

**JOURNAL OF COLONEL GEORGE
WASHINGTON: COMMANDING A
DETACHMENT OF VIRGINIA
TROOPS, WITH NOTES**

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Journal of Colonel George Washington: Commanding a Detachment of Virginia Troops, with
Notes by Robert Dinwiddie & J. M. Toner

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ROBERT DINWIDDIE & J. M. TONER

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JOURNAL
OF
COLONEL GEORGE WASHINGTON,
COMMANDING A DETACHMENT OF VIRGINIA TROOPS,

SENT BY
ROBERT DINWIDDIE,
LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR OF VIRGINIA,

ACROSS THE ALLEGHANY MOUNTAINS, IN 1756, TO BUILD FORTS AT THE
HEAD OF THE OHIO. IT COMPRISES THE HISTORY OF MARCHES,
CAMPINGS AND EVENTS, A SKIRMISH WITH THE
FRENCH, AND THE DEATH OF THEIR LEADER,
DE JUMONVILLE.

The Journal fell into the hands of the enemy, who, in 1756,
printed a version of it in French; a new translation of this
into English is what is here given in the absence of the
original. To complete the history of the Expedition

AN APPENDIX

IS ADDED IN THE FORM OF A DIARY, SUPPLYING AN ACCOUNT OF THE BATTLE
OF THE GREAT MEADOWS AND THE CAPITULATION OF FORT NECESSITY;
THE RETREAT OF THE ARMY; WITH COPIES OF ORIGINAL MUSTER
AND PAY ROLLS OF THE VIRGINIA REGIMENT, AND OTHER
DOCUMENTS CONNECTED WITH THIS EXPEDITION.

Edited, with Notes,

BY

J. M. TONER, M. D.

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1893.

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May 1913

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INTRODUCTION.

The real provocation or motive for the armed expedition to the Ohio in 1754 was not frankly stated by the Governor to the Legislative Assembly of Virginia, or in any state paper by the British Ministry, and is only to be gathered from the official letters of Governor Dinwiddie and the correspondence of other parties, well informed in State affairs, of that period. The following extract from a letter written by Governor Dinwiddie to Colonel Thomas Cresap, and dated Williamsburg, January 23, 1752, presents the views then held by the Colony of Virginia as to the obligations it was in duty bound to observe toward the French in the region of the head-waters of the Ohio: "Sir: You herewith will receive the Opinion of the Council in Answer to your Letters. As to making Reprisals for the Robberies done by the French on the Ohio, it is inconsistent with the Laws of Nations, while We are in Peace with France, and your Letter is too general: if you can give a particular Account of the different Robberies, we must apply to the Governor of Canada for Redress; Upon his Refusal, we may proceed in another manner." The Governor shortly after writing this letter became interested in "the Ohio Company," which was a creation of the

British Ministry designed to test the strength and disposition of the French in maintaining their claim to that vast region of country and to see what support measures for asserting a counter-claim would receive from the Colonies. The movement on the part of Virginia was by no means a spontaneous outburst on the part of the people. On the contrary, the measure was set on foot by the Governor, almost without conference, except with his Council, although he solicited aid from the other Colonies soon after he had committed himself to the enterprise. It seems more than probable that the project was inspired more by state-craft and private interest, than from any ambition on the part of Virginia to repel Indian depredations or to acquire additional territory. While the expedition was a war measure, war had not been declared, and the propriety of, and necessity for, the measure were not apparent to, or sympathized in, by the mass of the people in the several Colonies and was, to a great degree, unpopular with the Assemblies of Virginia, Maryland and Pennsylvania. The following extract from a letter written on the subject by Governor Dinwiddie in January, 1754, to Lord Fairfax, discloses some of the State motives and, at the same time, shows the indifference of the people. He says: "As the French Forces on the Ohio intend down as far as Logstown early in the spring, I think it is for His M'y's Service and the Protection of the Settlem'ts of this Dom'n to do all in our Power to prevent their building any Forts or

making any Settlements on that river, and more particularly so nigh us as that of the Logstown. I therefore, with Advice of the Council, think proper to send immediately out 200 Men to protect those already sent by the Ohio Comp' to build a Fort, and to resist any Attempts on them. I have Commission'd Major George Washington, the Bearer hereof, to command 100 Men to be rais'd in Frederick County and Augusta, therefore I trouble Y'r L'ds' to direct the Militia of Frederick to be drawn out and fifty Men to be enlisted for that service, that Number probably may voluntarily enlist themselves on this Expedit'n on the Pay settled by Act of Assembly, but if they do not voluntarily enter on this Service, I think they must ballot, that the Number may be ascertained so as to prevent as far as we can, of being Surpriz'd. When the Men are properly order'd and their Names taken, they may proceed to Alexandria to Maj'r Carlisle, who I have appointed Commissary of Stores and Provisions, who will take proper Care of them."

The drafts and enlistments were so slow and inadequate to the purpose, as to induce Governor Dinwiddie, February 19th, 1754, to issue a proclamation granting two hundred thousand acres of land on the Ohio, to be divided among, the officers and men serving in this expedition.

In a letter in answer to Governor Hamilton, who requested of Governor Dinwiddie a specific statement of his purposes on the Ohio, he writes, 27th

of April, 1754: "The Plan of my Operat's is agreeable to His M'y's Com'ds to take Possess'n of the Lands on the Ohio in His Name, to build two Forts. My Order to the Com'd'r in Chief, is to be on the Defensive, but if oppos'd by the Enemy, to desire them to retire; if they sh'd still persist, to repel Force by Force. If You sh'd raise Men, they may be told to submit to the rules and regulat's of the other Forces." [*Pa. Colo. Records*, vi, p. 32.]

The apathy of the people was so great as to amount to opposition, but was, in time, greatly overcome by personal influence, national pride, dislike of the French and fear of Indian atrocities which were pictured as imminent. The theory upon which the English government acted throughout was that the French had no valid claim to the territory or, indeed, any land in America, notwithstanding existing treaties which the British were bound to respect, and they made good these conclusions in a war of expulsion.

THE JOURNAL OF MAJOR WASHINGTON.¹

[Notes in the French edition are copied and referred to by letters, while the editor's notes are referred to by numerals.]

On the 31st of *March* [1754] I received from his Honor (a)² a Lieutenant Colonel's Commission³ of the *Virginia* Regiment, whereof *Joshua Fry*, Esq.⁴ was Colonel, dated the 15th, with Orders to take the troops, which were at the time quartered at *Alexandria*,⁵ under my command and to march⁶ with them towards the *Ohio*, there to help Captain *Trent*⁷ to build Forts, and to defend the possessions of his Majesty against the attempts and hostilities (b) of the French.

¹ This is a private journal of Colonel George Washington's, kept by him on his march from Alexandria to the Ohio in the spring of 1754. By mischance and the accidents attending war it fell into the hands of the French. The Journal was in no sense an official one, and even the French rendering of it makes it accord, in all essential points, with his letters to Governor Dinwiddie and to other correspondents. Sparks says the Journal was captured at the battle of the Monongahela. He does not, how-

(a) Governor Dinwiddie of Virginia.

(b) These hostilities had consisted in defending that country against the invasion of the English, and in summoning the latter to withdraw. This note in the French edition of the Journal is omitted in the English translation published by Galt in New York, 1757.