

= Battle of Jumonville Glen =

The Battle of Jumonville Glen , also known as the Jumonville affair , was the opening battle of the French and Indian War fought on May 28 , 1754 near what is present @-@ day Hopwood and Uniontown in Fayette County , Pennsylvania . A company of colonial militia from Virginia under the command of Lieutenant Colonel George Washington , and a small number of Mingo warriors led by Tanacharison (also known as " Half King ") , ambushed a force of 35 Canadiens under the command of Joseph Coulon de Villiers de Jumonville .

The British colonial force had been sent to protect a fort under construction under the auspices of the Ohio Company at the location of present @-@ day Pittsburgh , Pennsylvania . A larger Canadien force had driven off the small construction crew , and sent Jumonville to warn Washington about encroaching on French @-@ claimed territory . Washington was alerted to Jumonville 's presence by Tanacharison , and they joined forces to surround the Canadian camp . Some of the Canadians were killed in the ambush , and most of the others were captured . Jumonville was among the slain , although the exact circumstances of his death are a subject of historical controversy and debate .

Since Britain and France were not then at war , the event had international repercussions , and was a contributing factor in the start of the Seven Years ' War in 1756 . After the action , Washington retreated to Fort Necessity , where Canadian forces from Fort Duquesne compelled his surrender . The terms of Washington 's surrender included a statement (written in French , a language Washington did not read) admitting that Jumonville was assassinated . This document and others were used by the French and Canadiens to level accusations that Washington had ordered Jumonville 's slaying .

= = Background = =

Throughout the 1740s and early 1750s , British and Canadian traders had increasingly come into contact in the Ohio Country , including the upper watershed of the Ohio River in what is now western Pennsylvania . Authorities in New France became more aggressive in their efforts to expel British traders and colonists from this area , and in 1753 began construction of a series of fortifications in the area .

The French action drew the attention of not just the British , but also the Indian tribes of the area . Despite good Franco @-@ Indian relations , British traders had become highly successful in convincing the Indians to trade with them in preference to the Canadiens , and the planned large @-@ scale advance was not well received by all . In particular , Tanacharison , a Mingo chief also known as the " Half King " , became decidedly anti @-@ French as a consequence . In a meeting with Paul Marin de la Malgue , commander of the French and Canadien construction force , the latter reportedly lost his temper , and shouted at the Indian chief , " I tell you , down the river I will go . If the river is blocked up , I have the forces to burst it open and tread under my feet all that oppose me . I despise all the stupid things you have said . " He then threw down some wampum that Tanacharison had offered as a good will gesture . Marin died not long after , and command of the operations was turned over to Jacques Legardeur de Saint @-@ Pierre .

Virginia Royal Governor Robert Dinwiddie sent militia Major George Washington to the Ohio Country (a territory that was claimed by several of the British colonies , including Virginia) as an emissary in December of 1753 , to tell the French to leave . Saint @-@ Pierre politely informed Washington that he was there pursuant to orders , that Washington 's letter should have been addressed to his commanding officer in Canada , and that he had no intention of leaving .

Washington returned to Williamsburg and informed Governor Dinwiddie that the French refused to leave . Dinwiddie commissioned Washington a lieutenant colonel , and ordered him to begin raising a militia regiment to hold the Forks of the Ohio , a site Washington had identified as a fine location for a fortress . The governor also issued a captain 's commission to Ohio Company employee William Trent , with instructions to raise a small force and immediately begin construction of the fort . Dinwiddie issued these instructions on his own authority , without even asking for funding from the

Virginia House of Burgesses until after the fact . Trent 's company arrived on site in February 1754 , and began construction of a storehouse and stockade with the assistance of Tanacharison and the Mingos . That same month a force of 800 Canadien militia and French troupes de la marine departed Montreal for the Ohio River valley under the command of the Canadien Claude @-@ Pierre Pécaudy de Contrecoeur , who took over command from Saint @-@ Pierre . When Contrecoeur learned of Trent 's activity , he led a force of about 500 men (troupes de la marine , militia , and Indians) to drive them off (rumors reaching Trent 's men put its size at 1 @,@ 000) . On April 16 , Contrecoeur 's force arrived at the forks ; the next day , Trent 's force of 36 men , led by Ensign Edward Ward in Trent 's absence , agreed to leave the site . The French then began construction of the fort they called Fort Duquesne .

= = Prelude = =

In March 1754 , Governor Dinwiddie ordered Washington back to the frontier with instructions to " act on the [defensive] , but in Case any Attempts are made to obstruct the Works or interrupt our [settlements] by any Persons whatsoever , You are to restrain all such Offenders , & in Case of resistance to make Prisoners of or kill & destroy them . " Historian Fred Anderson describes Dinwiddie 's instructions , which were issued without the knowledge or direction of the British government in London , as " an invitation to start a war . " Washington was ordered to gather up as many supplies and paid volunteers as he could along the way . By the time he left for the frontier on April 2 , he had recruited fewer than 160 men .

Along their march through the forests of the frontier , Washington was joined by more men at Winchester . At this point he learned from Captain Trent of the French advance . Trent also brought a message from Tanacharison , who promised warriors to assist the British . To keep Tanacharison 's support , Washington decided not to turn back , choosing instead to advance . He reached a place known as the Great Meadows (now in Fayette County , Pennsylvania) , about 37 miles (60 km) south of the forks , began construction of a small fort and awaited further news or instructions .

Contrecoeur operated under orders that forbade attacks by his force unless they were provoked . On May 23 , he sent Joseph Coulon de Villiers de Jumonville with 35 soldiers (principally Canadian recruits , but also including French recruits and officers) to see if Washington had entered French territory , and with a summons to order Washington 's troops out ; this summons was similar in nature to the one Washington had delivered to them four months earlier .

On May 27 , Washington was informed by Christopher Gist , a settler who had accompanied him on the 1753 expedition , that a Canadian party numbering about 50 was in the area . In response , Washington sent 75 men with Gist to find them . That evening , Washington received a message from Tanacharison , informing him that he had found the Canadien camp , and that the two of them should meet . Despite the fact that he had just sent another group in pursuit of the Canadians , Washington went with a detachment of 40 men to meet with Tanacharison . The Mingo leader had with him 12 warriors , two of whom were boys . After discussing the matter , the two leaders agreed to make an attack on the Canadians . The attackers took up positions behind rocks around the Canadian camp , counting not more than 40 Canadiens .

= = Battle = =

Exactly what happened next has been a subject of controversy and debate . The few primary accounts of the affair agree on a number of facts , and disagree on others . They agree that the battle lasted about 15 minutes , that Jumonville was killed , and that most of his party were either killed or taken prisoner . According to Canadian records , most of the dead were colonials : Desroussel and Caron from Québec City , Charles Bois from Pointe @-@ Claire , Jérôme from La Prairie , L 'Enfant from Montréal , Paris from Mille @-@ Isles , Languedoc and Martin from Boucherville , and LaBatterie from Trois @-@ Rivières .

Washington 's accounts of the battle exist in several versions ; they are consistent with each other , but short on details . He wrote in his diary , " We were advanced pretty near to them ... when they

discovered us ; whereupon I ordered my company to fire ... [Wagonner 's] Company ... received the whole Fire of the French , during the greatest Part of the Action , which only lasted a Quarter of an Hour , before the Enemy was routed . We killed Mr. de Jumonville , the commander ... also nine others ; we wounded one , and made Twenty @-@ one Prisoners " .

Contrecoeur prepared an official report of the action that was based on two sources . Most of it came from a Canadien named Monceau who escaped the action but apparently did not witness Jumonville 's slaying : " [Jumonville 's party] saw themselves surrounded by the English on one side and the Indians on the Other . The English gave them two volleys , but the Indians did not fire . 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 had sent them to retire , to be read ... Monceau saw all our Frenchmen coming up close to Mr. de Jumonville , whilst they were reading the Summons ... during which Time , said Monceau made the best of his Way to us " . Contrecoeur 's second source was an Indian from Tanacharison 's camp , who reported that " Mr. de Jumonville was killed by a Musket @-@ Shot in the Head , whilst they were reading the Summons " . The same Indian claimed that the Indians then rushed in to prevent the Englishmen from slaughtering the Frenchmen .

A third account was made by a private named John Shaw who was in Washington 's regiment , but not present at the affair . His account , based on detailed accounts from others who were present , was made in a sworn statement on August 21 ; the details on Tanacharison 's role in the affair are confirmed in a newspaper account printed on June 27 . In his account , the French were surrounded while some still slept . Alerted by a noise , one of the Frenchmen " fired a Gun upon which Col. Washington gave the Word for all his Men to fire . Several of them being killed , the rest betook themselves to flight , but our Indians haveing gone round the French ... they fled back to the English and delivered up their Arms ... Some Time after [,] the Indians came up [,] the Half King took his Tomahawk and split the Head of the French Captain haveing first asked if he was an Englishman and haveing been told he was a French Man . He then took his Brains and washed his Hands with them and then scalped him . All this ... [Shaw] has heard and never heard it contradicted but knows nothing of it from his own Knowledge " . Shaw 's narrative is substantially correct on a number of other details , including the size and composition of both forces . Shaw also claimed to have seen and counted the dead , numbering 13 or 14 .

Historian Fred Anderson documents a fourth account , by a deserter from the British @-@ Indian camp named Denis Kaninguen ; Anderson speculates that he was one of Tanacharison 's followers . His report to the French commanders echoed that of Shaw : " notwithstanding the discharge of musket fire that [Washington] had made upon him , he [Washington] intended to read [the summons] and had withdrawn himself to his people , whom he had [previously] ordered to fire upon the French [. T] hat [Tanacharison] , a savage , came up to [the wounded Jumonville] and had said , Thou are not yet dead , my father , and struck several hatchet blows with which he killed him . " Anderson notes that Kaninguen apparently understood what Tanacharison said , and understood it to be a ritual slaying . Kaninguen reported that 30 men were taken prisoner , and 10 to 12 had been killed . The British colonists suffered only one killed and two or three wounded .

= = Aftermath = =

Washington wrote a letter to his brother after the battle , in which he said " I can with truth assure you , I heard bullets whistle and believe me , there was something charming in the sound . " Following the battle , Washington returned to the Great Meadows and pushed onward the construction of a fort , which was called Fort Necessity . The dead were left on the field or buried in shallow graves , where they were later found by the French .

On June 28 , 1754 , a combined force of 600 French , Canadien and Indian soldiers under the command of Jumonville 's brother , Louis Coulon de Villiers , left Fort Duquesne . On July 3 , they captured Fort Necessity in the Battle of the Great Meadows , forcing Washington to negotiate a withdrawal under arms . The capitulation document Washington signed , which was written in French (a language Washington did not know how to read , and may have been poorly translated

for him) , included language claiming that Jumonville and his men were assassinated .

= = Escalation = =

When news of the two battles reached England in August , the government of the Duke of Newcastle , after several months of negotiations , decided to send an army expedition the following year to dislodge the French . Major General Edward Braddock was chosen to lead the expedition . He was defeated at the Battle of the Monongahela , and the French remained in control of Fort Duquesne until 1758 , when an expedition under General John Forbes finally succeeded in taking the fort .

Word of the British military plans leaked to France well before Braddock 's departure for North America , and King Louis XV dispatched a much larger body of troops to Canada in 1755 . Although they arrived too late to participate in Braddock 's defeat , the French troop presence led to a string of French victories in the following years . In a second British act of aggression , Admiral Edward Boscawen fired on the French ship Alcide in a naval action on June 8 , 1755 , capturing her and two troop ships carrying some of those troops . Military matters escalated on both North American soil and at sea until France and Britain declared war on each other in spring 1756 , marking the formal start of the Seven Years ' War .

= = Propaganda and analysis = =

Because of the inconsistent nature of the record of the action , contemporary and historical coverage of it has been easily colored by preferences for one account over another . Francis Parkman , for example , accepted Washington 's account , and was highly dismissive of the accounts by Monceau and the Indian .

French authorities assembled a dossier of documents to counter British accounts of the affair . Entitled " Mémoire contenant le précis des faits , avec leurs pièces justificatives , pour servir de réponse aux ' Observations ' envoyées par les Ministres d 'Angleterre , dans les cours de l 'Europe " , a copy was intercepted in 1756 , translated , and published as " A memorial containing a summary view of facts , with their authorities , in answer to observations sent by the English ministry to the courts of Europe " . It used Washington 's capitulation statement and other documents , including extracts of Washington 's journal taken at Fort Necessity , to suggest that Washington had actually ordered the assassination of Jumonville . But not all Frenchmen agreed with the story : the Chevalier de Lévis called it a " pretended assassination " . The French story contrasted with that of the British account . Based on Washington 's report , the British suggested that Jumonville , rather than being engaged on a diplomatic mission , was spying on them . Jumonville 's orders included specific instructions to notify Contrecoeur if the summons was read , so that additional forces might be sent if needed .

Historian Fred Anderson theorizes about the reasons for Tanacharison 's action in the killing , and provides a possible explanation for why one of Tanacharison 's men reports the event as a British killing of a Frenchman . Tanacharison had lost influence over some of the local tribes (specifically the Delawares) , and may have thought that conflict between the British and French would bring them back under his influence as allies of the British . According to Parkman , after the Indians scalped the French , they sent a scalp to the Delawares , in essence offering them the opportunity to " take up the hatchet " with the British and against the French .

= = Legacy = =

A portion of the battlefield , along with the Great Meadows where Fort Necessity was located , has been preserved as a part of Fort Necessity National Battlefield . Jumonville 's name has been given to a Christian retreat center near the site . The non -profit Braddock Road Preservation Association , named for the road General Braddock constructed to reach Fort Duquesne , sponsors research and promotes the French and Indian War history of the area .

