

MARCH TO DISASTER: MAJOR GENERAL EDWARD BRADDOCK
AND THE MONONGAHELA CAMPAIGN

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The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author and do not necessarily represent the views of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)

ABSTRACT

MARCH TO DISASTER: MAJOR GENERAL EDWARD BRADDOCK AND THE MONONGAHELA CAMPAIGN, by Major Joseph A. Jackson, 117 pages.

This thesis posits that the leadership of Major General Edward Braddock led to the defeat of the force that he recruited, trained, and led against Fort Duquesne in July 1755. This thesis places Braddock into the strategic context of the time, seeks to highlight relevant leadership decisions he made that yield insights for today's combat leaders. The defeat at the Battle of the Monongahela resulted in a torrent of Indian attacks that claimed many civilian lives and reduced colonial trust in Great Britain's ability to defend her colonies. This engagement set the conditions that fostered within the colonists a growing mistrust of Great Britain and her colonial policies.

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Historical writing is a form that takes many unexpected turns as a thesis is first proposed and investigated. This thesis did exactly that. It intrigued, confounded, and exasperated me. Equally, it enlightened and enthralled me. The journey to investigate this period of our military history arose from a personal sense of family obligation as well as professional interest.

I want to acknowledge Captain Peter Hogg, Esquire, one of the real historical figures that inspired this pursuit. According to family records, he was my Great-Great Grandfather from eight generations ago. He was a Scotsman and contemporary of George Washington. These two men shared a senior-subordinate relationship during the French and Indian War. Specifically, they served together during the events of 1754 at Fort Necessity and at the Battle of the Monongahela River. After the war, they surveyed lands granted as pensions from Governor Dinwiddie of Virginia. These pension lands lay along the Ohio River at present day Point Pleasant, West Virginia.

Directly, I extend my great thanks and appreciation to my thesis committee. This group comprised Dr. Joseph Fischer, the chairman of my committee; who kept me within the bounds of the relevant. I thank Dr. Richard Barbuto, for his encouragement, support for the project, and insights into historical writing on a compressed timeline. I also owe my thanks to Dr. Jerold Brown for his lecture style that brings history to life. To this assembled team, I am grateful for the greatest gift a scholar may receive - latitude - defined by me as the room to think, expand, and contribute.

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CHAPTER 1

CLASH OF TITANS

I have but one lamp by which my feet are guided, and that is the lamp of experience. I know no way of judging of the future but by the past.

Patrick Henry, 1775

Introduction

For the student of the art of command and leadership, military history provides a wide array of poignant examples that illuminate leadership pitfalls and their tragic results. In this particular instance, inflexible leadership, lack of contingency planning, and the arrogance of Major General Edward Braddock resulted in the defeat of a combined Anglo-American army en route to Fort Duquesne in July 1755. Braddock was not a malevolent leader; rather his leadership remained inflexible in a foreign land. He proved obdurate where the terrain and troops were vastly different from those that he previously encountered in his European service. His arrogance deafened him to the advice and counsel of those who knew the country better than he did. The amalgamation of these factors led to a series of decisions by General Braddock that contributed to his defeat.

The tragedy of Braddock's campaign against Fort Duquesne reinforces the premise that super-imposing preconceived formulas of tactics, operations, and aesthetics of uniformity do not compensate for adaptation and innovation in combat. Leaders employed in the profession of arms must maintain a level of flexibility, objectivity, and perspective, and use the fundamental axioms of the military art as a guide not a binding rule to meet a particular circumstance.

Before addressing the issues specific to Major General Braddock and the campaign that he led, it is necessary to review briefly the context of the rivalry between Great Britain and the France. Additionally, review of the colonial policies of the two kingdoms that shaped events prior to the war warrant attention. Into this *milieu*, Braddock would discover that his forty-five years of experience and his steadfast beliefs in the military conventions of the period would not be enough to accomplish his ultimate objective of seizing Fort Duquesne.

Prelude: One Hundred Years of War

From 1688 until the final and decisive defeat of Napoleon Bonaparte in 1815, the rivalry between Great Britain and France persisted intermittently with increasing lethality. Primarily the British and French confined their wars to the continent of Europe.¹ However, global expansionism based upon dynastic, economic, and strategic interests led these rivals to secure new zones of control around the world and in North America. Each empire sought territories and geographical positions to out-manuever the other to control an increasing level of wealth, influence, and power.

One of the first of these strategic wars was the Great War of the League of Augsburg in 1688. This war launched by Louis XIV as he attempted to solidify French continental territories along its frontiers. He fought to retain areas such as Lorraine, the Saar Valley, Luxemburg, and the Duchy of Zweibrucken. The conflict eventually

¹ Walter O'Meara, *Guns at the Forks*, (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1965), viii. The conflict began in North America began 1689 with a series of Indian massacres. These included; the destruction of Dover, New Hampshire followed in August by Pemaquid, Maine, and in February 1690, the town of Schenectady on the Mohawk, massacres at Casco, and Salmon Falls shortly followed. In response, on 1 May 1690 at the Albany Conference, colonial representatives elected to invade Canada. In August a land force commanded by Colonel Winthrop departed for Montreal, a naval force, commanded by the governor of Massachusetts, Sir William Phips set sail for Quebec via the Saint Lawrence River. The Battle of Quebec and the expedition on the St Lawrence were disasters. The English colonies fought a limited and defensive campaign thereafter.

extended to North America in a *petite guerre* – this “small war” foreshadowed the brutal combat between the rival French and British colonies of future conflicts.

This war commenced when the French Governor, General of New France, Louis de Buade de Frontenac, unleashed Indian scalping parties from Canada into New England. The British, led by Sir William Phips, captured Port Royal from the French and nearly achieved a decisive victory by attacking Quebec. The war ended essentially in a draw. The 1697 Treaty of Ryswijk marked the end of the fighting. France ceded its frontier territories to Spain, and the Dutch Republic and England under the joint rule of William and Mary. One of the major points of contention, the succession of the Spanish throne, went unanswered. When King Charles II of Spain died, France went to war again.

The War of Spanish Succession (1701-1714), next drew Britain, France, and most of Europe into a destructive conflict. The French strategic goal was to place a member of the French royal family on the Spanish throne. This would align the combined financial and colonial power of France and Spain against the United Kingdom, the Holy Roman Empire and their allied states. In parallel, their respective colonies in North America again fought each other for their individual survival and the expansion of their nations’ power. The Treaty of Utrecht that concluded the War of Spanish Succession marked a significant shift in colonial possessions. Dynastically, the French and Spanish monarchies did not combine. The French relinquished control of Newfoundland, Nova Scotia (Acadia), the island of St. Kitts, the Hudson Bay Territory, and their influence over the powerful Iroquois and confederated tribes.²

² O'Meara, *Guns at the Forks*, ix. This colonist referred to this conflict as Queen Anne’s War.

In 1740, the War of Austrian Accession marked yet another dynastic war. The contest of wills between France and England resulted from the deaths of Frederick I, King of Prussia, and subsequently of King Charles VI of Austria. A land grab ensued and created a struggle over Silesia as Frederick II attempted to gain land. Maria Theresa, now ruling Austria, worked to solidify and protect her throne. This war lasting eight years, (1740-1748), eventually spanned the globe and included battles in India, the West Indies, and in North America.

Maintaining its parallel nature, the fighting between the French and British colonies took on a familiar shape among their colonies. The fighting forces used a mixture of regular troops, militia, and Indians to raid, raze, and burn targets of opportunity. Forces on each side had perfected these techniques over the previous decades of fighting. In America colonists referred to this war as “King George’s War.”³ New England colonists captured Louisburg in Canada. The 1748 Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle ended this conflict. The treaty restored the colonial borders that existed eight years earlier. The French recovered Louisburg in exchange for Flanders in the Netherlands. While this treaty ended the fighting, it failed to resolve the issues between Britain and France.

The French and Indian War, unlike those previously discussed, did not begin in the royal courts of Europe or as an effort to secure a vacancy upon a European throne. This war began in the colonies as a “small war,” and created a broader and escalating world war between France and Great Britain. The Europeans called this conflict the

³ Ibid., 11. The title of this war is not exactly accurate. The formal declarations of war between the two belligerents was not official until Great Britain declared war on France 18 May 1756 and France responded in kind on 9 June of the same year. These formalities occurred two years after the opening of hostilities.

Seven Years War, but the bloody chronology spanned over nine years. It ended in 1763 with the signing of the Treaty of Paris.⁴

Colonial Policy

The origin of this conflict in North America began as early as the 1740's. The French sought to secure their hold on New France and viewed the use of the Ohio Territory as the natural extension of its communication and fur-trading route between Louisiana and Quebec. The vital link provided by the Mississippi River connected to the Ohio River and the larger bodies of water farther north of the Great Lakes watershed. These interior waterways facilitated the French lines of communication and commerce.⁵(See figure 1).

⁴ Walter R. Borneman, *The French and Indian War*, (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2006), xiv.

⁵ Ted Pulliam, "A Huge Red Bull's Eye," *American History Magazine*, (2005), 52.



Figure 1. Map displaying the disputed French territories in North America.
 Source: www.american.edu/TED/ice/french-indian.htm.

The French determined that these waterways formed the logical boundaries to their colonial possessions. They facilitated their commerce and provided the hunting and trapping territories that supported the limited French *coreurs de bois* (trappers). Therefore, all of the land between these rivers and lakes belonged to them.

Opposing views and methods of colonization facilitated the collision course between French and British interests. In practical terms, the French claimed and maintained control over its global empire by creating small military outposts. Simultaneously, the French worked to establish beneficial economic ties with the local

inhabitants. As a matter of policy, the French strictly controlled immigration to New France. The priority, privilege, and preferences of immigration went to Louis XV's loyal Catholic subjects. That is not to say that significant migrations of sizeable French populations did not occur. Protestant Huguenots fled France and eventually established themselves in the Carolinas. They chose not to attempt reconciliation through a French allegiance in New Orleans but instead started a new alliance.⁶



Figure 2. King Louis XV, King of France

Source: Portrait of Louis XV of France, 1715, Hyacinthe Rigaud (1659-1743), Oil on canvas, (Chateau de Versailles, France).

The French did not send large segments of its population *en masse* to North America. French policy was one of control and restriction of new territories, versus the more direct concept of pure conquest through arms and the establishment of new cities with French citizens. The French Governor General, the Marquis de la Glassniere, pleaded with the king to send larger groups of settlers and more troops to occupy the land. The king refused. Instead, Glasssoniere dispatched 200 soldiers and Indians under

⁶ Borneman, *The French and Indian War*, 12. Louis XIV also persecuted the French Huguenots. Earlier migrations reveal settlements in the Delaware River Valley in the early eighteenth-century.

the command of Captain Pierre-Joseph Celoron de Blainville and a Jesuit chaplain, Father Bonnechamps, to legalize and solidify French territorial claims. Travelling in canoes along the rivers and lakes, they stopped at each confluence of the headwaters of the Allegheny River, Scioto River, Wheeling Creek, Muskingham River, Kanawha River, the Monongahela, and finally arrived at the Great Miami River. Turning north on their return trip, they stopped at Pickawillany and travelled overland to the Maumee River. From here, they used canoes to reach Lake Erie and then up the St. Lawrence to Montreal. At each location, the French buried lead plates in the ground that explained that the treaties from the 100 Years War, the treaties of Ryswijk, Utrecht, and Aix-La-Chapelle, gave ownership of the lands to the King of France.⁷



Figure 3. Figure Map denoting contested the contested Ohio Territory circa 1753.
Source: <https://www.generationhub.blogspot.com>.

⁷ Ibid., 17.

In North America, by virtue of their own restrictive policies, the French did not establish the population centers that could raise a large provincial militia force. If relations with the British waned and the situation deteriorated toward war, the French would have to rely on projecting its land forces via its navy from France. Examination of the population records and census report indicates that the French population of Canada in 1754 was approximately 55,000 white inhabitants. New Orleans and Acadia combined comprised a meager 25,000 more. The French contained in specific urban centers (generally from Montreal to New Orleans) combined with the constraints of French colonial policy; could not leverage a French majority of colonists in any single area to gain a significant or lasting population advantage.

The British claimed the Ohio lands by right of royal charters, land grants, and companies of speculators. The Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York, Pennsylvania, and Virginia colonies all vied for portions of the land. (See figure 4).

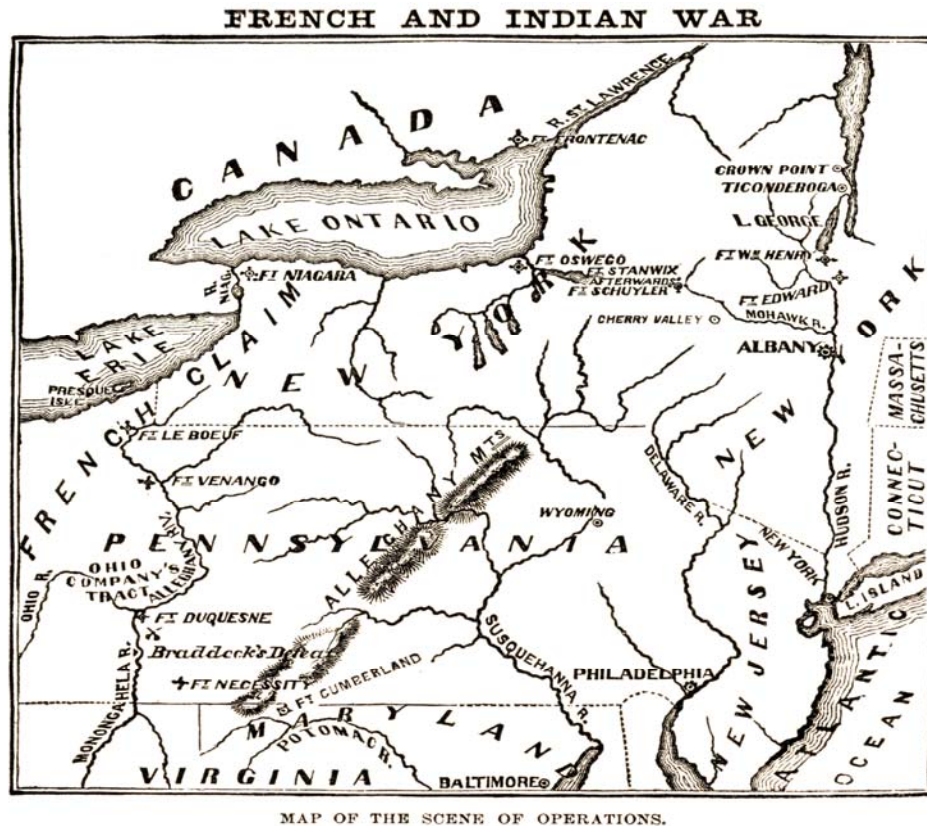


Figure 4. Colonial Frontiers and Ohio Company Grant
 Source: French and Indian War, Map of the Scene of Operations, (Harper's Encyclopedia of US History, Harper & Brothers, 1905, New York).

To lend legitimacy to these claims and as a commercial counter-measure to the claims of French control, the colony of Virginia created the Ohio Company in 1747 with a charter from King George II. To policy makers in London, however, the company's usefulness as an instrument for checking French penetration of the Ohio valley was the most compelling argument on its behalf.⁸ This charter granted permission to settle and develop the contested region.⁹

⁸ James Titus, *The Old Dominion at War: Society, Politics, and Warfare in Late Colonial Virginia*, (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1991), 12.

⁹ Pulliam, "A Huge Red Bull's Eye," 52.



Figure 5. King George II, King of the United Kingdom

Source: King George II when Prince of Hanover by William Faithorne Jr., after Georg Wilhelm Lafontaine (Fountain, Fontaine) mezzotint, 1700-1710 (1701 or before), (National Portrait Gallery, London).

The British strategic interests combined military ambitions and economic desires to populate and exploit the land it occupied. The formation of the Ohio Company granted 100 families the right to occupy and develop 200,000 acres of land beyond the Appalachian and Allegheny Mountains. The implementation of this policy carried with it the necessity of war. The moving of large numbers of families further west not only extended the British colonial borders, but also provided local labor to form a militia or constabulary to fend off the French and their Indian allies. In stark contrast to the French, the British colonies boasted a population of 1,160,000. This provided a convenient reservoir of workers and materiel.¹⁰

¹⁰ Borneman, *The French and Indian War*, 12, 13. The British, since the founding of Roanoke used commercial settlement of the land to solidify control of territory. By permanently settling families to work the land, they attained ownership and control. The British benefitted in two ways. First, the settlements generated new income and taxes on the goods produced. Second, the construction of homes and the clearing of the land created a condition of permanence and full-time occupation of the land. This method proved more effective than buried lead plates written in French.

The civil authorities clearly understood that the expansion of the frontier severed their collective economic interests. The individuals that comprised the membership of the Ohio Company were “overwhelmingly rich, prominent, and powerful men.”¹¹ The Lieutenant Governor of Virginia, Robert Dinwiddie, saw the economic promise of the Ohio Territory. This interest rested on the profits from intercepting and replacing the French fur traders. His aggressive policies toward the French led to the creation of a series of frontier forts. George Washington, along with speculator Christopher Gist, explored the territory on Dinwiddie’s behalf.¹² Dinwiddie’s policy of westward expansion did not receive universal support among members of the colonial general assembly or the western Virginian planters.

The Ohio region, rich in furs, contained no urban centers to with which to develop trade. No other commodities of value to the majority of Virginian merchants and farmers existed in this area. Their economic interests remained closely tied to the trans-Atlantic trade with Europe and along established north and south lines among the already established colonies.¹³

¹¹ Titus, *The Old Dominion at War*, 12.

¹² George Washington. *George Washington Remembers*, Edited by Fred Anderson, (New York: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers Inc., 2004), 33.

¹³ Titus, *The Old Dominion at War*, 14-17.



Figure 6. Lieutenant Governor of Virginia Robert Dinwiddie
Source: Robert Dinwiddie by Unknown artist, oil on canvas, circa 1760-1765, (National Portrait Gallery, London).

Realizing the English had a decisive advantage in labor and resources, the French adopted a policy that relied on Indian augmentation and the establishment of small military outposts. The French lacked the population to occupy the contested lands with clusters of homesteads. The French Governor General Marquis Ange Duquesne de Menneville implemented the expansionist policy of the French king by staking claim to the land through the construction of forts from Lake Erie down the Allegheny River to the Ohio River.

To consolidate and secure their lines of communications, the French befriended the Six Nations of the Iroquois Confederation. The French and Indians maintained a strategic alliance of commercial interests based upon the fur trade. The French and British realized that the Iroquois Confederation provided a buffer between the French and English colonies. This nominal buffer extended from upper Hudson River to the Ohio Territory. Initially, the majority of Indians allied themselves with the British.¹⁴

¹⁴ Joseph R. Fischer, *A Well-Executed Failure: The Sullivan Campaign Against The Iroquois, July-September 1779*, (Columbia, South Carolina, University of South Carolina Press), 9-10. The relationship between the British and the Iroquois was complicated. Essentially, the Indians viewed themselves as equal trading partners and autonomous of direct British control. The British view contended that their alliance

However, increasingly more land speculators appeared deeper in their territory. British settlers in temporary camps along the frontier began constructing cabins and clearing timber to plant crops; the Indians recognized that the British did not intend to leave. Frustrated and pressured from two sides, Iroquois representatives speaking on behalf of the Six Nations, told William Johnson, the English Indian Agent that:

We are so hemmed in by both that we have hardly a hunting place left...If we find a bear in a tree, there will immediately appear an owner of the land to challenge the property, and hinder us from killing it which is our livelihood.¹⁵

In contrast, the French trappers and the French fort garrison posted to the edges of Iroquois lands only minimally affected the Indian hunting areas. The lack of French permanent settlements, from the Iroquois perspective, offered the best hope of assistance in stemming the tide of settlers. Sharing a common view against the British, the French encouraged the Indians to limit the expansion of British settlements through antagonism and intimidation.¹⁶ By 1753, these tactics escalated to include scalping, murder, and the torching of British homesteads. This edged both sides closer to open conflict.

The Indian attacks, justified to the British the need for protection of their commercial interests, and of their homesteads. The colonial governors, especially Governor Dinwiddie, began gathering volunteer militia and regular colonial army units to its colonial borders. The British position, from Dinwiddie's view, was further justified

with the Iroquois and of the Ohio Indians that the Iroquois conquered became extensions and part of the greater British Empire in North America. As such, the British felt justified in extending their reach deeper into the Ohio Territory and they expected the Iroquois to accommodate and acquiesce to their presence in the region. This point of contention was not resolved until after the American Revolution. Following the French and Indian War, Pontiac's Rebellion also saw the Iroquois attempting to negotiate geographic sovereignty while maintaining trading relations with the white settlers.

¹⁵ Borneman, *The French and Indian War*, 18.

¹⁶ Ibid., 13. The Iroquois Confederation comprised the Mohawk, Seneca, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, and Tuscarora tribes. This confederation maintained a semi-feudal hold on the main tribes of the Ohio Territory comprising the Mingo, Shawnee, and Delaware. The Indians created a contractual relationship with both the British and the French known as a "Covenant Chain."

by the chain of recently built French forts extending from north to south along the Allegheny River. In response, Dinwiddie proposed to construct English forts. They also encroached upon the boundaries of hunting lands and furthered Indian discontentment. These combined factors created the tensions that would lead to a war in the New World between old rivals.¹⁷

Parle with the French – Washington's Journey 1753-54

The French logically placed the forts on key terrain throughout the Ohio region. During the Eighteenth-century, the strength and location of fortifications supported political stability and defined the geographical boundary of kingdoms. The northeastern region of France contained the star-shaped fortresses patterned by Sebastian le Prestre de Vauban. The French planned to secure the limits of the Ohio Territory in the same manner.¹⁸

In 1754, the French constructed Fort Duquesne. The location this fortress occupied was imposing. The confluence of the Alleghany and Monongahela Rivers provided an advantageous position for the fort. The value of this location was not lost on Major George Washington's trained eye as a surveyor and aspiring military leader. He noted in his journal of 1753 en route to the French Fort LeBeouf that,

As I got out of the canoe, I spent some time in viewing the rivers, and the land in the forks, which I think [it] well suited for a fort, as it has absolute command of both rivers....They are each a quarter of a mile across and run very near at right angles: the Alleghany bearing Northeast and the Monongahela Southeast.¹⁹

¹⁷ Pulliam, "A Huge Red Bull's Eye," 52.

¹⁸ John A. Lynn, *Battle: A History of Combat and Culture, From Ancient Greece to Modern America*, (Cambridge, MA: Westview Press, 2003), 130-131.

¹⁹ George Washington, *The Journal of Major George Washington: October 1753 - January 1754*, (Williamsburg: Colonial Williamsburg, Virginia, 1959), 4. The English began construction of a timber fort in 1754. The French simultaneously began constructing a fort at Logstown, PA. Alarmed at the possible

From October 1753 to January 1754, Major Washington, at the behest of Virginia Lieutenant Governor, the Honorable Robert Dinwiddie, embarked on a four-month, 900 - mile trip to determine French intentions in the region. Dinwiddie's message encouraged the French commander located at Fort LeBeouf to cease French expansionist efforts.²⁰ Washington published his personal journal detailing the trip upon his return to Williamsburg, Virginia, in January 1754. Dinwiddie politicized this account and used it to demonstrate that he had extended every effort to avoid confrontation with the French. The French reply, which amounted to a polite rebuff of Virginia claims, also facilitated two future actions. First, it permitted the British colonial governors and their assemblies to call out the militia and begin the construction of forts of their own. Second, the colonial civil authorities could now formulate and legitimize a formal petition to the King and Parliament for the deployment of British regular troops to safeguard British subjects and territory. To the first point, Dinwiddie wasted no time and commissioned Washington to erect a series of frontier forts to secure the Ohio Country for Virginia against the French and Indians.

Washington's own memoirs speak clearly to both his commission and assignment. He wrote:

On 31st March [1754] I received from his Honour a Lieutenant Colonel's Commission of the Virginia Regiment... with orders to take the troops quartered at Alexandria under my command, and to march with them towards the Ohio, there to aid Captain Trent in building forts and in defending the possessions of his Majesty against attempts of the French.²¹

presence of an English fort that could control the water route and cut off communication between Canada and New Orleans, the French ran the English off and began construction of Fort Duquesne on the site.

²⁰ O'Meara, *Guns at the Forks*, ix – x. George Washington's perceptions of peace in realty reflected a mere pause in the larger Franco-Anglo conflict from 1688-1815.

²¹ Washington, *George Washington Colonial Traveller 1732-1775*, 51.

The creation of Fort Cumberland in western Maryland and Fort Necessity just over fifty miles farther west marked the first of the frontier forts. This second fort stood on an open plain known as Great Meadows. Washington next intended to assemble his force, move toward Fort Duquesne, and await further orders.²²

Washington received a reconnaissance report from his Indian ally and guide, Chief Half King. Half King reported that a force of French soldiers was searching for Washington's force. Washington convened a council of war on the night of 27 May 1754 and decided to interdict the French. Following this council, Washington and a detachment of his command attacked the French force under the command of Ensign Joseph Coulon de Villiers de Jumonville. The results of this tactical action decidedly tipped the scales toward war.

Charles Stuart's 1766 memoirs recount the incident of Jumonville's death as told to Stuart by Captain Andrew Lewis. Captain Lewis was a provincial company commander under Washington's command and was a participant in the events at Fort Necessity. Lewis's revelation cast doubt on Washington's direct culpability. He alleges one of his subordinate commanders killed Jumonville. Lewis attempts to exonerate Washington's actions. He places Washington and his lack of leadership experience in context of the times when he wrote:

In this command he [Washington] had many difficulties to encounter, that none can well judge of who have never experienced similar troubles, to preserve order and necessary discipline, over an army of volunteers who had no knowledge of the use of discipline or military order, when in the enemy's country, well skilled in their own manner of warfare. And let it be remembered that the youth of our

²² Ibid., 55.

country, previous to those times, had grown up in times of peace, and were quite unacquainted with military operations of any kind.²³

Captain Lewis placed blame for the attack on the French detachment squarely on Washington's direct subordinate commander - Captain Peter Hogg. Captain Lewis, who was present at Washington's council, revealed the facts this way:

Major Washington ordered Captain Hogg [with a detachment] to go and examine him [Ensign Jumonville] as to his authority for making such encroachments on the British claims and settlements. Captain Hogg discovered Jumonville's encampment, which he approached in the nighttime; and contrary to his orders, or the instructions of Major Washington, he fired on Jumonville and killed him.²⁴

A French survivor reported that Jumonville was in discussions with Washington when a discharge of rifles killed him.²⁵ Regardless of which individual actually killed Ensign Jumonville, Washington - as commander - received the blame for the entire affair.²⁶

²³ Charles A. Stuart, *Memoir of the Indian Wars, and Other Occurrences*, Edited by Charles A. Stuart, (New York, New York: The New York Times and Arno Press, 1971) Washington received his first commission as a major in 1753 when he was twenty one years old. His promotion to lieutenant colonel was in 1754. Based on his lack of formal military experience and Washington's short time in command at any grade, it is understandable that some confusion and impulsivity existed within this expedition. Lack of discipline was a common theme that the British regular troops would comment on once General Braddock arrived in 1755 and began organizing his force. 50.

²⁴ Ibid., 50 – 51.

²⁵ Washington. *George Washington Remembers*, 36 – 37. The facts of Jumonville's death remain in dispute. Ensign Jumonville was a member of a French military family. His brother Francois Coulon de Villiers (1712-1794) was the first commandant of Fort de Cavagnal near present day Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Francois also served in the Battle of Fort Duquesne, subsequently captured at Fort Niagara and exchanged. The eldest brother, Louis Coulon de Villiers, defeated Washington at the Battle of the Great Meadows.

²⁶ Washington, *George Washington Colonial Traveller 1732-1775*, 57. Washington notes that his command killed nine, wounded one, and captured twenty-one French. Mr. Jumonville was among those killed. Somewhat surprisingly, Washington never records any animosity to his subordinate Peter Hogg for the assault upon the French detachment. Washington, based upon his orders from Dinwiddie, believed he was acting well within the scope of his orders and commission even though no formal state of war existed.

The Honors of War



Figure 7. George Washington departs Fort Necessity
Source: (South Pittsburgh Development Corporation).

Buoyed by his recent promotion and successes in the field, Washington returned to Fort Necessity to complete its construction. The optimism that Washington displayed in his notes to Dinwiddie in June 1754 in which he boasted that he “shall not fear the attack of 500 men,” did not last. By 3 July 1754, a French force had encircled Washington and his command at Fort Necessity and forced them to capitulate after an eight-hour skirmish.

The impact of this surrender was profound for two reasons. First, the death of Ensign Jumonville set the French command at Fort Duquesne in search of revenge. Second, this episode and the fact that Washington surrendered what the British considered their sovereign territory, hastened both super powers to an unofficial war. The French permitted the Virginians to leave the fort with “the honors of war.” However, the article of surrender placed blame and responsibility for the death of Ensign

Jumonville squarely on Washington.²⁷ This action incensed Dinwiddie. He quickly dispatched a copy of the surrender articles to England. Governor General Duquesne with equal alacrity sent his report to France.

Both sides accused the other of duplicity and breaking the terms of the surrender. The article of surrender signed by Washington stipulated the return of French prisoners. Likewise, the fort and the territory around Fort Necessity transferred to French ownership. The document further directed that the men comprising the garrison of Fort Necessity would not bear arms for a year and that every effort would be made to contain Indian aggression. Reference to the killing of Jumonville further complicated the document using the word *l'assassinat* (to murder). To the French, the actions taken by Washington clearly fit this category since no declaration of war existed between the two nations.

In an astute political move, Dinwiddie publically praised the bravery and actions of the defenders of Fort Necessity against insurmountable odds and laid the blame of surrender on the late arrival of reinforcements from the colony of New York. Washington and the other officers of the garrison, sensing that no blame court martial would convene, determined that the terms of surrender did not apply to them either. They broadly interpreted the terms of parole to apply to the sick and wounded only.

The French received a translated copy of Washington's journal seized at Fort Necessity. Governor General Duquesne determined that Washington and the British could not be trusted. Based upon his reading of Washington's journal, Duquesne

²⁷ Rene, Chartrand, *Monongahela, 1754-1755: Washington's Defeat, Braddock's Disaster*, (Oxford: Osprey, 2004), 38. The French attacked Fort Necessity as a reprisal for the death of Captain Jumonville. During the action at Fort Necessity, Washington's command recorded 31 killed and 70 wounded.

determined that the entire British *raison d'être* was to invade the French Ohio Territory. Duquesne's incredulity over British intentions made life difficult for the British prisoners captured after the capitulation of Fort Necessity. The French left them to their fate at the hands of the Indians. The Indians scalped, killed, or attempted to sell the hapless individuals into slavery.²⁸ In turn, the Virginians rendered the surrender null and void.²⁹

The unfolding events in North America spurred Britain and France to action. By January 1755, the British decided to reinforce the colonies and sent two infantry regiments and artillery from Ireland. The French responded. In May 1755, they sent 3,500 soldiers from the port of Brest. Approximately six French battalions were to bolster the defenses of Quebec and Louisburg.

All Politics Are Local



Figure 8. British troops embark for the American colonies January 1755
Source: (Library of Congress).

Wars remain the conduit of nations to determine the broader success or failure of the political and diplomatic process. This was as true for the French under the Bourbon

²⁸ Washington, *George Washington Colonial Traveller 1732-1775*, 58. Washington's journal entry confirms the need to fight off Indians and French guerrillas as they made their retreat. The Indians captured ten stragglers. They killed and scalped three, the balance eventually achieved freedom..

²⁹ Chartrand, *Monongahela, 1754-1755*, 40-41.

monarchs as it was of the United Kingdom under the rule of King George II.³⁰

Washington's defeat at Great Meadows and the loss of Fort Necessity in July 1754 caused a change in British colonial policy.

Prior to this, the British essentially followed a *laissez faire* policy toward the colonies. As long as England remained the main trading partner of the colonies for semi-finished goods and raw materials, colonial governors and their assemblies decided most internal security and political matters. However, the rising contentions over the colonial frontiers and the aggressive actions of the Indians in these areas necessitated a new emphasis on colonial administration and security. Washington's defeat at Fort Necessity convinced the British parliament that diplomatic channels could not resolve the problems in America with the French. Parliament did not trust that the amateur colonials could resolve the issues for themselves.

The members of the colonial assemblies may not have had the expertise to handle international policy. Nevertheless, the assemblies did possess capable, intelligent, and dedicated individuals. They recognized the immediate threat that the colonies now faced. Taking action, twenty-three delegates from seven colonies convened in Albany, New York, on 19 June 1754, to propose a common government of confederation for the colonies. The conference lasted three weeks. The results affirmed the colonies sincere desire to be subjects of the king and dealt primarily with the concepts of creating a unifying legislature comprising two representatives from each colonial assembly, and a president-general, serving in the name of the king. This individual could ratify the acts of the legislature, make treaties with the Indians, declare war, levy taxes, and propose laws

³⁰ See figures 1 and 2.

that conformed as nearly as possible to English Code. The delegates also discussed the concept of a shared and mutual defense plan.³¹

The basis of these ideas belonged to Benjamin Franklin at least in outline form. The plan passed after much debate. The Board of Trade in London received a copy for recommendation to King George II. The plan went nowhere. The colonies failed to adopt it, failing to look beyond their provincial views. The Board of Trade thought it too radical and distrusted the idea of a unified super-legislature among the colonies. The British Parliament became too distracted with the military expedition to consider the Albany Plan. Thus, the defense of the colonies and its governance would remain delivered from afar. British forces would arrive with an imperfect understanding both of the enemy, terrain, and of the character of their fellow citizens.

Britain Plans for War

Responsibility for forming and supplying the force to defend the colonies rested with the second son of King George II, the Duke of Cumberland.³² In his capacity as Commander of British Land Forces, he was supportive of the colonists as far as that support provided a means to engage France to further British aims. The Duke viewed the actions in the American colonies as a second front to globally attack against the French. The United Kingdom aligned itself in another war on the European continent – The War of the Austrian Succession. Others, such as the Duke of Newcastle, the British prime minister, doubted the colonists' ability to defend themselves without substantial English

³¹ Borneman, *The French and Indian War*, 36-37.

³² See Figure 3.

assistance in terms of officers, training, clothing, and other materiel required to wage even a limited campaign.³³



Figure 9. The Duke of Cumberland, Commander of all British Land Forces. Source: William Augustus, Duke of Cumberland after Sir Joshua Reynolds oil on canvas, (circa 1758-1760). (City of Aberdeen: Provost Skene's House, Aberdeen).

By September 1754, shortly after the news of Washington's defeat at Fort Necessity arrived the need for a full campaign appeared evident. The Duke of Cumberland devised a campaign plan that envisioned pinning the French to their key outposts and severing their communications between Canada and New Orleans via the Mississippi. Militarily, this was a sound stratagem. It also coincided with the Board of Trade's concerns that without intervention into the Ohio Territory, British colonial expansion on the continent would never expand beyond the Atlantic coast.³⁴

To accomplish this, the plan required sequential assaults on four locations (See figure 8). The first, operation required the capture of Fort Duquesne. Lord Cumberland

³³ Thad R. Riker, "The Politics Behind Braddock's Expedition," *The American Historical Review* (American Historical Association) 13, no. 4 (July 1908), The title, Commander of British Forces, translates in modern terms to Chief of Staff of the Army, 747.

³⁴ Titus, *The Old Dominion at War*: 15.

defined the success for this operation when, “the French shall be drove from their Posts upon the Ohio.”³⁵

The British planned subsequent attacks upon the French outposts of Fort Niagara, Crown Point on Lake *Chamblois* (Champlain) and in Nova Scotia at Fort Beausejour.

Command for the decisive operation for the Ohio went to a favorite friend of the Duke of Cumberland, Major General Edward Braddock. Before the British could launch any campaign, much work remained. Fighting the French and seizing Fort Duquesne - or any other bastion - was secondary to first projecting and creating the force. The organization and dispatch of an expedition to the colonies indicated a substantial change in the political balance between England and France. General Braddock’s campaign designed specifically for war and its single purpose - the seizure of Fort Duquesne amounted to an act of war.

Chapter Summary

The British overall strategy envisioned a single multi-pronged campaign that would eliminate the French menace to their frontier regions and secure expanding British commercial and economic zones in North America. This campaign marked the first time that hostilities between England and France originated outside of Europe and then expanded into a continental struggle in Europe. The previous 109 years of warfare between these two and their allied states had followed European disputes and then spread to their colonial possessions. This change marked a significant rise in the consciousness of both the British and French colonists in North America.

³⁵ Stanley Pargellis, *Military Affairs in North America 1748-1765: Selected Documents from the Papers in Windsor Castle*, (New Haven, Conn: Archon Books, 1969), 45-46. See also figure 4.

The British plan to gain the Ohio Territory relied on decisive regional battles in succession along the region's periphery. The success or failure of the plan merged at the confluence of the Monongahela, Ohio, and Allegheny Rivers. Fort Duquesne's central position at this site controlled the French lines of communication to the north across Lake Champlain and into French Canada. The fort further controlled these same lines to the west and south where they intersected the Mississippi River and connected to the French city of New Orleans. The British perspective contended that the French forts separated them from lands that belonged to the British Empire gained by their arrangements with the Iroquois Confederation.

According to the British, Major General Braddock met the requirements to lead the Anglo-American charge. General Braddock faced daunting tasks that extend beyond the purely military. To achieve the goals, the British needed to orchestrate and clearly articulate its policies, project a force, and secure funding from parliament via the colonial general assemblies for the expedition. It required a leader to forge a composite force of regular troops and colonial militia into a unified command. The financial and strictly military aspects however did not complete the variables that the force commander must address. Negotiating support from the colonial governors to supply the war with essential wagons, food, and adequate shelter demanded a political approach to address a military problem. The British commander must also understand the desires of the colonial governors and their local political machinations. The British viewpoint further assumed unquestioned colonial submission to and support for the King's forces. Braddock must also factor in the Iroquois sachems representing its various constituent tribes and determine a suitable role for them.

Operationally, General Braddock faced another adversary beyond the combined capabilities of the French and Indians and organizing his own forces. The terrain promised a challenge to traverse. Creating a path through the dense Pennsylvania wilderness required considerable consideration and effort. Only conquering the thick forest of Pennsylvania would help ensure victory against the French at Fort Duquesne. Braddock attempted to address all of these aspects of colonial campaigning.

All of the aforementioned variables required Braddock's time and attention, but not all of the things required fell strictly within his purview to control and Braddock had his own failings that did not draw the colonists and Native Americans to his support. His perspective of colonists and Indians prejudiced his view of their effectiveness. By speaking blunt honesty to the tribal and colonial leadership, he alienated them both. His demanding style and superior airs offended the Indians. The quickly realized that the British, if victorious would permanently occupy their lands in increasing numbers. The colonial civilian leaders and the militia soldiers resented Braddock's brutal truth as well. He placed them squarely in a servicing role and disregarded their experience with the Indians and knowledge of the land. More embarrassing for the colonists were the threats and confiscation of essential materials for the campaign. Braddock's threats to take wagons, horses, and cattle, for the army depleted the necessary resources the civilians needed to maintain their own homes and livelihoods.

This study will review Braddock's campaign and the culminating engagement along the Monongahela River. The following chapters will examine the leadership capabilities of Major General Braddock, the forming, training, and deployment of his army. Central to this is the recognition that his limited experience in battles upon the

continent of Europe, his lack of tact and vision, and his inability to modify or adapt the tactics of the day led to his defeat.

CHAPTER 2

BRADDOCK BUILDS AN ARMY

The more your troops have been accustomed to camp duties on frontier stations and the more carefully they have been disciplined, the less danger they will be exposed to in the field.

Flavius Renatus Vegetius, *De Re Militari*.

Introduction

Major General Edward Braddock understood his mission to seize Fort Duquesne and he set about preparing for it in a soldierly manner. The problem was not Fort Duquesne itself. The immediate issues for Braddock were many. He must recruit, train, and organize a combined Anglo-American force comprising both regular and militia units to seize the fort. Another problem for Braddock posed two complex and interrelated questions. First, how to deal with the terrain, and the equally important question, how would he sustain his force. Braddock also needed to develop working relations with the civilian authorities and the Native Americans. Both proved difficult, the civil authorities eventually if grudgingly supported Braddock. The Indians abandoned his army almost completely.

The answers to these questions and mitigating the situation necessitated a tremendous marshalling effort by the colonists and colonial governors to supply wagons, provisions, horses, and axes to make the expedition possible. It further required Braddock and his army to traverse more than 100 miles from Fort Cumberland to Fort Duquesne. Further still, this force must arrive with a sufficient force capable of fighting

and winning a battle or more precisely, setting a siege and reducing the fort. Braddock's personal shortcomings, tactical shortsightedness, and arrogance led him to create an army that did not accomplish any of these missions.

Origins of Braddock's Leadership

Forty-five years of service in the British army formed General Braddock's concept of leadership. The British army leadership model evolved to reflect the attributes of the aristocratic class. This social class believed that the higher social orders belonged in positions of leadership by virtue of their membership in the aristocracy. This body comprised the nobility, landed gentry, successful merchants, and members of the officer corps. Their view also posited that the masses of the lower and working classes could not organize themselves and needed guidance and direction. They therefore required the intervention of the higher social orders to provide the necessary leadership. Essentially, heredity, wealth, intelligence, and leadership all emerged from social standing. Only the privileged espoused the characteristics and capacity to learn and employ leadership. Braddock, as the son of a major general, advocated this belief system.

The British army of this period functioned without a systematic methodology and consensus of leadership values except those based upon social standing. Therefore, leadership quality varied greatly. Professionalism and leadership ability rested upon each individual's experiences and interest in furthering his career. This lack of coherent institutional foundations did not mean that a complete vacuum existed. However, the manuals and historical texts used during this period mainly dealt with the practical concerns of maneuver and linear tactics and not leadership traits.

Officers of this period regularly referenced such works as Flavius Renatus Vegetius's *De Re Militari* and Henry Bland's *Treatise of Military Discipline*, 1753 to guide them in employing their forces, but perfecting tactics took precedence over the ability to lead, inspire, and influence subordinates. Whether Braddock read these works remains unknown. What is certain is that Braddock developed a style of leadership based in part on social stratification. The army in which he served equally relied upon historical materials that buttressed their reliance upon precision, obedience, and the use of geometric configurations. This binding reliance upon such strict formation prevented Braddock from objectively assessing his operational environment in the colonies of Maryland and Pennsylvania.



Figure 10. Major General Edward Braddock

Source: Major General Edward Braddock, c. 1750, John Sartain, (Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.).

Braddock spent the majority of his career in the Coldstream Guards. He served in Flanders and in the city of Vlissingen. Additionally, he deployed to the Netherlands during King George's War (1741-1748). His regiment, the Coldstream Guards participated in the battles of Fontenoy and Dettingen. However, Braddock took no part in

the actual fighting. Despite his lack of actual combat experience, he continued to rise steadily in rank throughout his career. His friend, the Duke of Cumberland, the Commander and Chief of Land Forces, supported Braddock's career and selected him to lead the expedition to the North American colonies.

His limited combat experience and affiliation with the highly regimented and disciplined Coldstream Guards coupled with his keen sense of entitlement rounded out Braddock's understanding of leadership. This understanding remained underdeveloped. He failed to consider alternative ideas or other perspectives. When he did seek the opinions of others, it was to extricate himself from complicated decisions.³⁶ He did this numerous time during the Monongahela campaign. He also lacked an interest in, or simply failed to consider, the importance of the interpersonal dynamics inherently necessary in leading complex organizations. After Braddock established himself in North America, Benjamin Franklin noted Braddock's leadership gaps. Franklin observed that:

This General [Braddock] was I think a brave man, and might probably have made a figure as a good officer in some European war. But he had too high an opinion of the validity of regular troops, and too mean a one of both Americans and Indians. George Croghan, our Indian interpreter joined him on his march with 100 of those people who might have been of great use to his army as guides, scouts, etc.. If he had treated them kindly; but he slighted and neglected them, and they gradually left him.³⁷

³⁶ Winthrop Sargent, ed. *The History of an Expedition against Fort Duquesne in 1755; under Major General Edward Braddock*. Vol. I. I vols., (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: J.B.Lippencott & Co., 1856), 331. Holding war councils was common for commanders to have with their subordinate leaders. Braddock's decisions at crucial times during the campaign occurred during these sessions.

³⁷ Benjamin Franklin, *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*. 3rd Edition, 1977, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964), 223.

Diplomacy: Assemblies and Headmen

Braddock spent the first few days after his arrival at Hampton, Virginia, recovering from his slight sickness experienced aboard the HMS *Norwich*. His illness and his general disregard for colonists did little to help Braddock improve the resources to build his army. His first task was to write to the colonial governors to remind them of their obligation to meet in Alexandria, Maryland to discuss the funding, supplies, and support he would need for the campaign. Although London had notified the governors that they were to supply Braddock with anything that he needed including monies from a general fund, the planners had not considered the requirement to consult the Burgesses and Assemblies of the various colonies to ensure that the funding would materialize.³⁸

Franklin's earlier assessment of Braddock does not appear off target. Braddock demanded that the colonial governors finance the expedition by appropriating funds from their general assemblies. From these funds, Braddock would assemble the infrastructure to build and move his army. This was not an unreasonable request. Generally colonies provided the essential support for the campaigns and the British government sent the troops and leadership to reestablish, defend, or otherwise police a threatened possession. They expected that their colonies, in return, should pay for the security that the mother country provided. The assemblies in North America were not compliant to their governors' proposals. This complicated matters for Braddock and eroded the already tenuous relationships he held with the civilian leadership.

³⁸ Titus, *The Old Dominion at War*, 14-16. Few Virginians saw any real value in expanding into the Ohio Territory. The economic strength of Virginia remained tethered to the Tidewater region and predominantly the cultivation and export of Tobacco. The few Indian settlements near the western border offered no suitable markets for economic expansion. Thus, Dinwiddie's desire appeared to the Burgesses and the Assembly simply as an unnecessary undertaking and provoking the French and Indians.

The assemblies initial refusal to fund the expedition and subsequent suggestion that he should use government credit from Great Britain to defray his costs angered the general and added to a never-ending list of issues and decisions for Braddock. The Virginians finally appropriated ten thousand pounds in support of the campaign. Pennsylvania, heavily influenced by the frugality of the Quaker segment, presented a different hurdle for Braddock's campaign. Unlike Virginia, Maryland, and the Carolinas, Pennsylvania had no militia. To its favor, Pennsylvania did contain wagons and an ample supply of provisions that could feed the army. However, Pennsylvanians did not feel compelled by a sense of British kinship to divest themselves of their horses, wagons, and feed to see it lost in the wilderness for no good purpose. To placate General Braddock and to discern a way in which Pennsylvania might contribute to the cause, the Pennsylvania Postmaster, Benjamin Franklin, interceded.

In practical terms, the lack of colonial funding and local support for the campaign polarized the army and the civilian population. Since the colonial governors and assemblies did not rally to support the upcoming expedition, colonists felt no desire to contribute their resources to John St. Clair, Braddock's Quarter Master General. These events reinforced to Braddock that the colonists were lazy, indifferent, and were beneath him for serious consideration on important decisions. The only group that Braddock disparaged more than the colonists were the Indians.³⁹ Unfortunately, Braddock's campaign success or failure rested in no small measure on how he developed a coalition

³⁹ Mathew C. Ward, *Breaking the Backcountry: The Seven Years War in Virginia and Pennsylvania, 1754-1765*, (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2003), 39-40. In order to get the funding required, Governor's Dinwiddie of Virginia, and Robert Morris of Pennsylvania finally convinced their respective assemblies to supply and support the expedition. The political gyrations and Braddock's demanding, and haughty manner weakened their relations further.

of support with both of these groups. Braddock thought that the colonists failed to understand and assist in organizing a workable means of support for him. The Indian response to Braddock's ideas and statements created even more bitter results.

Native Americans did not fight in linear fashion as did the Europeans. Braddock considered them suspect, untrained, and of dubious value to his army of precise formations, obedience, and hierarchy.⁴⁰ Braddock's view is not surprising since the Indians often melted away from English and French campaigns alike that kept them away from their tribes for too long. The Indians existed as hunter-gatherers and a near-subsistence people required the efforts of all to survive. That did not prevent them from acting in concert to conduct successful ambushes and limited raids, but prolonged campaigning was beyond their physical resources.

Braddock went further, setting conditions that did not help his situation with those who might help him. The Indians viewed Braddock as a racist who displayed a lack of regard for their assistance. Braddock's actions regarding the Indians reinforced their negative opinion of him. Only 100 Indians joined his encampment at Fort Cumberland. This included a few Indians from the Ohio Territory and the Delaware tribe. Braddock, disappointed by the poor numbers of warriors that appeared, ordered away the families of those that did come. This order only worsened Braddock's standing among them. Braddock spoke honestly to the Delaware Headman, Shingas. Shingas asked Braddock what would become of the land once the French were pushed out. Braddock replied, "...the English should inhabit and inherit the land." Shingas repeated this query three times. Each time Braddock responded with the same answer. Shingas finally informed

⁴⁰ Thomas M. Huber, ed. *Compound Warfare: That Fatal Knot*, (U.S. Army Command and General Staff College Press, Fort Leavenworth, KS. 2002)17-19.

Braddock, “If they might not have liberty to live on the land they would not fight for it.”

Braddock responded that he did not need their help and would drive the French and Indians away.⁴¹ This exchange quickly circulated among the Indians and they began to slip away from the encampment on the pretext of needing to defend their families left in the villages. Braddock’s reputation among the Indians did not recover. Braddock spoke truthfully to the Indians, but that was not the truth they wanted to hear. The cost of the general’s forthrightness left his army deficient in its means of collecting intelligence and scouting. Braddock was unable to employ those who understood the terrain the best. Those Indians that offered to provide service as guides for his army did so reluctantly.⁴²

In contrast, the French understood the Indians’ hesitation to fight in European fashion and used it to their advantage. They encouraged the Indians to use their knowledge of the land and freedom of movement to seek advantages. They often served successfully in raiding parties, and their hit-and-run tactics frustrated the British colonial militia units as well as the regular army. Braddock missed the opportunity to add this local expertise to assist his force and increase their chances for defeating the French. The French learned from their own conflicts with the Indians that they were quite capable

⁴¹ Ward, *Breaking the Backcountry*, 40-41. Dinwiddie invited the Ohio Indian tribes to join the campaign, but almost none materialized for the campaign. Close analysis of Braddock’s forces reveals that the soldiers he possessed knew little of the frontier. Significant portions of the Pennsylvania Regiment (45.99%) worked as laborers and 39.9% of the Virginia Regiment were planters before the campaign. These individuals understood how to employ farm tools; they knew little of survival in the wild. Thus, the lack of willing Indian guides and scouts hampered Braddock’s ability to navigate the forest without expending a great deal of time and energy searching for the most traversable geography. The balance of Braddock’s recruits included artisans, tailors, carpenters, and shoemakers.

⁴² Borneman, *The French and Indian War*, 53. Braddock held meetings with a number of Indian tribes, including the Delaware and Shawnee to build an alliance. Braddock’s lack of diplomacy failed to raise much assistance from the natives. Fewer than twelve Mingo warriors remained with Braddock’s army.

adversaries.⁴³ Braddock's rigid concept of tactical employment and belief in the superiority of British discipline and firepower did not permit him to hold this same belief.

Colonists fighting in the small and irregular wars of North America of previous decades (against the French and Indians) understood the intrinsic value of using the terrain to their advantage. They learned to value flexibility, speed, and decentralized control because these elements increased the chances of success. Braddock's staid methods relied upon precision of formation, massing of troops, and overly-centralized command and control which curtailed individual initiative. Fighting in the New World required new or different tactics from those of Europe.⁴⁴

Braddock's Anglo-American Troops

The civil authorities in the colonies had not sat idle after the loss of Fort Necessity in 1754. Governor Dinwiddie preempted the arrival of regular forces by dividing Virginia into four militia districts. He also sent adjutants to each region to instruct the companies in basic drill. This half measure proved insufficient to create a formidable provincial force. In accordance with Dinwiddie's desires, the Virginia legislature funded the formation of two companies to form a Virginia regiment. Command of this

⁴³ Franklin, *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*, 126 The French were successful in burning Indian villages, but due to their own casualties from sickness and fighting through ambushes, they retreated to Canada with an appreciation for native fighting techniques.

⁴⁴ Michael D. Pearlman, *The Wars of Colonial North America, 1690-1763*, 30-34. Introduction from, Thomas M. Huber, ed. *Compound Warfare: That Fatal Knot*, (U.S. Army Command and General Staff College Press, Fort Leavenworth, KS. 2002). Colonial militias augmented their regular forces with Native Americans to provide an irregular capability increasingly through the eighteenth-century. Braddock's defeat by the combined regular French forces and augmented Canadian militia revealed the potential capability of adapting some aspects of Indian style tactics. From 1756 until the end of the war in 1762, the British increasingly and purposefully trained selected regiments and soldiers to fight in the decentralized and irregular tactics of the Indians. The formation of the 60th Regiment of Foot (The Royal Americans) and Rogers's Rangers are direct results of this shift in British military doctrine.

organization fell to Colonel Joshua Fry. His deputy would be none other than Lieutenant Colonel George Washington.

Braddock's regular army regiments comprised the 44th and 48th Foot. These units arrived in March 1755 consisting of 500 privates to a regiment. The regiments were further sub-divided into ten companies, each containing a captain, lieutenant, ensign, three sergeants, three corporals, two drummers, and 50 privates.⁴⁵ The 44th's officers included Colonel Sir Thomas Halket, Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Gage, and Major Russell Chapman. Colonel Thomas Dunbar commanded the 48th Foot. The principal officers in 48th included: Lieutenant Colonel Ralph Burton, Major William Sparkes, Captain Roger Morris, and Lieutenant John Gordon.



Figure 11. Grenadier of the 48th Regiment c 1751

Source: Cecil C.P. Lawson after David Morier, (Brown University, Providence, RI).

Upon his arrival, Braddock deduced that the British army maintained a small and apathetic assortment of independent companies in a few of the colonies. These units

⁴⁵ Washington, *George Washington Remembers*, 44. The 44th and 48th Regiments of Foot (infantry) originated in Ireland. The composition of the regiments precluded Catholics from joining. The Dublin Parliament administered both regiments. In 1754, the regiments were under strength. They transferred to Cork, Ireland where they received new recruits from Wales, and Scotland. Their staffing was set at 500 men per and would reach full strength of 700 by the recruitment of colonials. Prior to service in North America, only the 48th had combat experience during the Jacobite Revolt of 1745 at Falkirk and Culloden.

assigned to Fort Cumberland from New York and South Carolina were in poor condition. The 3rd and 4th New York could only muster 46 soldiers fit and present for duty. The falsification of muster rolls and prolonged absenteeism were also an issue. Only 21 soldiers of the 100 registered names mustered for formation in 1754 when the 3rd and 4th New York companies deployed to the frontier. Even those in key leadership positions were notably absent. A prime example is that of Captain John Rutherford of the 3rd New York who had been in England for three years. Not every provincial unit was in disarray; the 3rd South Carolina appeared in better condition and offered more promise. It had taken part in the action at Fort Necessity and proved well disciplined and drilled.

With the exception of Pennsylvania, all of the colonies possessed militia. Alternatively, the Virginians provided a ready pool of approximately 800 men-at-arms. Braddock dispersed these men to bring the 44th and 48th regiments to their fully authorized strength of 700 men each. He then formed nine Virginia companies from the remaining 400 men excluding officers.

The results did not please General Braddock. He appears to have been openly contemptuous of many of these new soldiers. He complained in a letter to Benjamin Franklin that he had assembled “about 2000 effectives, the greater part Virginians, very indifferent Men, this Country affording no better.”⁴⁶ Nonetheless, by April 19, 1755, the two regiments numbered nearly 700 men each and his force took shape.

⁴⁶ William R. Nester, *The Great Frontier War: Britain, France and the Imperial Struggle for North America 1607-1766*, (Greenwood Publishing Group, 2000), 227. This is a surprising comment by Braddock. Over half of the forces of the Virginia Regiment fell between the ages of 14-39 years of age. 41.9% of this regiment were between 20-24 years of age at enlistment. The ages of the troops provided a young and impressionable force that Braddock could quickly mold to fit the style of warfare he envisioned.



Figure 12. George Washington in the Uniform of the Virginia Regiment
Source: Charlie Wilson Peale 1772, (Washington and Lee University, Lexington, VA).

Rather than using numbers or letters to designate each company, the commander's name became synonymous with a particular company. Subsequently, they received specialized assignments. Two companies served as carpenters under command of Captain William Polson and Captain George Mercer. Seven additional companies would form ranger units (infantry) under the following captains; Adam Stephens, Thomas Wagener, William Peyronie, Peter Hogg, Thomas Cocke, John Dagworthy, and Brice Dobbs. Captain Robert Stewart commanded one company of light horse rangers.

Braddock had two other companies at his disposal. The regular artillery company was under the command of Captain Robert Hind. Commodore Augustus Keppel of the Royal Navy provided a company of sailors commanded by Lieutenant Charles Spindelow.⁴⁷ Lieutenant Spindelow was an expert draftsman, and sent on the expedition

⁴⁷ Franklin Thayer Nichols, "The Organization of Braddock's Army," *The William and Mary Quarterly* (Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture) IV, no. 2 (April 1947), 136. These two units went directly from Alexandria to Fort Cumberland and did not encamp with the main body. Colonial provincial troops consisted of officers and enlisted troops who served full time, usually from early spring until late fall. For example, the Virginia provincial troops who fought at Jumonville's Glen and at Fort Necessity. Recruited and enlisted in the spring of 1754, they disbanded the following fall.

to build floats for the cannon to cross the rivers and streams.⁴⁸ The army siege train that contained four, 12lb cannon; six, 6lb. cannon; four 8 Inch Brass Howitzers, and fifteen, 4 2/5 Inch Coehorn Mortars.⁴⁹

Thus, Braddock arrived with an imperfect but relatively able force for the period. The addition of the navy expertise of Spendelow, and Braddock's clearly stated orders provided from Lord Cumberland, provided clear direction.

While in garrison, Braddock took some direct measures for his troops' conditions. He prepared the individual soldiers for the campaign. He wisely altered the load and dress of his troops. Given the dense forest and underbrush of the terrain, his troops stored their shoulder and waist belts and short swords. He further required the soldiers to carry only one extra shirt, a pair of stockings, an extra pair of shoes and functional brown gaiters. He replaced the heavier regulation waistcoats and breeches with ones of lighter weight. This reduced the carrying load per soldiers and was at least a half-measure against the effects of the summer heat. Lieutenant Henry Timberlake could testify to the effects of the humid summers for he suffered, "[a] fit of sickness by running, overheating, and drinking large amounts of coldwater, rendering me incapable of duty."⁵⁰ The soldiers placed water-filled leather bladders inside their hats to prevent sunstroke. To increase practicality and utility of moving through the woods and heavy brush, the officers and non-commissioned officers stored their espontoons and halberds and

⁴⁸ Nichols, "The Organization of Braddock's Army," 138.

⁴⁹ Pargellis, *Military Affairs in North America 1748-1765*, 88 –91.

⁵⁰ Henry Timberlake, *The Memoirs of Lieutenant Henry Timberlake, 1756-1765*, (Edited by Dale Van Every, Johnson City, Tennessee: The Watauga Press, 1927) 45.

exchanged them for lightweight muskets. Braddock's decisions that directly changed the soldiers' accoutrements would not greatly increase the speed of his advance.

Logistics: Pounds and Provisions

Lack of food for the soldiers and horses was the immediate and pressing issue that Braddock faced. Prior to Franklin's appearance, Braddock received only 25 barely serviceable wagons and very few of the 2,500 horses promised by Virginia and Maryland. General Braddock arrived at Fort Cumberland to find that the wagons of flour arrived empty and that the salted beef arrived spoiled. This was unsatisfactory and inauspicious way to begin a campaign.

Beyond leveraging colonial treasuries to finance the expedition, Braddock faced more expense and practical supply limitations. His army, located at Fort Cumberland, occupied the last populated area that could effectively sustain his army. Once the march began, no location could provision a force the size of Braddock's without stripping the region bare. Unfortunately, there were no towns west of Fort Cumberland, other than a few Indian settlements, trading posts, and modest family farms. Therefore, the army had to cart and carry everything it needed for the journey with them. A common axiom of logistics is that it does not drive the commander's operations. However, in Braddock's situation, his supply issues complicated his decision process. It compelled him to organize his force to both protect the provisions he had and to attempt to reach his objective quickly before his army exhausted them.⁵¹

⁵¹ Fischer, *A Well-Executed Failure*. 104-105. Logistical concerns more or less determined the operational efficiency of an eighteenth-century army. Braddock experienced this first hand. He could not live off the land by pillaging enemy villages as in Europe ala the fashion of a *chevauchee* fashion. Nor did he have the space or time to graze his horses each day. The figure of 2500 horses is probably a conservative estimate. The cannons required seven horses per limber. The cannons and limbers due to fatigue and the dwindling

In attempting to attain speed, Braddock was at the mercy of the environment as well as his supplies. He had to create a path through the wilderness that did not exist and to widen it where it intersected Indian trails to an approximate width of twelve feet. Down this narrow corridor, Braddock would push 2000 troops, approximately 2500 horses, 300 wagons, plus 600 more horses carrying provisions on their backs, spare mounts, and a dozen limbers to service the 12 field-guns, and finally the 14 Coehorn mortars which traveled in small wagons fitted for their use. Besides the rations for the troops noted earlier, seven to ten thousand bushels of oats for the horses completed the load.

The soldiers' food necessitated burdening the pack animals even more. Their diet consisted of large amounts of salted meats such as bear, pork, and venison that they purchased from the Indians in bulk as much as 8,600 pounds at two pence per pound. Soldiers further received a standard ration of seven pounds of beef or four pounds of pork per week per soldier. Rice, corn, peas, butter, turnips, and apples rounded out the balance of their diets as well as a daily issue of half a cup of rum or whiskey. This last item was so important that mutinous behavior by the troops was not far away if the casks ran dry. The commissaries purchased hard liquor 100 hogsheads at a time.⁵²

The army's misfortune and deficiencies, as well as the other colonies' mismanagement in delivering the supplies that Braddock needed, allowed Benjamin

number of draft animals needed nine horses six weeks into the campaign. The wagons at the beginning of the march comprised the King's wagons – heavy covered Conestoga type vehicles used by the army. Once the march began to stall, locally contracted wagons at a cost of 10 shillings per day replaced the army variant. The problem of moving heavy wagons and artillery into the interior would continue to plague the colonists and the future Continental Army. During the Sullivan campaign against the Iroquois of 1779, little had changed in terms of moving artillery and provisions into the interior of the Ohio and Great Lakes regions.

⁵² O'Meara, *Guns at the Forks*. 119-121.

Franklin to shine. He arranged for 150 wagons loaded with food and some extra luxuries such as cheese, coffee, oils, lemons, and hams for the officers to arrive at Fort Cumberland within two weeks of Braddock's arrival. The first 91 wagons arrived on 20 May 1755.⁵³ These provisions arrived in twenty packets on twenty horses to Braddock's officers who received them gratefully. Franklin's intervention alleviated the immediate crisis. Franklin achieved what neither Braddock's or St. Clair's belligerent attitudes could. The supplies began to arrive and Pennsylvania to maintained the respect of its neighbors and they accomplished it without straining Pennsylvania's treasury.

Braddock's Quarter Master General Sir John St. Clair wrote of Franklin:

No magistrate in Virginia or I believe in Maryland gave themselves the least trouble to assist in collecting the Country people to work upon the roads and to provide us with Carriages; But on the Contrary everybody laid themselves out to put what money they cou'd in their Pockets, without forwarding our expedition. In this Situations we cou'd never have subsisted our little army at Will's Creek, far less carried on our Expedition had not General Braddock contracted with the People of Pennsylvania for a Number of Waggons.⁵⁴



Figure 13. Benjamin Franklin (1706–1790)

Source: Joseph Siffred Duplessis, (National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution)

⁵³ Ibid., 227.

⁵⁴ Nester, *The Great Frontier War*, 227.

Other Means of Supply

Carrying tons of supplies through the wilderness was not the only means of provisioning available to Braddock's army. Other methods did exist, according to Captain Robert Orme, Braddock's senior aide-de-camp. First, the idea of creating magazines of supplies in advance of the march seemed appropriate. Second, constructing small stockades with guards and depots of supplies promised a means to secure the lines of communication and to reduce the size of the wagon train. The last options went well beyond the scope of Braddock's comfort and orders. Instead of marching directly against Fort Duquesne then maneuvering from south to north to take Fort Niagara and Frontenac, Governor William Shirley of Massachusetts proposed combining forces and moving collectively to Fort Oswego then on toward Fort Niagara.

In the first instance, the terrain would require that a significant number of pioneers from the ranger companies cut a path first. This method was impractical since the supplies for the magazines would not be far enough in advance of the army's march and would slow its progress further by forcing the pioneers to cut trees to avoid crashing into and damaging the horses and wagons sent to establish the magazines. Essentially, this method placed the horses and carts before the army and increased its vulnerabilities.

The second option did not prove suitable either. It tied a significant number of troops to the logistical operations. Braddock could not expend the troops to clear land and then construct the necessary warehouses for powder and dry goods. Nor did the army possess enough axes and other building materials to construct stockades suitable for prolonged use. This concept also ran against the general purpose of his mission of

seizing Fort Duquesne. With most of the force spread along a 100-mile route, Braddock would have no forces available to achieve his objective.

Of the three plans considered, only the last held some merit. By capturing Fort Niagara, Braddock and Governor Shirley's forces could isolate Fort Duquesne. The British could effectively sever French communications from Canada to the Ohio River. The fort would either surrender or eventually face attack by two forces. Braddock rejected this idea completely.⁵⁵ Given the distances between his and Shirley's forces and likely difficulties in putting the two organizations together, Braddock maintained his focus upon Fort Duquesne.

Transportation

Equally frustrating for General Braddock was the lack of alternative means of transport for all or a portion of his supplies and ordnance. The Potomac River turned away from the line of march just past Fort Cumberland. The army was traveling northwest and this river flowed southwest. The Monongahela that lay 75 miles away was too shallow and contained too many twists and turns to be useful. The only other river of any size, the Youghiogheny River, was even less useful than the Monongahela. It revealed similar characteristics and was therefore useless as a viable means of transport. The overland route was the only viable means and felling trees and pushing forward across land was the only option available.

⁵⁵ O'Meara, *Guns at the Forks*, 136. Braddock's campaign was just one of several to occur from Nova Scotia, to the Monongahela River. Governor (Colonel) William Shirley's force succeeded in taking Fort Bausejour in Nova Scotia.

Braddock's options concerning his logistics remained limited. The lack of navigable waterways determined that he carry his provisions.⁵⁶ Carrying his supplies in turn cost precious time and encumbered his line of march with the materials of war. He made the only decision that he could.

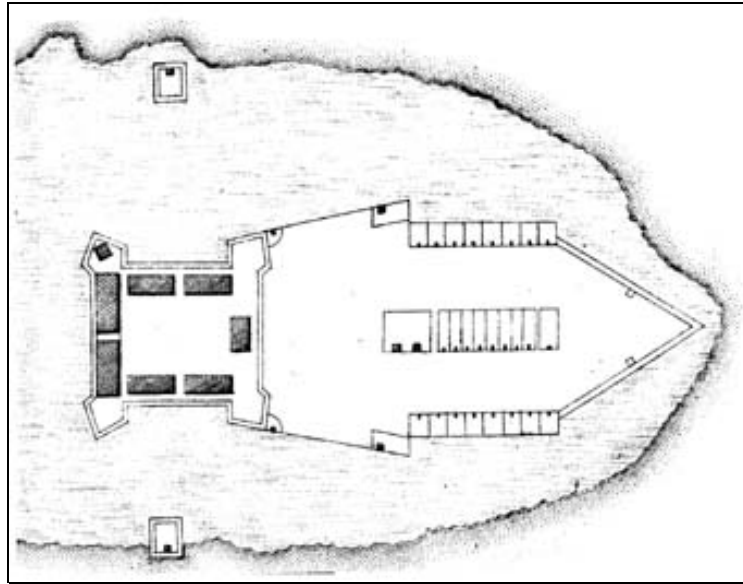


Figure 14. Fort Cumberland 1755

Source: Map drawing from William Loudermilk, (*History of Cumberland, Maryland* 1878).

Developing the Force

Success in European-style combat during the eighteenth-century required that units rigorously follow rules that reinforced their dependence upon symmetrical shapes of columns, squares, and lines. Braddock strictly adhered to these rules. In Europe, the terrain justified this methodology. Armies and units deployed from columns to lines and

⁵⁶ Fischer, *A Well-Executed Failure*, 128.

formed on broad open plains. They then could maneuver by wheeling and closing to within less than 100 yards to exchange fire. Braddock's lack of actual field experience accepted these tactics without considering how they might be modified if the terrain did not favor this prescribed methodology. He drilled and built his army along these concepts.

Braddock imposed a tough system of order through rigid administration, drill, and harsh discipline. Armies often used corporal punishment for infractions. The colonial militia troops deeply resented its use upon them. Accustomed to leading individualized lives, the order imposed by Braddock seemed stifling. Braddock set a brisk and authoritative pace of daily events for his command at Fort Cumberland. He did this to set the tone of importance for the upcoming campaign against Fort Duquesne. It also forced the militia units and new recruits to acquiesce to the rigors of army life. Braddock employed harsh measures. These proved effective for other British campaigns in Europe; these methods defined his new command. This order imparted the essential qualities of soldiering by instilling individual and unit discipline across the organization. This improved their collective chances of survival in combat.

The resulting organization appeared efficient, measured, and regimented. However, the order and pageantry belied the fact that this force lacked the atmosphere to foster any individual initiative. When this force faced the French and Indians prior to its arrival at Fort Duquesne, they would respond in textbook fashion, but that textbook response would not necessarily lead to a successful engagement.

Chapter Summary

Major General Edward Braddock believed that by presenting an autocratic leadership style, he could build an effective combined Anglo-American force of regular army and militia. The resulting force would then seize the objective of Fort Duquesne. Braddock's decisions to train his force were not wrong nor was his decision to carry all of his supplies given the physical circumstances. These decisions followed the understood tactics of the time. What he failed to appreciate was the full magnitude of what lay ahead and how necessary it would be to create contingency plans beyond the basic defensive formation to defend his force and protect his siege train.

He failed despite his meetings with various Indian sachems to forge a meaningful coalition. This left his army handicapped and limited in regard to its ability to *see* and *know* what was over the next rise no matter how disciplined and orderly it might appear. His interactions with the Native Americans were painfully honest. Braddock clearly articulated British policy that the Indians would not receive a homeland or substantial hunting grounds for their support. His brutal truth and low opinion of their soldier qualities spoiled any good will that the regional tribes felt for Braddock and his men.

Braddock's demands of support and supply – no matter how necessary – left a poor impression upon the colonial leaders. Braddock attempted to solve the complex issues of administration, recruiting, pay, punishment, and maintaining essential logistical functions. The manner in which he and St. Clair went about it drew the resentment of the local population and the assembly members. The result of Braddock's efforts resulted in the formation of an army and the gathering of supplies. As his martial strength increased, his support beyond the tents of Fort Cumberland eroded.

To compensate, Braddock built the army that he knew. He forged a miniature European army with which to fight other Europeans – the French. This required tactical proficiency by building disciplined units that could execute and maneuver within the system of British linear tactics and employ the practice of volley musket fire. In doing so, he created a command that relied most heavily on obedience and response versus initiative. Whereas the French, lacking the troop strength of the British, relied more upon their own *elan* and relationships with the Native Americans to offset this imbalance in materiel and training. On the morning of 29 May 1755, with flags unfurled and drums beating, Braddock's advance party of 600 troops disappeared into the forest.

CHAPTER 3

A RATIONAL WAY OF WAR

Introduction

Braddock's orders from Lord Cumberland stated his mission simply and directly: seize Fort Duquesne. The composition, organization, and logistical structure of the march to Fort Duquesne originated from this order. General Braddock used his previous career experiences and knowledge to formulate his advance to the objective. Braddock lacked experience in combat and lacked even more experience in fighting in a rugged wilderness. It is not surprising then that his plan reflected a European design that did not account for the effect of the environment.

Braddock's basic arrangement comprised a heavy column of infantry and colonial militia augmented by cannon and a heavy-laden logistical train. He formed his column's organization around a tactically sound and logical order. However, his subsequent decisions reduced the column's combat efficiency and effectiveness while he attempted to gain speed to reach Fort Duquesne. The column formation that Braddock used provided for all-around security and it fundamentally protected the wagons and cannon needed for the anticipated siege of their objective. In a firefight, Braddock counted on the discipline of the units and their firepower to overcome any French and Indians they encountered. The column undoubtedly presented a large and tempting target, but equally it bristled with guns and a significant advantage in numbers. Braddock clung to these advantages even as the elements beat down his force. When he realized that his progress with such an unwieldy organization would exhaust his supplies before he reached the objective, he divided his force. His subsequent decisions and lack of contingency

planning set the conditions that further hastened his misfortune before arriving at his objective.

Braddock drilled his small army in contemporary British tactics of linear warfare while at Fort Cumberland. This method of tactical employment required precise movements and use of massed formations. These ideas of mass and unit-level maneuver ran against the cultural grain of the colonials. The colonists' experiences in previous *petite guerres* determined that reliance upon individual instinct and flexibility proved more successful in wilderness fighting. They confirmed that prudent use of cover and concealment, stealth, and selection of targets could close the tactical gaps between traditional troops and the Indians or those that fought like them.⁵⁷ These precepts appealed more to the colonial mind. These tactical preferences failed to deter Braddock's confidence in the superiority of using symmetrical European formations densely packed and centrally controlled.⁵⁸

The British army utilized these tactics to good effect in fighting in the Low Countries during the War of Austrian Succession, among others. Armies that fought

⁵⁷ John Shy, *A People Numerous and Armed: Reflections on the Military Struggle for American Independence*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1991)32-33. Wars with the Native Americans in New England and in Virginia reinforced an appreciation for Indian style fighting that the British regular army lacked. The English settlers counter attack against the Wampanoag Confederacy of King Philip's War revealed their ability to adapt to meet the Indians on equal terms tactically and with equal ruthlessness. Bacon's Rebellion of 1676 displayed these ill-advised but equally effective tactics that the landless frontiersmen could use to raid, destroy, and pillage in like fashion to the natives. While the efficiency of the militias is debatable, the strength of the militia was not necessarily their prowess in prolonged engagements but in their resiliency to answer the threats to colonial safety repeatedly and to adapt to the tactics of the enemy to pursue and defeat them.

⁵⁸ FM 7-72, "Light Infantry Battalion," (Washington DC: Department of the Army, March 16, 1987), C-2. Presently, United States Army doctrine provides guidelines and factors for planning that light infantry battalion commanders must consider when planning a tactical movement. Appendix C of Field Manual 7-72 stresses that there are numerous considerations including the tactical situation, terrain and weather, effectiveness of planning and preparation, march discipline and supervision, soldiers' load, and overall physical condition. It is recommended that soldiers' load should not exceed 30% of his/her body weight to prevent degradation of performance. General Braddock considered these things in part or in total. He nevertheless concluded that a highly centralized and densely packed column was best for the march.

during this period incorporated the broader concepts of rationalism from the sciences of mathematics and geometry.⁵⁹ Major General Braddock's preconceptions of how to plan and prepare his army to engage the French followed these contemporary conventions. However, Fort Duquesne was not the flat, open land of Flanders where columns and lines of troops could easily deploy and reform.

For Braddock, the security of the wagons was paramount for the cannon and cargo it contained would enable him to reduce Fort Duquesne. The column, essentially an extended rectangle, contained deployed security units a short distance along the sides, front and rear. The problem that Braddock would encounter with this force was that when attacked, it responded by collapsing to the road to defend the wagons and ordnance. While logical, this response revealed that Braddock failed to appreciate that the closer the enemy encroached upon his formation, the less usable his formation and tactics would become.

Braddock was thoroughly convinced of the rightness of these European practices. His conceit was understandable. Braddock commanded a force of more than two thousand troops, with cannon, and outnumbered his enemy 2000 to approximately 300. Braddock believed he was not in jeopardy.⁶⁰ Despite the warnings of influential provincial officers and political leaders such as George Washington and Benjamin Franklin, he decided to rely on the strength of the regular British army system of tactics.

⁵⁹ Lynn, *Battle: A History of Combat and Culture*, 130.

⁶⁰ Ward, *Breaking the Backcountry*, 38. Three Hundred of the French forces were regular garrison troops at Fort Duquesne; it does not include approximately another 100 French Canadians, and 400-600 Indians. Braddock, based on his own experience with Indians, most likely assumed that they would not pose a significant threat.

He arrogantly believed his forces to be unbeatable and that the terrain would not impede his campaign. He boasted to Benjamin Franklin:

After taking Fort Duquesne, I am to proceed to Niagara; and having taken that, to Frontenac, if the Season will allow time; and I suppose it will; for Duquesne can hardly detain me above three or four Days; and then I see nothing that can obstruct my March to Niagara.⁶¹

Braddock's conclusions of what might occur after successfully reducing Fort Duquesne were not reasonable. He failed to acknowledge the difficulty in transporting artillery even farther through the dense woods of western Pennsylvania and into New York. Once Fort Duquesne fell, there remained no easy means to supply Braddock's force. Any logistical support would have to traverse the 100-mile path that Braddock's pioneers just created. It still required improvements by way of creating numerous small bridges over the marshy bogs and streams that ran between the high ridges. After six to eight weeks of marching through rough terrain and conducting a siege, Braddock's army would require time to recover from the effects of the summer heat and exhaustion, and to train the replacements for those lost during the march. Braddock's view of the situation was orderly and logical, but not realistic in its scope.

To prepare his force, Braddock imposed rigid discipline and parade-ground formality upon them to ensure his force practiced the maneuvers he thought they would need to protect the wagons during the march. Captain Robert Orme, Major General Braddock's senior aide-de-camp, explained Braddock's concept of the formation in detail in his journal.⁶² Braddock held a meeting outlining his plan and soliciting objections. No apparent dissenting opinions arose from this meeting and Braddock's plan of tight,

⁶¹ Franklin, *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*, 223.

⁶² Sargent, *The History of an Expedition against Fort Duquesne in 1755*, 317-320.

constricted control remained intact. Given the need to secure the wagons and his siege equipment, Braddock's plan followed basic tactics used at that time. In order to defend the train and to maneuver the units alongside it, Braddock had to maintain tight control. However, once he made subsequent decisions to change the order of march and the composition of the columns, he did not change his method of defense.

To Braddock, it seemed logical that the accepted practices of the time would remain true to form. Based upon his experience and the secret intelligence reports from Major Stobo, an English prisoner of the French at Fort Duquesne, this advance would not be substantially different from any siege in Flanders. Moreover, Braddock reasoned that the British regular soldiers accustomed to the parade-ground drill and precision would sweep away any Franco-Indian force it met.

The conflicts of Europe did not all occur upon wide-open plains. Likewise, not every campaign and resulting battle played out in chessboard fashion. British units such as the 48th fought in the mountains of Scotland during the 1745 Jacobite Rebellion. Additionally, British units served with distinction in France fighting in small bands and rearguard actions among the hedges and copses after the battle of Fontenoy on 11 May 1745.⁶³ However, the adaptability of the British troops in these engagements did provide the model for Braddock. He relied upon what he observed and largely, what the terrain seemed to allow. He led a narrow, slow column moving with imperfect knowledge of the terrain and scant intelligence of the French and Indians that they might find.

⁶³ Peter E. Russell, "Redcoats in the Wilderness: British Officers and Irregular Warfare in Europe and America, 1740-1760." *The William and Mary Quarterly* (Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture) XXXV, no. 4 (October 1978): 636-637.

The Troops Assemble

Braddock commanded 2150 effective troops comprising British regulars, colonial militia, and sailors. Further augmentation included wagon masters, frontiersmen, wives (serving as nurses, cooks, and laundresses), and a few Indian scouts. In order to begin the expedition, the force assembled in two brigades. The full organization assembled on the morning of 30 May 1755 (Appendix A) and included a collection of twenty-nine field pieces of artillery, in addition to the limbers, and 300 supply wagons; it required thousands of horses to move the force approximately 110 miles from Fort Cumberland to the objective at Fort Duquesne.⁶⁴ The actual order of march deviated from this official mustering in order to employ the artificer companies. These units employed carpenters and pioneers to fell trees, clear the route, and construct crude bridges as needed.

Anticipating that advance preparation of the route would expedite the march, Braddock dispatched a vanguard of 600 men commanded by Major Russell Chapman of the 44th Regiment of Foot. This advance party included the quartermaster general, Sir John St. Clair, two engineers, Lieutenant Spendelow of the Royal Navy, and several Indian guides.⁶⁵ The task facing this formation was to clear a path 12 feet wide for 20 miles (the distance from Fort Cumberland to Fort Necessity).⁶⁶ Christopher Gist found the Nemacolin Indian trail around Will's Mountain the first major natural obstacle to

⁶⁴ Pargellis, *Military Affairs in North America 1748-1765*, 86-91. Captain Robert Stewart commanded a troop of cavalry. However, none of the original sources or secondary sources mentions any significant detail or contribution of this element. They did not play any significant role in the engagement in their usual role to screen or guard the infantry as they advanced toward Fort Duquesne.

⁶⁵ Sargent, *The History of an Expedition*, 309. Prior to the beginning of the march, Braddock met with and persuaded eight Aughquick Indians to gather intelligence on the French and join his expedition. Captain Robert Orme, Major General Braddock's senior aide-de-camp recorded this.

⁶⁶ Chartrand, *Monongehela, 1754-1755*, 50-53. This initial penetration from Fort Cumberland resulted in the wrecking of three wagons. The 12 foot width requirement of the road was not an accidental measurement. This width facilitated the passage of wagons, cannons, and troops in column of twos along each side of the road.

Braddock's expedition. The discovery of this route by Gist and George Washington's confirmation that it provided a suitable route supported Braddock's assumption that this march would not prove difficult. This assumption ended with the termination of this trail.

Distance, Rate, and Time

The topography revealed that the general relief of the terrain runs from northeast to southwest.(Figure 16). Braddock's carpenters discovered that the undulations of the terrain - steep slopes to ascend and descend created bogs and streams in the narrow valleys and required the erection of numerous small bridges. It also required additional time to corduroy the timbers to prevent the loss of wagons, cannons, and hopelessly miring the horses.⁶⁷

Braddock did not have an alternative means to move the artillery and a portion of the supply wagons. No navigable waterways existed along the route of advance. This meant all cross-country movement would require a huge expenditure of time and physical effort. Placing this effort into perspective, during the first two days of the march, the army travelled a total of five miles. Two days after the march began; Braddock made the first decision that began a slow process whereby Braddock reduced the effectiveness of his force. He sent two of the 6-pounder cannons and four of the Coehorn mortars back to Fort Cumberland. Additionally, he replaced the King's covered wagons with local open

⁶⁷ O'Meara, *Guns at the Forks*,129. Important to note is that American draught horses were lighter and not as robust as the European version. They could not handle the heavy cannon and wagons combined with the vertical climbs required therefore more were needed to haul the artillery. This increase in horses further increased Braddock's burden to carry feed for them. The term corduroying is used generically to mean that expanses, streams, and other crevices required the felling of trees to form a solid platform over which the horses could walk without breaking legs and strong enough to support the weight of the wagons and artillery. The primary documents, such as Captain Rober Orme's account does not mention the length or number of bridges that the pioneers constructed. He simply states emphatically that they spent a great deal of time on bridging operations.

farm wagons. Officers sacrificed their extra mounts to move excess baggage to Fort Cumberland as well.⁶⁸ The army continued to lurch forward and only 25 miles elapsed after nine days of brutal marching and felling of trees.⁶⁹

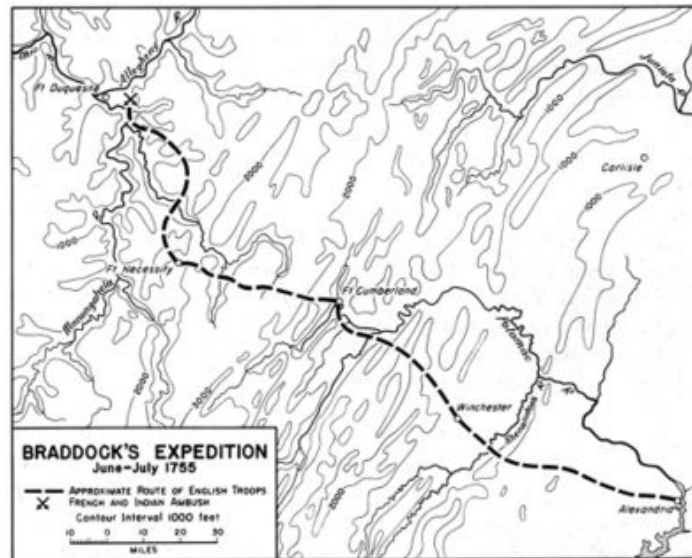


Figure 15. Braddock's route to seize Fort Duquesne

Source: The University of Texas at Austin, (Courtesy of the University of Texas Libraries).

Recognizing that he could not sustain his force at this pitiful rate of advance, General Braddock received advice from George Washington on how best to continue the advance. Washington advised:

⁶⁸ Ibid., 129. This decision by Braddock did not immediately improve the speed of his advance. The removal of cannon was probably a good decision. They would be of little use in the woods if they were attacked and with an arsenal of 24 types of artillery and ordnance he had a sufficient amount to demolish Fort Duquesne. The decision of the British officers to give up their extra mounts is interesting. Officers retained their primary mounts and this partly attributed to the significant loss of officers among the dead and wounded during the battle.

⁶⁹ Pulliam, "A Huge Red Bull's Eye," 55. The rivers that existed in the area ran along north-south axis. The campaigns against the French forts further north benefitted to some degree from water transport in moving artillery. However, even moving cannon by water did not ensure that they would actually arrive at the destination. Braddock eventually reduced his artillery train from 24 to 16 pieces of various sizes.

...to push on; if we even did it with a chos'n detach[ment] for that purpose, with the artillery and such things as were absolutely necessary; leaving the baggage and other convoys with the remainder of the army, to follow by slow and regular marches, which they might do safely, while we advanced in front.⁷⁰

Based on his own inexperience and Washington's exposure to the region in his loss at Fort Necessity in 1754, Braddock made the second fateful decision. He changed the arrangement of the columns organization and divided it into two unequal segments in order to gain speed. On 8 June 1755, Braddock created two columns with the aspiration that he could establish his siege before his supplies ran out and his force became ineffective due to fever and exhaustion.

This decision is one of the most critical of the campaign. Braddock needed to increase his rate of march. Nevertheless, by taking Washington's advice he increased the risk to both column segments. The lead column comprised 44th and 48th Regiments, the New York Independent Company, three of the nine Virginia Ranger companies, a company of carpenters, the seamen, a few of the Light Horse company and some gunners for the artillery. General Braddock reduced the artillery train as well.⁷¹ Braddock's decision gambled that he could cut his way more quickly with the majority of the infantry and by tacking sufficient artillery, he could quickly secure a perimeter around Fort Duquesne. The artillery would provide the decisive weapon and shatter the wooden stockade walls. Using artillery in the woods, though possible, was not ideal. It required a precise crew drill to unlimber, place into position, load, and fire. Firing single 12 or 6-

⁷⁰ Walter O'Meara, *Guns at the Forks*, (Englewood Cliffs, N.Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1965), 131.

⁷¹ Rene. Chartrand, *Monongehela, 1754-1755*, 57. The artillery pieces in the lead column consisted of four 12-pdr cannon, two 6-pdr cannon, four 8-inch howitzers, and three Coehorn mortars. Thirteen artillery wagons, 17 ammunition wagons and packhorses carrying 35 days provisions followed.

pound balls into the dense forest would do little to disrupt an attack. Even though Braddock had lightened his column significantly, his decision to retain the artillery still slowed his advance and created a condition that necessitated a defensive response focused upon guard pieces if attacked as opposed to counterattacking to drive the enemy away.

This decision also increased the risk that neither column could mutually support one another if attacked. The trailing column contained the sick, the majority of the 300 supply wagons, horses, cattle, and the weakest of the draft horses. The strongest remaining horses now pulled the artillery for the lead column. Colonel Thomas Dunbar would not be able to match the speed of the leading column with these slower moving elements.

The leading force comprised approximately 1400 troops supported by a smaller and lighter logistical train. After three days, 50 miles separated the two columns. The balance of the wagons, associated artillery pieces, limbers, and ammunition as well as the balance of the colonial infantry units, approximately five companies of Virginia Rangers, cattle, and the sick remained with Colonel Dunbar at Little Meadows. They resumed their plodding march on 28 June following Braddock's departure on 8 June.

Braddock's leading light column sub-divided further into three segments. The vanguard contained approximately 400 troops. Axe men comprised the largest number of this group to clear a route through the dense forest. The second segment contained Braddock's scouts. The main body of 800 followed with Braddock, his staff (including Washington), a mix of British regulars and Virginians followed by a small wagon train of reduced artillery, seaman, and a few nurses. Flank guards and skirmishers patrolled

approximately 50 yards along either flank through the brush in order to provide early warning.⁷²

On 16 June 1755, the British arrived at Little Meadows where Braddock decided for the third time to reduce his baggage in order to increase his speed. He sent more of the soldiers' wives to Fort Cumberland and reduced baggage further. Washington penned in a letter on 14 June 1755 to John Augustine Washington:

As I wrote to you since the 1st Instant, I shall only add, that the difficulties arising in our march (from having a number of wagons) will, I fear, prove an insurmountable obstacle.⁷³

Braddock finally recognized this as well. However, his decisions reflected his desire to close upon an enemy that he perceived as weak and under strength. The increased speed seemed justified because reports of the French at Fort Duquesne placed their strength at 100 French and 70 Indians.⁷⁴ Braddock did not conceive of the idea that the garrison at this strategic location might contain more troops. As noted previously, he did not seriously consider the French or the Indians a significant tactical threat. Some signs of Indian scouting and reconnoitering of his position did occur. The British dismissed these as random acts of violent bravado by the Indians. The British did not view them as part of a systematic pattern of shadowing of the army.

Braddock's force progressed and the French and Indian raiding parties began to shadow the British flanks as they drew nearer to Fort Duquesne. They sought opportunities to scalp and kill scouting parties, or those retrieving wayward horses.

⁷²Ibid., 131-132. Excess baggage, two 6pdr cannons, four coehorn mortars, and various ordnance were sent to Fort. Cumberland. This relieved the column of 100 horses, 16 wagons, and 50 "undesireable" soldiers. Twenty-eight of the women were sent to Philadelphia.

⁷³Washington, *George Washington Colonial Traveller 1732-1775*, 76.

⁷⁴Chartrand, *Monongehela, 1754-1755*, 56.

These events, and the growing distance between his “flying column” and the heavy column under Colonel Dunbar, compelled Braddock to hold a final council of war for one more decision.

This next decision proved crucial. Braddock decided to press ahead and attempt to encircle Fort Duquesne before allowing Dunbar’s column to close to within supporting distance. Pressing ahead with half of the formation meant no relief for Braddock’s column. This extended the miles between himself and Dunbar. By 8 July 1755, more than 50 miles separated the two segments of his force, and the final ten miles remained to reach the fort. This was an important decision. If attacked, Braddock had no ready reserve to commit to add to his own volume of fire or to attempt a difficult envelopment through the trees. Operationally, this decision carried risk as well. If Braddock did arrive at Fort Duquesne without incident, his troops would quickly expend themselves in efforts digging trenches and hauling the artillery into position around the fort.

Between 16 June and 8 July 1755, the British continued to cut their way forward. On 25 June 1755, the army turned north as it passed the former site of Washington’s surrender at Fort Necessity. They averaged only three miles per day. It required five days to cover the next seventeen miles. Braddock maintained flank and rear security elements as well as a vanguard. While this was a by-the-book formation, the duration and difficulties during the march began to wear on Braddock’s men. The time spent on the march, exposure to heat, rain, bad food, and the never-ending hauling, dragging of wagons, cannons, and limbers stressed Braddock’s limited logistical supplies. When he separated from the second column, on 8 June, he possessed 35 days of supplies and

rations. By 8 July, a month later, Braddock's supply situation was nearing the point of failure.

Braddock's decisions had an inverse relationship to achieving his desired goal. By pushing his force harder and faster, he eroded their desire to fight as they witnessed their supplies running out and the difficulty of the terrain unchanging except for their proximity to Fort Duquesne. This was little comfort. Braddock placed himself in a dilemma. He had to either capture the fort with the troops at hand or disperse what supplies he could capture. Alternatively, he would have to stop short of the fort and allow the second column to rendezvous with him and replenish his stocks. Given the narrow and restrictive terrain, Braddock pressed his luck.

By July of 1755, the French suspected a British attack upon the fort. In an effort to reconnoiter and confirm this, Contrecoeur dispatched units in detachments of approximately 200 troops augmented by Indians to confirm the direction of the British advance. One of these detachments led by Captain Daniel Hyacinthe Lienard de Beaujeu comprising 108 French regulars (officers and soldiers), 146 Canadian militia, and 637 Indians literally ran into the vanguard of Braddock's force just ten miles from the British objective.⁷⁵ Unfortunately, for the soldiers in Braddock's column, fighting was not an option but a necessity. The vanguard under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Gage crossed the Monongahela 10 miles from the objective --Ft. Duquesne -- on 9 July 1755.⁷⁶ After slogging and willing themselves nearly 100 miles, the march culminated.

⁷⁵ Alberts, *The Most Extraordinary Adventures of Major Robert Stobo*, 144-5. Contrecoeur remained at Fort Duquesne. He believed that the fort could not be held against a British attack and desired to burn the fort and march north toward the next French position and find more support.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 98-107. Major Robert Stobo participated in the loss of Fort Necessity and remained a hostage of the French. The letters and diagram of the fort (figure 17) smuggled out by Major Stobo reached Fort

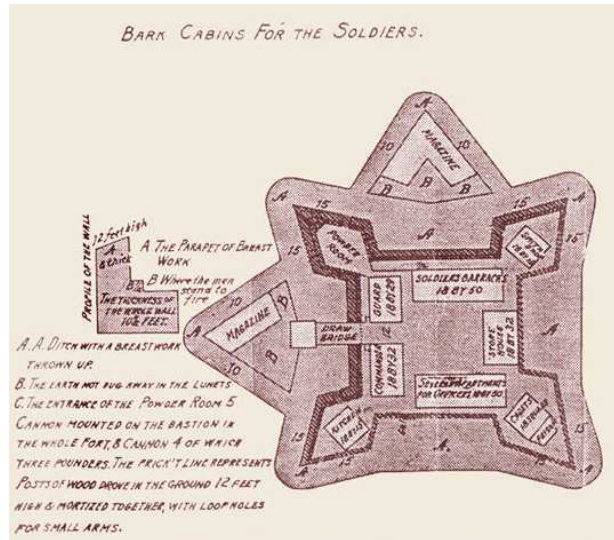


Figure 16. Map of Fort Duquesne

Source: By Robert Stobo (The Most Extraordinary Adventures of Major Robert Stobo).

Chapter Summary

Limited logistics and difficult terrain greatly affected General Braddock's decisions. In response to those impediments, he made a series of decisions that affected his ability to sustain his forces in the field to achieve his objective. First, by failing to recognize the difficulty of the terrain, he slowed his own initial progress by encumbering his army with a huge supply and siege train. Second, Braddock's decision to divide the assets of his army created internal problems that grew as the march progressed. The terrain necessitated that he reduce the artillery train further, place his sick, weakened animals, and bulk of supplies in the heavier second column under Colonel Dunbar. This ensured that this element would not keep pace with the lead march element under Braddock. This set of conditions led Braddock to a fateful decision. Once he passed the

Cumberland prior to Braddock's departure and were among the documents captured in the abandoned wagons.

site of Fort Necessity, Braddock determined to push on to the object rather than to refit, resupply, and cross level supplies once more. Instead, he pushed his own limited resources to their end and probably the endurance of his own troops.

Braddock's lack of experience and his desire to prove to the colonials that British tactics could surmount any environment led him to form his column in the only way that he understood – by the book. His methods of organization were not necessarily flawed. Braddock's fault lay in the fact that the book method was the only method he accepted until his force became irreversibly jammed into the narrow confines of the forest and ravines. Thereafter, his decisions, while marginally increasing his speed, reduced his effectiveness because he could not maintain his supply lines, he could not rotate the sick and weary troops for fresh replacements in Dunbar's column and despite maintaining security around his column he knew nothing of what the enemy was really preparing. This set of decisions and resulting realities did not rest well with Braddock's two regimental commanders. By 8 July, Colonel Sir Peter Halket believed Braddock was advancing blindly toward the fort. Colonel Thomas Dunbar commanding the second column felt abandoned and uniformed with respect to his orders and the general's plan. Both were true, and none of the three were speaking to each other or seeking a means to fix or better the situation.⁷⁷ Irrespective of the tactical decisions that would be made in the battle to follow, the decisions that Braddock made along the route of the march did not place his troops in a precarious situation.

⁷⁷ Chartrand, *Monongehela, 1754-1755*, 56 -59. Lieutenant Colonel Halkett died during the ensuing battle attempting to rally his troops to attack the French and Indians hidden among the trees. Lieutenant Colonel Dunbar would assume temporary command of the remnants of Braddock's force and went into winter quarters in August of 1755 in Philadelphia. He sent letters to Braddock complaining of the growing distance between their units and the sad condition of the horses. Braddock sent 40 horses from his column to Dunbar's of which only 16 arrived.

CHAPTER 4

MEETING ENGAGEMENT

An Officers character is hardly retrievable if surprised without being prepared.

General Humphrey Bland

Introduction

Braddock and his Anglo-American force expected to find the French awaiting the siege of Fort Duquesne from behind its heavily timbered bastions and ramparts.

Braddock's march for the past six weeks did not experience the expected hit and run tactics or an ambushade that his tactical arrangement intended to thwart. Signs of Indians emerged as they neared the fort but no enemy presence materialized to obstruct their progress. Tired, haggard, and almost out of supplies, Braddock and his approximately 1400 troops viewed Fort Duquesne around midday on 9 July 1755 as they crossed the Monongahela. That would be the closest that they came to seeing the fort. The action that followed took the name of the last terrain feature that Braddock's force had to cross rather than the name of the fortress he came to siege.

Braddock had endured a complex and arduous campaign. Now, as he pushed his column for one more day to reach its objective, his previous decisions and those that he would and would not make that day collided with the decisions of the French. The result was that Braddock led his army into a disastrous meeting engagement.⁷⁸ Prior to his

⁷⁸ Field Manual 7-8. "Infantry Rifle Platoon and Squad," Washington DC: Department of the Army, April 22, 1992. 3-12. The Battle of the Monongahela was a meeting engagement. This is as an offensive operation, consisting of maneuver that results in opposing forces encountering one another. Units employ this type of offensive operation to, "gain, maintain, or reestablish contact with the enemy. These two forces literally stumbled into each other on the narrow path. Quick reactions by the French facilitated better use of the terrain than did the British who fell back upon their column.

march toward Fort Duquesne, Benjamin Franklin eerily forecasted the implications of Braddock's expedition into the frontier. Franklin commented:

The only danger I apprehend of obstruction to your march, is from Ambuscades of Indians, who by constant practice are dexterous in laying and executing them. And the slender line near four miles long, which your army must make, may expose it to be attack'd by surprise in its flanks, and to be cut like a thin thread into several pieces which, from their distance cannot come up in time to support each other.⁷⁹

His prophetic words became fact. The six-plus weeks of battering their way through the Pennsylvania wilderness took a toll on the health and alertness of Braddock's force. Dysentery, fevers, and exhaustion plagued the marching column. Poor sanitation and hygiene were common to all armies of this period in Europe and in North America. The condition of Braddock's army was no exception to these troubles. Beyond the decisions that Braddock made, the physical condition of his troops directly correlated to their alertness and ability to fight. The army maintained a screen on along its flanks and a vanguard and rearguard. However, Braddock did not establish a rotation of troops within his leading column or among the units from Colonel Dunbar's trailing group. Whereby the carpenters and road builders in the front could rotate for a rest or take up sentry duty along the flanks to recover their strength. Instead, Braddock pushed the same troops day after day crashing through the forest and depleting his supplies.

Though the vanguard and flank guards reported the remnants of Indian encampments along the route, contact with them remained light. This lack of direct contact with the French or Indians (other than attempts by small raiding parties to capture soldiers while foraging) lulled Braddock and the regiments into a false sense of

⁷⁹ Franklin, *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*, 224.

security.⁸⁰ Braddock did maintain specially tasked units deployed around the column as it marched to provide advanced warning of attack. As the march progressed, their attention to force protection suffered. Fatigue and illness depleted the ranks. Their attention to their surroundings and overall security degraded. Until the morning of 9 July, Captain Pierre de Contrecoeur noted to General Marques deVaudreuil, the Governor General of New France, on 14 July 1755 that many attempts to exploit a weakness in the British formation had failed because, there were “always on guard.”⁸¹

This lack of enemy activity reinforced Braddock’s belief in the correctness of his decisions and the tactical arrangement of his troops. However, Braddock did not maintain these protective measures with the rigor and discipline of his martinet reputation. On previous occasions, Braddock ordered the securing of high ground in order to prevent any surprise from the French and Indians. Harry Gordon, one of the road engineers confirmed that:

...the General likewise ordered about 350 men to take possession of the heights on each side; and the Grenadier Company, the advance of the advanced party, to gain the Rising Ground, which shut up th Valley in our front. No enemy appear’d, and we Encamp’d on the last Mention’d Rising Ground, which Brought us within a Small Mile of the River Monongahela.⁸²

Gordon’s journal entry of the night prior to the Monongahela crossing is important because it shows that Braddock failed to make this decision the next day. On

⁸⁰ Peter E. Russell, "Redcoats in the Wilderness: British Officers and Irregular Warfare in Europe and America, 1740-1760." *The William and Mary Quarterly* (Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture) XXXV, no. 4 (October 1978): 643.

⁸¹ Stanley Pargellis, "Braddock's Defeat," *The American Historical Review* (American Historical Association) 41, no. 2 (January 1936), 269.

⁸² Pargellis, *Military Affairs in North America 1748-1765*, 105-106. Harry Gordon served as the chief road engineer for Braddock’s march. Gordon’s account, was written after the battle and includes parts of others accounts. Several other first person accounts note that Braddock failed to seize or secure the high ground on the path as he neared Fort Duquesne. This is just one of several decisions that Braddock made that determined the outcome of the battle.

the morning of 9 July, Braddock neglected to maintain this same level of concentration on security. He did not secure the last rise after his force crossed the Monongaheala River. Gordon concludes that Braddock failed to order this, despite the earlier repeated practice. Gordon notes:

Every one who saw these Banks, Being Above 12 feet perpindicuraly high above the Shore, and the course of the River 300 yards Broad, hugg'd themselves with joy at our Good Luck in having surmounted our greatest Difficulty's, and [all] too hastily Concluded the Enemy wou'd never dare to Oppose us.⁸³

Braddock held the same opinion since he did not send out any additional security to search for any other key terrain features.

His generalship as his force neared the objective did not provide sufficient guidance to his subordinates. Instead, the automatic but uncoordinated actions of his subordinates during the battle would cause the component elements to become impediments to the Braddock's force's ability to fight in the already close quarters of the forest. The formation Braddock deployed was of proven European design. Nevertheless, Braddock either did not realize or failed to consider that the protection and survival of the column relied upon its scouts and reconnaissance capability and not solely on its firepower. As his force cut its way through the forest, he telegraphed each day to the scouting Indians of the French his location. For Braddock, it was virtually impossible to maintain their location as a secret. The crashing trees, the cooking fires, and the noise of the wagons gave precise report of his progress and location. In contrast, Braddock knew nothing of the French and Indian strength or intentions. Even worse, Braddock lacked the means to acquire accurate intelligence. The exception to this intelligence gap was the

⁸³ Ibid., 106.

detailed map provided of Fort Duquesne by Major Robert Stobo. The detailed map of the objective was not useful to Braddock until he arrived upon the site.

Braddock's outer security elements may have provided some warning, but any notice that they could give would be when the enemy was well within musket shot. Braddock's force contained no deep reconnaissance element that could extend beyond 150 yards in any direction into the woods. Due to poor relations that he established among the Indians during the recruiting and training phase at Fort Cumberland, those he encountered along the trek did not prove willing to remain with him and made a good excuse for his few scouts to slip away with them.⁸⁴

Braddock's force was approximately 1400 troops aligned in a tactical march column. The column's organization included a lead element (called the vanguard) of 300 regulars. These troops divided into three sub-groups: a small party of Indian guides, a company of grenadiers, and a reserve. A road-making company of approximately 200 Virginians and some regulars followed commanded by Major John St. Clair. The main body marched a short distance of only 100-150 yards behind. This segment comprised about 700 hundred men including the general, his staff, and about 50 guards. Flanking parties employing about 200 troops of 10-20 men, 100 -150 yards off each flank. The wagons, cannon, and their respective limbers, occupied the road while the rest of the troops marched by twos on each side of them. A final rear guard of Virginians followed 100 yards behind the wagon train.

The soldiers marching in columns of twos were bisected companies. One platoon marched on each side of the wagons and not following one behind the other on the same

⁸⁴ Sargent, *The History of an Expedition against Fort Duquesne in 1755*, 340.

side of the road. In case of an attack, they could not employ the organized volley fire British tactics dictated by platoons. Additionally, there were no areas indentified into the spacing of the wagon train and none on the sides of the road where units could form and wheel to execute the precision linear tactics that they had drilled.⁸⁵ Despite these physical space limitations, Braddock could have issued some contingency orders to react to attack.

The British army was familiar with irregular warfare. The campaigns in Scotland against the Stuart pretender, Prince Charlie, showed the British army was capable of conducting decentralized operations. They worked in small bands as opposed to seeking battle in concentrated linear formations.⁸⁶ Braddock failed to use his own limited experience in Flanders. There, the British conducted irregular warfare to bring about pitched decisive battles of the linear style.

Braddock failed to utilize the expertise that existed in his own formation to develop effective countermeasures. Colonel Sir Peter Halket, commander of the 44th Regiment, served in the Highland campaign during the Scottish revolt of 1745. Braddock's company commanders such as Captain Peter Hogg, a Scot, who served on the Jacobite side, could have provided more advice. On a diminished scale, Braddock could

⁸⁵ Pargellis, "Braddock's Defeat," 257. Of course Braddock is not to blame for the lack of space to assemble his men if attacked. What is questioned is that Braddock knew he was nearing Fort Duquesne and did not appreciably increase his security or situational awareness. As Contrecoeur noted, the British were quite alert until the morning of 9 July 1755. The precipitating decisions made by Braddock during the march concerned more his use of logistics and how he would defeat an attack, not that he did not intend to face one. The British became more relaxed as they approached the final river crossing to the fort.

⁸⁶ Russell, "Redcoats in the Wilderness," 637-639. Preston Pans and Culloden marked the pitched battles of this war. The British army especially cavalry units such as dragoons assisted in forcing the Jacobite forces higher into the crags of the highlands. The infantry would then sweep through an area and conduct firefights or more often hand-to-hand combat to kill and capture the rebels. Braddock's force limited to just a dozen Indian scouts failed to make significant use of its one company of colonial cavalry. Braddock essentially moved a densely compact force almost blindly through the wilderness.

have dispatched some of his flanking guards (already configured in groups of 20) to scout out farther ahead and to the flanks especially as the remains of Indian campsites increased as they came within the last thirty miles of the fort. Likewise, the mounted troop of light horse could have provided Braddock with some reach toward Fort Duquesne and the surrounding villages to ascertain a better picture of what awaited him. The single troop of light horse cavalry remained close in to the formation. Just as his troops on foot.

Braddock, who was no longer on speaking terms with Halket, placed him in charge of the wagon train within his column.⁸⁷ Halket died during the battle before having any positive effect. Captain Hogg and his company travelled with Colonel Dunbar in the support column fifty miles away. Thus, with limited scouting elements and no intentions to adapt his tactics, Braddock pushed the column to cover the last ten miles to Fort Duquesne.

The Monongahela was not the first river crossing that posed a potential threat for Braddock's force. On 30 June 1755, he crossed the Youghiogheny for the second time, expecting an attack. Nothing happened. Gage's advance party had the same experience now as they crossed the Monongahela. The resistance that they expected did not materialize, and Braddock assumed that the French had gone and there would be little opportunity for the French to put up a fight outside of the walls of Fort Duquesne. Elementary precautions, scrupulously observed until now, slackened. The army marched

⁸⁷ Paul E. Kopperman, *Braddock at the Monongahela*, (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1976), 168. Halket, an experienced soldier, believed that Braddock was moving blindly toward the objective. He encouraged Braddock to prepare his troops for contact as they neared the Monongahela River. He recommended sending scouts ahead to the fort to determine what preparations or deployments the French had made. Braddock did not take his advice and a rift developed between the two. Colonel Halket, during the engagement offered to take a detachment of 200 troops to occupy terrain that he thought offered an advantage. General Braddock relied that Halket should return to his station and offer his advice only when asked. Halket died of wounds received in the battle a short time later.

with fife and drum playing the ‘Grenadier’s March’. These spirited conditions changed abruptly.

By reviewing the battle and its key points, it becomes apparent that Braddock’s leadership decisions or lack thereof added to the confusion and assisted the French in attaining a stunning victory over a better equipped and more numerous British force.

The French, as discussed in Chapters One and Three, did not send large numbers of troops to North America. The garrisons of the French Frontier forts did not typically garrison a force of more than one or two hundred regular French troops. The French colonial and military authorities augmented their numbers with Native Americans and when possible, by dispatching portions of other garrisons to the one most threatened. Governor Duquesne applied this methodology to reinforce the fort bearing his name.

French colonial policy did not create a large influx of colonial settlers, the French leveraged the forces and allies they could. This imparted a greater sense of freedom and innovation than with the more formation-centric British. On the continent of Europe and in the major engagements of the Seven Years War, the French too shared the contemporary belief in order and symmetry of linear warfare. The French could point with pride to Marshal Maurice de Saxe and his victories employing these methods.

In North America, the French learned to adapt and fight in the Indian style. French fur traders that joined the regular French units travelled in small groups, with little logistical support. The addition of Indians made a small but highly capable force. Still this was not enough to offset the British numbers and influence over the Native Americans. In this regard, the French neutralized the Indians that might support Braddock. The Iroquois and their confederacy remained neutral thanks to French

intervention and assurances. Braddock's lack of diplomacy aided the French in their negotiations. The Indians quickly gathered to the French cause. The Ojibway, Ottawa, Pottawattamie, and Shawnee provided service to the French.

Leadership also played major factor in both armies. For the British it was Braddock's by the book method for the French with little of the British resources and artillery, personality and dynamic action made the difference. The French force contained excellent Captains in Daniel-Hyacinthe-Marie Lienard Beaujeu and in his successor Jean-Daniel Dumas. Four lieutenants, six ensigns and twenty officer cadets bolstered the French command. Their presence and personal bravery in the opening stages of the battle prevented their force from disintegrating.

Combat

The French formation sighted Braddock's lead column just ten miles from Fort Duquesne at 2:00 pm on 9 July 1755. The Anglo-American column crossed the river with flags flying and drums beating with the intention of intimidating the French. In a final act to disrupt the British advance, Captain Daniel-Hyacinthe de Beaujeu convinced Captain Contrecoeur to allow one final attack to interrupt the Anglo-American column.

The meeting engagement occurred where the narrow path inclined through the woods to an opening that curved to the right. This curve formed part of a hill that provided an advantageous point from which to fire into the approaching column. This location became key terrain during the ensuing engagement. The intersection of the road and this hill formed a natural trench. The French made good use of it. It obscured the

from view and would offer protection against the volley fire of the vanguard.⁸⁸ (See figure 18).

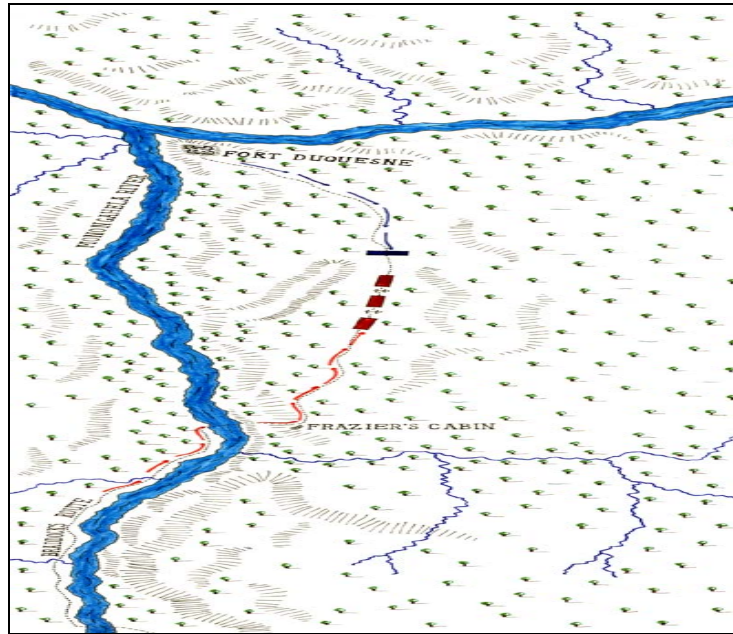


Figure 17. Final approach toward Fort Duquesne
Source: <http://www.britishbattles.com/braddock.htm>.

The British grenadier company of the vanguard encountered the French and Indian contingent as it crested the rise and the curve. The vanguard, under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Gage, halted, formed, and fired a volley. The British did not secure the highground at the crossing earlier in the day, but that did not mean that the entire force was not somewhat prepared. The volley stunned the French and Indian formation which hesitated and began to scatter into the woods. The British achieved success in their initial volley. The vanguard killed the French commander, Captain Beaujeu. This initial success went unexploited. Gage did not pursue this event with a

⁸⁸ Pargellis, "Braddock's Defeat," 259.

vigorous bayonet charge. Gage, the professional regular British officer formed his men and began to fall back toward the main body.



Figure 18. View from the Hill blocking Braddock's Route
Source: Painting by Edward Diming(<http://www.britishbattles.com/index.htm>).

At this point, the French attack comprising approximately 850 French troops and Indians came close to stalling. Only French Captain Jean Daniel Dumas' ability to quickly rally the Indians and return fire upon the British prevented the attack from failing. Dumas encouraged the Indians to advance forward and run along the sides of the British column among the trees.⁸⁹ The Indian contingent composed of Wyandot, Ottawa, Shawnee, and Mingos parted from the path and ran down each side of the British column. This created a horseshoe around the head of the column and enfilading fire from three directions. Gage's decision to withdraw to the main body and Braddock's belated

⁸⁹ Russell, "Redcoats in the Wilderness," 637-639.

decision to attempt to seize this hill. Left the key terrain feature of the battle in French hands. The hill became key terrain because it afforded a marked advantage to the French. From this elevated position, they could continue to fire into the British formation and equally important prevent the British from advancing. This failure to scout and secure the high ground, placed Braddock's formation firmly on the defensive. The initiative shifted to the French. Recognizing that they were flanked on both sides, the vanguard fell back toward the main body, formed, and fired again. Simultaneously, the Indians now in the woodline began to parallel the retiring vanguard. The main body, with General Braddock, continued its forward progress to come to the support of the vanguard.

Even though General Braddock was not personally present when the vanguard encountered the enemy, the result of the events still remained his responsibility. He provided no contingency plans for this set of circumstances.⁹⁰ There were no "if" and "then" discussions with his subordinates to determine what to do with the other elements of the formation. Lieutenant Colonel Gage behaved exactly as prescribed by standing British tactics. These stipulated that when engaged, the vanguard should fall back to the main body and then send a party ahead to reconnoiter and discern the situation.⁹¹ Braddock did not wait for this part of the scripted methodology to unfold. He moved himself and the bulk of his troops forward before he had developed any situational awareness. Braddock, eager to display his leadership, decided to react quickly and

⁹⁰ Pargellis, *Military Affairs in North America 1748-1765*, 106. Braddock heard the firing of the vanguard and received a message from Gage that they had encountered the enemy. Braddock did not issue any subsequent orders to the flanks or rear guard. The advance guard of the main body under Lieutenant Colonel Burton advanced with General Braddock. Chaos ensued.

⁹¹ Pargellis, "Braddock's Defeat," 264. Bland's *Treatise* set forward basic tactics that Braddock and his contemporaries used. General James Wolfe used it as a guide in his campaigns against the French in Canada.

decisively. The result was confusion. The two elements of the column became entangled and confused.

Conversely, the French, who followed a less-regimented system of tactical engagement, pressed their attack. The French force comprised a combination of French Canadian militia, and regular French line infantry troops from the *Compagnies franches de la Marine*, numbering about 500 troops. Their Indian augmenters range from 100-300 braves.

The French leadership created another advantage. Before the battle, Captain Beaujeu prioritized their target selection. British officers on horseback were prime targets for the Indians and French Canadians.⁹² The casualty figures from the battle bear witness to this decision. The officers of Braddock's force suffered 73% killed and wounded, or 63 of the 86 officers were injured. Additionally, the French negated any British advantage of massing volley fire by using dispersion and the cover offered by the woods along the road. The total casualty estimates give testimony to the French flexibility. Of the 1400 British regulars and militia that fought at Monongahela, 914 became casualties. Estimates of the French and Indian losses did not exceed 25-30.⁹³

The French garrison of Fort Duquesne knew the terrain surrounding their fort. A series of contributing factors aided the French. First, they used the terrain to their advantage. Second, the French units, though smaller than the British force, quickly assimilated to working in a dispersed order. Whereas for Braddock to train his assembled

⁹² Thomsen, "Baptism of Fire," 55. The French army and marine regiments sought the Canadian militiamen for their shooting prowess. As the war progressed regular French infantry regiments integrated them into their ranks.

⁹³ Richard Holmes, *Redcoat: The British Soldier in the Age of Horse and Musket*, (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc, 2002), 41-2. Due to the ad hoc nature of the French force, it is impossible to get an accurate assessment of losses, though all of the historical documents do not exceed 40 French and Indian dead or wounded.

force, it required several months of drill for them to become proficient in just a few maneuvers. The Canadian militia knew their weapons and skillfully and accurately employed them by selecting the British leadership.

Hearing the engagement to his front, General Braddock ordered the main body forward to move to the assistance of the vanguard. The vanguard retreated toward the main body, formed, and fired again. Both of these decisions observed in isolation were logical. However, they were not appropriate for the terrain that the formation occupied. Braddock did not issue orders to consider the configuration of his troops. The bisected companies marching by twos advanced with Braddock. After they cleared the wagons, the halves could merge forming a front of four ranks across and about twenty deep. Gage's troops already deployed into a line of eight or more across were firing systematically. Increasingly the vanguard members were running back toward the main body to establish a new line of defense. This resulted in two forces colliding (the vanguard and the main body) in opposing formations in confusion along the narrow path. Increasingly precise fire from the three sides exacerbated the confusion.

Had Braddock remained in his central location, he could have heard and seen the actions that would soon compel his flank guards to collapse toward the column. By moving forward, he developed a myopic view of the battle and lost situational awareness of the rest of the battlefield. With the mingling of two elements, the noise of musket and cannon fire, incidents of fratricide also occurred during this brief but costly engagement. The blue and buckskin-clad militia forces resembled the French and Indians in the haze of the battle. As the formation became more compressed and confused, the ranger companies were reluctant to remain exposed and understood the value of the cover and

concealment the wilderness offered. They formed behind some tree fall at an angle to the road and fired a volley; the British regulars still in the road mistook it. They fired a volley of their own into their American cousins. This forced the colonials to abandon the shelter of the logs and wedge themselves back onto the path in view of the French and Indian attackers who shot them from behind. Braddock's army continued to fire volleys into the trees, and the volume of their fire kept the enemy from closing on the column for a while. This fire control did not last long.

Once the flanking units received fire, they executed identical movements as the vanguard had done. They moved toward the road to protect and secure the wagons. In theory, this would mean an increase in firepower since they would combine their strength with that of the column's main body that formed in columns of twos down its sides. However, the drill and tactics practiced at Fort Cumberland occurred on flat and open terrain. The synchronized firing volleys into the trees did not inflict equal casualties upon the enemy. The French and Indian firing and targeting of officers did not slacken. The losses among the officers continued to increase and panic began to spread.

Furthermore, General Braddock's order to move the main body forward left the wagons and artillery pieces at the rear of the column only lightly defended. This compounded the problems along the column's sides. The troops that the flank units expected to find defending the wagons were not there. Any advantage in firepower that the flanking units attempted to achieve by moving toward the wagons was lost. They now found themselves exposed on the road, limited in movement by mounting casualties and the obstacles that the horses, wagons, cattle, cannon, and limbers presented.

Braddock's preoccupation with the blocking force to the front of his column diverted his attention from the collapsing flanks. The battle was not yet lost at this point. A vigorously executed bayonet charge on either flank, or in almost any direction would have sent the Indians scattering and compelled the French Canadian militia to retreat. This maneuver seems counter-intuitive; however, it would not have added more hanging smoke from the musket volleys in the humid July air. The psychological impact of the bayonet charge might have been sufficient to chase away the enemy. However, not a single officer dared to attempt this maneuver. With the increasing casualties, most of the officers remaining and their troops began to lose any semblance of formation, order, and discipline. The column began to segment into smaller isolated battles between the units on the road and the white muzzle flashes hidden among the trees.⁹⁴

The thickening blanket of smoke, press of the confused formations, and the mounting casualties among the Anglo-American officers marked the culminating point of the British defense. Braddock's force now received fire from all sides. He discerned too late that the only way out of the trap was forward. That required the clearing of the hill to the front right of the path. He failed to secure this hill earlier in the day. George Washington, serving as one of Braddock's aides de camp, attempted to organize an assault party for that objective. The units were hopelessly intermingled. Approximately 100 troops made a token effort to regain the hill. The French and Indians on the ridge and from the cover of the ditch at its base quickly repulsed it. Meanwhile, Braddock continued to direct fire into the woods to the left of the column and to rally his men to charge the rise on the right again.

⁹⁴ O'Meara, *Guns at the Fork*, 146-7.

Braddock, as noted in earlier chapters, was no coward. Equally, he was arrogant and bull-headed. By continuing to focus on one area of the battle, and by continually moving around the congested area, Braddock's attempt to demonstrate leadership actually contributed to the confusion of the battle. He rode waving his sword cursing and threatening the troops if they did not reform and attack the enemy occupied hill blocking their advance. With the exception of the single aide that he sent to discern Gage's initial situation, he did not do the same for the rest of the formation.⁹⁵ Instead, they followed in one large entourage to the head of the column. Braddock continued to attempt to match the French and Indians round for round, because of his belief in superior British fortitude. He waited too long to launch a decisive counter attack in any direction.

While doing this, Braddock suffered a shot through his arm that lodged in his chest. Within four days he would die.⁹⁶ The immediate impact of his injury proved decisive. With their leader no longer capable of directing the battle, and the majority of the officers killed or wounded, the Anglo-American force disintegrated and fled. The initial confusion of the engagement grew into fear, and the mounting collective fear erupted with the wounding of Braddock.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 147.

⁹⁶ Chartrand, *Monongehela, 1754-1755*, 73. When the intensity of the fighting increased, the militia companies abandoned the linear formations that the British attempted to form. The colonists began to fight much like the French and Indians among the trees. This led to an undetermined number of Anglo-American casualties from fratricide as they crossed the front of British sections firing blind volleys into the woods. Another point of comparison with the French is the use of horses. The British officers continued to mount fresh horses; Braddock was mounting his fifth when he received his wound. He died four days later.



Figure 19. Burial of General Braddock

Source: By John Rogers engraved in 1858 after a painting by John Trumball in 1755.

Washington, one of the few unwounded officers, provided capable leadership. Acting on his own initiative he ordered Braddock placed in a covered wagon along with his two other wounded aides. He then organized a rearguard action that fought its way back to the Monongahela River. The French and Indians swarmed the remnants of Braddock's column. They seized the guns, and wagons, and killed and scalped the dying and wounded. The survivors scrambled to cross the river; they trampled and killed their comrades in the process. The defeat was total but the engagement was not yet complete. The Canadian militia and the Indians lost interest in a thorough pursuit. They began securing booty and other loot. The French regulars and Captain Dumas settled for the damage already inflicted.

Given the countless hours of drilling and the pains taken to undertake this expedition, the scope and detail of the loss astonished almost everyone. Until the meeting engagement with the French and Indians on 9 July 1755, the brigade maintained all of the essential principles of movement that armies of the period employed.

Braddock's force maintained cohesion, momentum, and protection, and configured themselves to provide security.⁹⁷ What Braddock failed to consider was that his preconceptions of how to fight in the wilderness required adaptation. The map below displays the formation used by Braddock. As the figure illustrates, the column had security to the front, flanks and rear. However, the broken and densely forested terrain made actual deployment of this formation cumbersome. The limited distances among the vanguard, flankers, and the main body also meant that even if they encountered the enemy, the main body could not efficiently form and wheel into a linear formation as they practiced at Fort Cumberland.

The French victory resulted from three things. First, the French remained flexible and adaptive. They used the terrain to shield them from the British and the thickness of the trees significantly degraded the effects of the volley fire the British attempted. The British did employ some of their cannon, but they did not assist in turning the tide of the battle. Mostly their effect was psychological and the noise and smoke they produced added to the confusion. Second, the targeting of the British leadership effectively debilitated Braddock's ability to command and control his formation. Although, he himself did not attempt to force the units to maintain a reporting system by use of couriers. Once Braddock involved himself in the fight at the head of the column, he developed a singular vision and failed to develop a coordinated plan. Finally, the combination of the first two elements destroyed the Anglo-Americans' will to fight. The

⁹⁷ FM 7-72, "Light Infantry Battalion," (Washington DC: Department of the Army, March 16, 1987), 1.5 Momentum is a relative term in this instance given the fact that they moved only three to four miles a day. The connotation is that they maintained a slow but steady progress even if the speed was glacial.

hapless ranker firing in clock-work fashion shrouded in smoke, seeing his leaders and peers dying, gave in to fear, panic, and his individual will to survive.

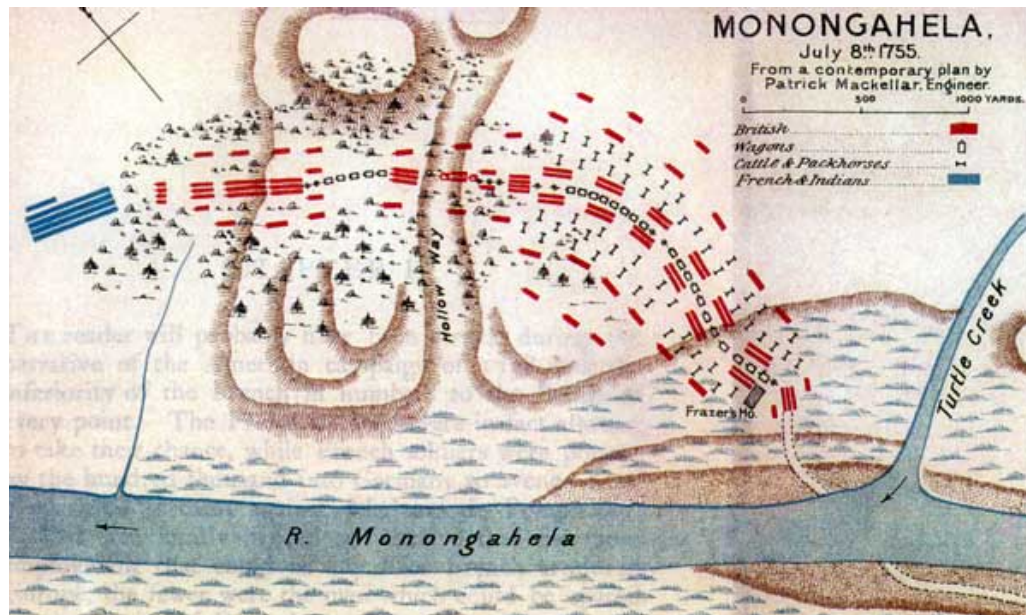


Figure 20. The Map of the Battle Plan
Source: Painted by Patrick MacKellar, Engineer, 1755.

Ratios and Proportions

Braddock and the French both did not consider another point of tactical planning. Neither side considered the size as a determining factor in conducting their actions. Calculating force ratios is one means to prepare for success in combat operations. The French and Indian coalition that faced the British theoretically did not possess enough combat troops to defeat Braddock. What they did possess they used brilliantly. Dynamic leadership in and a willing subordinate leaders effectively employed their units. The French regulars maintained their blocking positions on the road and the small hill. The

French knew the local terrain and that knowledge assisted them in placing the Canadian militia in advantageous positions to target the British leadership. They also used the Anglo-American fear of the savage Indians to good effect. As order gave way to confusion and confusion to panic, the whooping Indians and the scalping of the dead and dying along the wagons hastened the Anglo-American retreat.

The French force contained approximately 854 troops. This total comprised 108 French regular army officers, cadets, and soldiers. It also contained 150 French Canadian militiamen. The balance of their formation consisted of 600 Indians. The implications of this are enlightening. Braddock's total force numbered approximately 2150, however over half of these troops were placed in the slower and heavy column 50 miles behind the first. This was well beyond immediate range for mutual assistance. Therefore, Braddock's force of 1400 troops gave him a ratio of only 1.6 to 1 to face the French. Neither side controlled a decisive advantage in numbers. Accordingly, a force of just over 2000 troops seems barely substantial enough to lay a successful siege and cordon around Ft. Duquesne and subsequently storm it.

However, the French considered the fort lost if Braddock established his cordon and emplaced his small, but heavier caliber artillery pieces. The French attacked Braddock out of necessity. Captain Contrecoeur understood the risk of allowing the British to establish a siege. It is doubtful that the Indians would have stayed to augment the 600-man garrison. It is more likely that the French and Indians would have attempted to interdict and harass Braddock's lines of communications to prevent the siege. Braddock's leadership failed to envision that the French and their native allies might adopt a high-risk plan to prevent a siege. The French and Indians gambled on a more

flexible and practical method to counter and negate the advantages and prowess of British firepower, numbers, and discipline.

Braddock's column tried to employ volley fire, but this proved unsuitable. Firing massed volleys into the trees did not improve Braddock's tactical position or overall situation. The volleys the British did fire delivered more fire to a specific area; they could not select or readily discern individual targets from among clustered trees. The French and Indians in response employed more precise, though less voluminous fire, down the entire length of Braddock's formation. Thus, their formation, though thinner and wider than Braddock's, covered more surface from three directions. It was not important for the French and Indians to create gaps in the British line. Rather by targeting the command structure, they made the line formations increasingly irrelevant.

The Participants' Accounts

General Thomas Gage and Washington reached the same conclusion about the Battle of the Monongahela River: the British lost because the soldiers panicked and that the panic was caused by the novel fighting methods of the "invisible" enemy in unaccustomed territory. This basic deduction by two of the battle's heroes distills the essential thoughts of the combatants. The British soldier realized that his fire was ineffective while the enemy moved closer and freely continuing to strike targets. The British soldiers ran for safety.

After the defeat, Captain Robert Orme, Braddock's senior aide, wrote an extensive narration explaining the events of the battle. Or more precisely, explaining away faults of the events. His report to Lord Cumberland is one of eight existing accounts of the battle. However, only four of the eight—those of Orme, George

Washington, Adam Stephens, and John St. Clair-- were first-hand accounts, but these are not necessarily useful. Orme's narrative was colored by his desire for promotion.

Washington's report, due to his lack of experience, recorded the events of the combat, but made no effort to analyze the decisions. Stephens was with the rearguard and did not witness the primary fighting. St. Clair commanded the working party after the vanguard in the order of march. His narration coincided generally with Orme's.

After the battle, Captain Orme's report was considered the definitive narration of the disaster by the British authorities. However, it reveals little of the complexities of the battle and creates a contradictory view. Orme, like St. Clair, had much to gain by securing patronage from superior officers, placed blame upon the common soldier and explained away Braddock's culpability. He ignored the most important aspects in combat-- the relationship between the leader and the led.⁹⁸

⁹⁸ Sargent, *The History of an Expedition against Fort Duquesne in 1755*, 353-357. Orme became the scapegoat for the loss. He left the army less than a year after the battle. St. Clair's report generally coincides with Orme's both blame the soldier for running away while the officers bravely encouraged them to fight.



Photo © The National Gallery, London.

Figure 21. Captain Robert Orme Aide de Camp to Major General Braddock
Source: National Gallery, United Kingdom, by Sir Joshua Reynolds in 1756.

Orme overlooked that soldiers, especially those in Braddock's command, did what they were told. Braddock himself demonstrated this repeatedly while forming and maneuvering his force. The blame for the loss and its severity must reside with those in positions of authority-- the commander and to a degree, his subordinates. Analyzing Orme's report further reveals another stunning contradiction. If the soldiers were of such poor quality and undisciplined, then they would not have stayed under fire from three sides for more than two hours suffering greater than 50% casualties. Lord Cumberland, after reviewing Orme's letters, came to the same conclusion: those associated with Orme had little credibility. Only the vanguard under the control of Gage warranted praise. Gage received command of a regiment within six months.

Chapter Summary

There are salient points to extract from Braddock's failure. General Braddock's defeat consisted of factors internal and external to his force. The external factors include the unfortunate realization that the enemy still has influence during an engagement. During this particular instance, the French hastily but masterfully executed a plan that placed the use of terrain, weapons, and valorous leadership in their favor. The audacity and ingenuity of Captains Beaujeau and Dumas made Braddock more than unlucky. Their bold leadership in contrast to British formality made Braddock culpible for the gravity of the loss. By executing a simple but bold plan, they defeated a numerically superior force that according to eighteenth-century standards executed almost all of the correct tactical responses and lost in spite of them.

General Braddock's fatal flaw was that once he chose to stand by European tactics, unlike the French, he did not execute them to their full potential to ensure the success of his army. The troops could not maneuver to fire as required. Nor could they maintain their order once the officers and key leaders succumbed to wounds. The bravery of the individual soldier bolstered Braddock's false assumption that the battle was in hand. As the casualties mounted among the Anglo-American leadership, the resolve and fortitude of the troops faltered. The lack of contingency planning to preserve the space around the formation, not using the bayonet, and Braddock's wounding caused the immediate internal collapse of his highly centralized force.

Those immediate actions during the battle were not the only causes for the loss. Braddock's gradual but steady decline in alertness securing his force by the day of battle set the conditions for a defeat and an engagement that did not need occur. He pushed an

exhausted, ailing, and logistically depleted organization into an unnecessary contact with the enemy that was rested, trained, and knowledgeable when he had another option.

Braddock had the option to await the arrival of Dunbar's troops to allow his own troops to recover while encamped just beyond the crossing of the Monongahela River.

Braddock's belief in British martial superiority learned in Europe did not account for the lessons the French learned in parallel to the British colonial militia fighting previous frontier wars.

As commander, Braddock had to make a decision as to how to train and employ his combined force. The course of action that he chose followed the European model. This in itself was not a fatal or wrong choice. He did not have time to train his force in both regular and irregular warfare and conduct a siege of Fort Duquesne. By choosing to use the European model of tactics and organization, he relied upon what he practiced throughout his forty-five year career. Tragically, he failed to realize because of his limited exposure, that commanders adapted the tactics to fit the terrain and enemy. Braddock achieved part of the solution against the terrain. His own bias prevented him from achieving parity with the enemy.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

Observations of Braddock's defeat remain shrouded in contradiction just as the Anglo-American soldiers who fought through the confused clouds of grey-white smoke on 9 July 1755. Succinctly defining the moment when Braddock lost is clearer than defining the proximate causes that led to that moment. Decisions Braddock made during the battle had immediate and ultimately tragic consequences. Other decisions and circumstances beyond his direct control conspired to set dangerous conditions for Braddock and his men. Ironically, these decisions were not all wrong. What they reveal is that Braddock was too much a product of the social and military institutions that continuously reinforced order, obedience, and structure. He displayed a talent for organization and administration. But those talents did not facilitate the textbook campaign that he desired. Nor could it compensate for the actions of the French. Reviewing these main points from the climactic battle to the beginning of the campaign may clear some of the ambiguity of the decisions and conditions that led to the disaster.

During the battle, Braddock's force responded to external forces that set each element in sequence into rehearsed and automatic responses. These ingrained contingency plans matched the by-the-book style Braddock desired and clearly understood. Those automatic responses were not wrong observed in isolation. The withdrawal of the vanguard once they encountered the French was technically correct. The collapse of the flank security elements that withdrew to the road to secure the wagons was also correct. Even the movement forward of the main body, though rushed, was not wrong. In fact, it is understandable that the files of tired troops suddenly surging

with adrenaline would want to follow their commander toward the fighting. These reactions collectively however traded away two precious commodities that his engaged force required – time and space.

The concentration of all of the British troops upon the road gave away the terrain that his force desperately needed to further execute the complex maneuvers he instilled. This physical constriction of the organization compressed Braddock's time to make decisions as the enemy pressed closer. The decisions he did make attempted to salvage an increasingly tenuous position. But Braddock clung to attempting to create the semblance of firing lines. By doing so, he simply increased the probability of more casualties from French and Indians firing into rows of confused troops.

Beyond these responses, there were two decisions with respect to the battle that proved tactically fatal. First, Braddock failed to quickly order the vanguard to advance against the French regulars blocking the road and occupying the hill to his right front. Instead, Braddock exchanged volleys for two hours attempting to overcome his foe with concentrated firepower. The second fatal decision in the battle was actually an instance of indecision. Braddock never ordered the use of the bayonet nor did he designate an element from the rear of the column under Colonel Halket's command to attempt even an envelopment. Had he directed a local counterattack along one or both of his flanks, it is probable that he would have dispersed the Indians and likewise the French from his immediate area. Thus, he would have created a limited but probably sufficient area to disentangle his formation. From that point, Braddock would have gained the space needed to dictate the development of the engagement.

Placing the full blame of the debacle upon Braddock is convenient. But it is not a complete assessment. Factors beyond Braddock's direct control forced him into the aforementioned decision cycle. The French force possessed a set of strong personalities that took advantage of the desperation that they perceived in the British formation. The French knew the local terrain. They reacted faster than the British and seized the hill turning it into key terrain. Captain Beaujeu's and Captain Dumas' examples of valor and pursuit of *gloire* encouraged the balance of the militia and Indians remain engaged in the fight. They then filtered along the sides of the column. From these positions they enfiladed the formation with fire. The scales tipped to favor the French as a direct result. As Braddock lost more officers and control of his troops, the French and Indians crept closer. They wisely used the trees and foliage for cover and concealment never presenting themselves as an exposed mass. French innovation played a part in the battle that Braddock could not stop. He could only conduct counter moves to it. The counter actions he took did not lead to the result most desired. Instead, they encouraged the French and Indians to remain steadfast in their attack.

Braddock's decisions that brought him to the engagement deserve review. These operational decisions created the conditions for the above tactical outcomes. By making a few key choices along his route, he pushed his army toward its hapless fate. Each of these decisions attempted to gain speed, but that speed was elusive and an illusion at best.

Braddock divided his troops into unequal segments. The first segment did not gain exponential speed because it was limited by the nature of the terrain, an artillery train, and by the limited number of ax men that he could deploy across a twelve-foot

wide front to cut the needed path. These delays led to other decisions based on his logistical limitations.

Braddock realized that his limited supplies and the difficulty of the terrain might force his expedition to cease progress before it ever reached Fort Duquesne. This realization compelled him to make decisions of increasing risk. The lead column under his command nearly exhausted its supplies by the time of its arrival at the Monongahela River. He assumed greater risk by not waiting for the second column under Colonel Dunbar to close the gap. The result was that Braddock's troops, tired and feverish, did not get an opportunity to recover and make any needed reorganization. Nor did Braddock review the plan for the final investment around Fort Duquesne with his subordinates. Braddock risked the entire operation by pushing them into what became a fatal engagement in a weakened condition well beyond the reach of his supporting element.

The attack on Gage's vanguard came as a surprise, but up to that point, Braddock had considered the possibility of an attack while on the march. He arrayed his force accordingly to stave off any serious threat from the French and Indians. In that limited regard he was correct and successful. The French and Indians were unable to decisively engage him. But their lack of success reinforced Braddock's belief in his invincibility and his forces became less attentive to security though they maintained the same formations designed to provide it.

Braddock's decisions caused internal unrest. His blunt but honest dialogue with a number of Native American tribes left his force devoid of a sufficient number of scouts as they moved. Furthermore, he did not send his mounted troop out to conduct any

shaping operations, or significant intelligence gathering. This omission and his treatment of his principal subordinate commanders Colonel Dunbar and Colonel Halket created resentment, poor communications, and lack of unity within the formation as a whole.⁹⁹ Braddock's forces may have shared the same hardships, moved along the same road, but unity within the organization was lacking. They progressed blindly and ponderously toward the objective. Despite this, Colonel Halket fought bravely for his men and died executing Braddock's orders. Braddock's decision to push on to the fort rendered Colonel Dunbar completely ineffective.

Braddock's fierce determination to reach his objective picked away at the physical and logistical fabric of his army. As the distance to the fort grew shorter, his ability to attain it grew weaker. Based upon the decisions and options he chose, and other variables such as consolidating and then attacking did not enter into Braddock's calculations. These decisions along the route lessened his forces' effectiveness and placed it in jeopardy. Thus, Braddock's organizational skills, his brutal honesty, and desire to do things correctly actually became the contributing factors to his death and defeat of his force.

The British Ministry described Braddock's loss as: "...[an] unfortunate miscarriage of His Majesty's forces in the designed attack on Fort Duquesne."¹⁰⁰ That mildly acknowledged the death of many devoted soldiers and colonial militia to an ambitious task. The British eventually placed the remnants of Braddock's command under John Campbell, Lord Loudon. He assumed the position of British Commander-In-Chief in North America. Though he developed in the same leadership and cultural

⁹⁹ Kopperman, *Braddock at the Monongahela*, 169.

¹⁰⁰ O'Meara, *Guns at the Forks*, 155.

paradigm as Braddock, he did what Braddock failed to do from the beginning – he listened. He accepted the advice of both Thomas Gage and George Washington who encouraged the development of a unit that could fight like the Indians.¹⁰¹ The British army that followed Braddock's learned from its mistakes.

The army that followed incorporated the tactics and techniques that figures such as Christopher Gist, George Washington, and Benjamin Franklin presented to Braddock. New units of infantry based their training not simply on the principles of linear concepts. They discerned that fighting in the thick wilderness and difficult terrain of the colonial frontier required flexibility, trust, and that subordinates could work effectively in a dispersed arrangement.



Figure 22. Lord John Campbell, 4th Earl of Loudoun 1705-1782
Source: By Allen Ramsay (National Galleries of Scotland).

¹⁰¹ Washington, *George Washington Colonial Traveller 1732-1775*. 121. Apparently, Washington's advice was heeded. Washington notes in his journal on 13 July 1758 that Henry Bouquet approved of dressing his men in buckskin for General Forbes campaign against Fort Duquesne in 1758.

The loss at the Monongahela River began a process of organizational and tactical change for the British Army. The British and colonial troops formed light infantry units to fight in dispersed and similar fashion as the French. As is often the case with disasters, prudent action and mitigating innovations arrive as the result of, not prior to the event. The lessons of Major General Braddock's defeat fit this scenario.

The staggering percentage of loss had a dramatic effect upon the British army. As a direct result, newly-formed regiments applied the hard lessons learned by Braddock's force. They selectively trained soldiers as sharpshooters, trained them to travel with lighter packs and less equipment, emphasized loading while in the prone position, and instructed them in traversing over all types of terrain. The program spread throughout the British army. By 1758, each regiment contained specialized companies of grenadiers and light companies.¹⁰²

Light infantry companies existed prior to this particular engagement. But the British army began to focus on developing these units more completely to augment the traditional line units. The most notable of these formations in North America were Rogers Rangers and the 60th Regiment of Foot, The Royal Americans. These units served the balance of the war with mixed records of accomplishments. But that was not the most important point. The significance is that the army modified and adapted itself to a new operational paradigm.

¹⁰² Holmes, *Redcoat*, 41. The Ranger companies that served under Braddock resembled typical infantry units. The term ranger originated from the small band of frontiersmen that Virginia paid to patrol its frontier areas before this war. Additionally, the Virginia Ranger Regiment attempted to move into among the trees at the Monongahela. Mistaken as French troops in the confusion, British troops fired into them and the resulting fratricide forced them back onto the exposed road.

Braddock's leadership failure heralds relevant warnings against hubris, rash decisions, and a myopic view toward a single objective to today's military professional. Successful leadership within organizational levels emerges from the flexible application of contemporary military tactics, a concept missed by Braddock. His downfall as a leader was his inability to adapt the tactics and concept of leadership that he knew too well. Creating a new paradigm in a new world was not suited to Braddock. Unfortunately, that was discovered too late.



Figure 23. General John Forbes 1710-1759

Source: Painting in the possession of the Royal Scots Greys Regiment, Aldershot, England. Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania, (Senator John Heinz Pittsburgh Regional History Center).

In 1758, George Washington, then a Brigadier General and commander of all of Virginia's military forces, returned a second time to Fort Duquesne with British Brigadier General John Forbes. This army comprised 5000 provincials and 1400 Scottish

Highlanders as well as rangers.¹⁰³ On 25 November 1758, Forbes seized Ft. Duquesne after routing the outnumbered French. The French burned the fort as they retreated. The defeat of Braddock in 1755 validated to the French that their blended units of regulars, militia, and Native Americans was sound. The French, like Braddock, failed to recognize that their adversary would adopt and adapt to achieve their objective of possessing Fort Duquesne.

¹⁰³ Thomsen, American History, "*Baptism by Fire*," 12.

APPENDIX A

ORDER OF ASSEMBLED ANGLO-AMERICAN TROOPS

Fort Cumberland, Maryland 30 May 1755

First Brigade:

- Colonel Peter Halkett's 44th Foot.
- Captain Rutherford's New York Independent Company.
- Captain William Polson's Virginia Provincial Artificers (Carpenters).
- Captain William Peronnee's Virginia Provincial Rangers.
- Captain Wagner's Virginia Provincial Rangers.
- Captain John Dagworthy's Maryland Provincial Rangers.

Second Brigade:

- Colonel Thomas Dunbar's 48th Foot.
- Captain Paul Demerries' South Carolina Independent Companies detachments.
- Captain Brice Dobb's North Carolina Provincial Rangers.
- Captain George Mercer's Virginia Provincial Artificers (Carpenters).
- Captain Adam Steven's Virginia Provincial Rangers.
- Captain Peter Hogg's Virginia Provincial Rangers.
- Captain Thomas Cox's Virginia Provincial Rangers.

The Artillery Train

- Six Brass 6pdr Cannon.
- Four Brass 4pdr Cannon.
- Four 8in. Brass Howitzers.
- Fifteen 4 2/5in. Coehorn Mortars.

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