indefatigable tension between Colonial and Regimented officers as an impediment to the expedition. Washington's refusals to pay Trent's Ohio Company agents, and his dispute with Captain McKay had doomed the original expedition. Dinwiddie explained to Sir Thomas Robinson that,

"There is uneasiness subsisting between the Officers of His Majesty's Independent Companies, and those under my Commissions. The former will not rank with them, and I fear [this] may be of great Prejudice in case of action."

Dinwiddie's inventive resolution was to request the militia forces "be regimented and blank commissions sent out to me to fill up as was done on the Expedition to Cartagena." Acceptance would allow the Governor to reorganize the Virginia
Regiment into regimented companies, "commanded by Captains and Lieutenants only."\footnote{114}{The Official Records of Robert Dinwiddie, 1:355. Governor Dinwiddie to Sir Thos. Robinson, October 25, 1754.}

Lawrence Washington received his commission as a Captain during the failed expedition to Cartagena. He translated that rank and his service there into a distinct and respectable public reputation, gaining him marriage into an influential family, and the rank of Major in the Virginia Militia as Adjutant General of the colony. Horatio Sharpe, newly the recipient of a Royal commission as Lieutenant Colonel and Commander in Chief of forces in the Ohio, offered that same level of preferment to George Washington. At the age of twenty-two he was offered the rank of Captain, with a commission signed by the King, and command of one of the Independent Companies in the coming campaign. He refused.

Fitzhugh guaranteed that "In regard to the Independent Companies, they will in no shape interfere with you." Washington would be allotted the retention of his post as Colonel "and when the Regiment is reduced, will have a Separate duty."\footnote{115}{PWC, 1:224. Letter from William Fitzhugh, November 4, 1754.} Service as a Captain, where he had once been a Colonel, was not acceptable to George; he replied "I think the disparity between the present offer of a Company, and my former Rank, too great." Washington began 1754 as a Major and District Adjutant with no experience in the field, and became a publically recognized hero as a Colonel. By the end of 1754 he resigned his commission in frustration, declaring "My inclinations are strongly bent to arms."\footnote{116}{PWC, 1:225-226. Letter to William Fitzhugh, November 15, 1754.}
"You make mention in your letter of my continuing in the Service, and retaining my Colo. 's Commission. The idea filled me with surprise: for if you think me capable of holding a Commission that has neither rank or emolument annexed to it; you must entertain a very contemptible opinion of my weakness, and believe me to be more empty than the Commission itself." --- George Washington to William Fitzhugh

As a young man George Washington pursued self-aggrandizement and social mobility through public distinction and military rank. In accordance with the etiquette of Virginia's political system he concealed his ambition behind a deferential persona that offered disinterested service in exchange for preferment. An inventive individual, he orchestrated his rise through the ranks of Virginia's political-military hierarchy through an astute manipulation of influential patrons. Washington was a deliberate and self-interested actor who intuitively deflected suspicions that he harbored selfish ambition as the most effectual means to attain position and status.

Until very recently the broader historiography of George Washington had retained a narrative consensus that presented an image of an apolitical paragon, or a reluctant political actor. Initially popularized by Mason Weems' and John Marshall's panegyric biographies after Washington's death, the apolitical thesis is found in part or in whole as recently as Joseph Ellis' 2004 His Excellency and Ron Chernow's 2010 George Washington: A Life. The modern apolitical thesis however is forced to contend with a generation of character studies that revealed the numerous character flaws of the young Washington; his temper, his infatuation with his best friend's wife, and his avaricious acquisitions of land are forced to mesh into the teleology of a...

---

disinterested man. Refusing to abandon the consensus, modern biographers often reiterate Samuel Elliot Morrison's interpretation, and argue Washington simply outgrew his more serious flaws. Paul K. Longmore's *The Invention of George Washington*, one of the few works to directly engage with Washington's efforts to forge a political reputation, reaches a similar conclusion. John E. Ferling's critical analysis of Washington's political actions, *The Ascent of George Washington*, is one of the few scholarly works to seriously question the narrative of the apolitical thesis, though it does so under the aphorism of Washington's indispensability to America.

The thesis of *The Ambition of Cincinnatus* rejects the apolitical interpretation entirely, stipulating instead that Washington's deferential and reluctant engagement with politics and his reputation as a disinterested public servant are the core components of a deliberately crafted political technique. Following the example of the late Lawrence Washington, George pursued recognition and rank in military service as the quickest means to be, as Douglas Southall Freeman described his motivations, "distinguished in some measure from the common run...." Washington's thinly disguised ambition for preferment was restrained under the framework of patron-client relationships. At once solicitous and deferential, this tactful approach helped him amass a collection of influential patrons. Selectively pressuring each for support, Washington successfully gained a post as Adjutant General, a sinecure with an attached £100 salary, and the rank of Colonel in the Virginia militia.

---

The core motivations of George Washington's military career are apparent in his interactions with Dinwiddie during the campaign against Fort Duquesne. Despite his speedy elevation in rank by the Governor, Washington routinely engaged in divisive arguments over his pay beginning in May 1754. The pivotal contention from Washington was that his daily compensation of 12s 6d as a Lieutenant Colonel and 15s as a Colonel represented an affront to his dignity. He mentioned an intention to resign over the issue in late May, with the counsel of William Fairfax restraining his action. Demonstrating youthful overconfidence in his own significance, Washington had dictated to Governor Dinwiddie that "My pay according to the British Establishment & common exchange is near 22s per Day." The disruptive dispute between Washington and Captain McKay over command authority in the regiment in June derived from the same source. Provincial officers operated under the authority of the local Governor who acted as Commander in Chief, the holders of Royal Commissions operated under the authority of His Majesty the King. It was improper for a provincial to command a commissioned officer, a matter of decorum that Washington refused to accept. Dinwiddie's inventive solution to the dispute was an immediate reorganization of the command staff for the regiment that equated a Royal Captain with a provincial Lieutenant Colonel for the duration of the campaign. That distinction was acceptable to Washington in June, when it gave him authority over McKay. Horatio Sharpe, who replaced Dinwiddie as

---

6 The Official Records of Robert Dinwiddie, 1: 212. Governor Dinwiddie to Governor Sharpe, June 20, 1754.
Commander in Chief, offered Washington a Royal Commission as a Captain in November. Washington's reaction was incongruent with his disinterested reputation.

He issued an absolute refusal to serve under "every Captain, bearing the King's Commission," or subject himself to the potential command of individuals "who have acted as my inferior officers." He rebuffed William Fitzhugh's overture to allow the retention of his Colonelcy by declaring that in the absence of "rank" and "emolument," he considered the position "empty." Washington explicitly declared that the distinction of the position and the compensation that it commanded were indispensable to his willingness to serve. He had previously issued a hollow threat to Dinwiddie in May that he would rather "serve voluntarily," than suffer the indignity of underpayment. When offered an opportunity to demonstrate his fidelity to his disinterested persona, Washington chose to resign.

Demonstrating that his deferential persona had deteriorated entirely, Washington bluntly declared his belief that the entire reorganization scheme was a plot "generated, hatched, & brought from Will's-Creek," by a cabal of resentful regimentals to rid themselves of Colonel Washington. Ignoring his personal culpability in forcing the reorganization, and refusing to accept the compromise in ranks that had been acceptable when it affirmed his authority, Washington characterized the entire incident as, having "had my Commission taken from me."

---

He refused to accept direct responsibility for the proceedings and instead severed his ties with Governor Dinwiddie, Sharpe, and Fitzhugh.

Washington's decision to resign from the Virginia Regiment did not indicate a broader retreat from the patronage systems that he had utilized for position. He retained the Adjutancy of the Northern Neck through 1755, and assumedly the £100 salary. Instead of retiring to private life, a suitable option as he had received the lease on Mount Vernon in December 1754, Washington rededicated himself to advancement in the military through patronage. Captain Robert Orme, "principle aide-de-camp" to Major General Edward Braddock received a letter from George Washington in the late winter of 1755. The retired Colonel had expressed a desire to serve with the General's forces in the upcoming campaign against Fort Duquesne. Braddock's forces marched under the authority of the King, circumventing the authority of Washington's normal superiors in Williamsburg. Hoping to utilize his public reputation from the initial campaign to gain entry into Braddock's command, he sent a suitably deferential letter detailing his interest.

Washington's concerted defense of his reputation in the aftermath of Fort Necessity paid dividends now, as Orme declared recognizing him as a man "universally esteemed," for his service. Finding him a position within the campaign however would prove difficult. On November 12, 1754 the King had ended the controversy between provincial and regimented officers by endorsing Royal

---

Commissions as superior; "Under no circumstances could he as a Virginia colonel, even should he regain that position with full powers, be on an absolutely equal footing with any regular colonel, lieutenant colonel, or major."\(^{16}\)

While the King's decree had demonstrated Washington was in the wrong in his dispute with McKay, it also simplified his inclusion in Braddock's forces. Finding no suitable active duty position for him, General Braddock offered Washington a place "in his Family," as one of his personal aide-de-camps.\(^{17}\) As he explained to his brother John the offer was "agreeably enough" to satisfy his ambitions. "I am thereby freed from all command but [General Braddock's], and give his order's to all, which must be implicitly obeyed."\(^{18}\) Washington considered Braddock a viable replacement to Dinwiddie as his next patron. Further explaining the situation, he remarked, "I have now a good opportunity, and shall not neglect it, of forming an acquaintance which may be serviceable hereafter." George Washington was dedicated to the patronage system as his primary means of social mobility, and seemed prepared to use it for a second chance to pursue his career "in the military line."\(^{19}\)

George Washington deliberately crafted a reputation as a deferential and disinterested servant for the sole means of self-aggrandizement. He prized the social distinction incumbent with the rank and wealth of significant military posts, and zealously protected both his reputation and his position. The maintenance of his political reputation developed into the superintending concern of his young career,

\(^{17}\) PWC, 1:241. Letter from Robert Orme, March 2, 1755.
\(^{19}\) PWC, 1:278. Letter to John Augustine Washington, May 14, 1755.
and his failure to retain it resulted in his first major loss of status. Despite the historiographic consensus that Washington was a reluctant political actor, his astute manipulation of patronage networks indicates he was not only comfortable within patronage, but that he thrived within that system. The myth of Washington as Cincinnatus began as the masterful formulation of a resourceful and inventive young George Washington for the express purpose of satisfying his ambitions.
Notes

Abbreviations for Primary Sources


Bibliography


Ramsay, David. *The Life of George Washington, Commander in Chief of the Armies of the United States of America; Throughout the War which established their Independence; and First President of the United States* (Boston, MA: D. Mallory and Co., 1811).


