

# CONFRONTATION AT THE MONONGAHELA: CLIMAX OF THE FRENCH DRIVE INTO THE UPPER OHIO REGION

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ALTHOUGH disputes over the Acadian boundary and the border between New York and New France could well have provoked renewed conflict between England and France in the 1750's, the final rupture came over possession of the Ohio valley. It was here that English colonial expansion first crossed the Appalachian mountains, an expansion led by Indian traders and frontiersmen such as Conrad Weiser, George Croghan, Andrew Montour, and Christopher Gist. Through the judicious use of gifts and trade welcome to the Indians of the Ohio valley, English traders soon gained great influence in the area.<sup>1</sup> Already, during the War of the Austrian Succession, the Governor-General of New France, the Marquis de La Galissonnière, saw the danger to New France in the activities of these traders who offered goods to the Indians at a fraction of French prices. Upon his return to France in 1749, La Galissonnière recommended that a series of forts be constructed on the upper Ohio to prevent English incursions beyond the Appalachians.<sup>2</sup>

Responding to the threat of English occupation of the Ohio region, La Galissonnière initiated and his successors continued a drive to effectively control the area. This thrust brought France and England once again into open conflict with each other and reached its high point in the defeat of a British and colonial force under Major General Edward Braddock at the battle of the Monongahela on July 9, 1755.

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<sup>1</sup> See Wilbur R. Jacobs, *Diplomacy and Indian Gifts* (Stanford, 1950), 90-114; and the journal of Céloron de Blainville in Lyman C. Draper (ed.), *Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin* (Madison, 1908), XVIII, 36-56.

<sup>2</sup> E. B. O'Callaghan et al. (eds.), *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York* (15 vols., Albany, 1853-87), X, 220-232.

The classic account of the French drive is given, of course, by Francis Parkman in his masterpiece on French and English colonial conflicts in North America. But the publication of many fresh sources and the improved availability of others, particularly French documents, has created the opportunity to fill in many of the gaps in Parkman's basic narrative. However, even the account of Lawrence Henry Gipson in his work on the British Empire is somewhat lacking in the balanced use of sources. The publication of the *Papiers Contrecoeur* in 1952 stimulated new work on the French side of the story by a variety of writers, but even the excellent narrative of Donald H. Kent stops short of the critical years of 1754 and 1755. The field is therefore open for an inquiry into the nature of the initial success of the French move.<sup>3</sup>

Although the French occupation and defense of the upper Ohio region was an accomplishment involving vast effort and great expenditure, careful investigation of the drive primarily using French sources surprisingly vindicates the common conception that its success was mainly the result of a combination of misfortune and slowness, disorganization, and general incompetence on the part of the British. For, at the crucial moments in the campaign of 1755, the military advantage apparently lay in the hands of the British who failed to exploit the opportunity thus presented.

In 1749 Governor-General La Galissonnière sent out an expedition under Céloron de Blainville to renew claim to the upper Ohio and to counter the effect of English presents to the Indians of the region. In almost every Indian village along the Allegheny, Ohio, and Miami Rivers, Céloron encountered English traders whom he ordered out of French territory. He realized, however, the effects of his expedition were transitory and that stronger action would have to be taken to end this "contraband" trading.<sup>4</sup> French exasperation at the English success among the Ohio

<sup>3</sup> Francis Parkman, *Montcalm and Wolfe* (Boston, 1884), I; Lawrence Henry Gipson, *The British Empire Before the American Revolution*, Vol. IV, *Zones of International Friction* (New York, 1939), and Vol. VI, *The Years of Defeat* (New York, 1946); and Donald H. Kent, *The French Invasion of Western Pennsylvania 1753* (Harrisburg, 1954).

<sup>4</sup> *Wisconsin Historical Collections*, XVIII, 36-56, and "Céloron's Journal," in C. B. Galbreath (ed.), *Expedition of Céloron to the Ohio Country in 1794* (Columbus, 1921), 57.

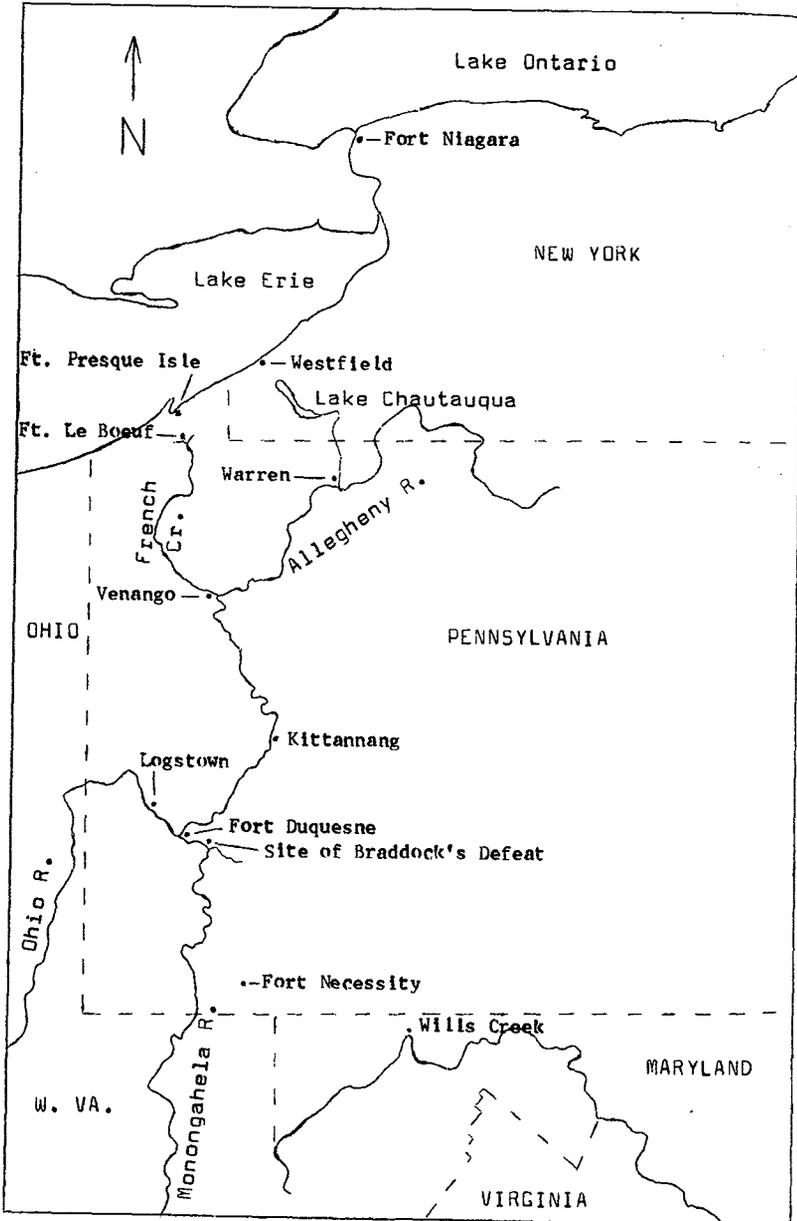
Indians, especially with one branch of the Miamis led by a chief known as La Demoiselle, resulted in a punitive raid ordered by the Governor-General, the Marquis de La Jonquière. In June, 1752, a force of Canadians and loyal Indians under Charles Langlade destroyed the village of Pickawillany on the Great Miami River and emphasized French displeasure by boiling and eating La Demoiselle.<sup>5</sup> While the French could not compete with English presents and trade, the effect of force and numbers could intimidate the Indians allied to the English and eventually bring them to the French side.

The death of La Jonquière in 1752 led to the appointment of Ange de Menneville, Marquis Duquesne, as Governor-General. Duquesne continued the policy of expansion into the upper Ohio region and the following two years saw the gradual increase in French influence among the Indians of the Ohio. French resolution accompanied by hesitation on the part of English colonial assemblies resulted in the decline of fervor for the English among their former Indian friends.<sup>6</sup>

Late in 1752, upon the advice of La Galissonnière and with encouragement from the French government, Duquesne and the Intendant in Quebec, François Bigot, began to plan an expedition for the following year to build a series of forts along the upper Ohio and its supply route. Originally the expedition of 2,000 men, 1,700 Canadian militia and 300 regular soldiers, was to take the portage from Lake Erie to Lake Chautauqua and then pass down Conewango Creek to the Allegheny River and down the Allegheny to the Ohio. Supply houses were to be built at each end of the Chautauqua portage and forts constructed on the Allegheny near present-day Warren, Pennsylvania; on the Ohio at Logstown, a Shawnee village twenty miles downstream from modern Pittsburgh; and at the Indian village near the junction of the Scioto and Ohio Rivers. Pierre Paul de la Malgue, Sieur de Marin, an

<sup>5</sup> Jacobs, *Diplomacy and Indian Gifts*, 114, and Draper MSS. 1JJ, 3-6. Charles Langlade, a Canadian with an Indian wife, had great influence among the Indians of the upper Great Lakes region and was to play a large role in the victory over Braddock. He is mentioned frequently in the *Wisconsin Historical Collections*.

<sup>6</sup> William M. Darlington, *Christopher Gist's Journals with Historical, Geographical and Ethnological Notes and Biographies of his Contemporaries* (Pittsburgh, 1893), 31-87; Jacobs, *Diplomacy and Indian Gifts*, 115-135; and Kent, *French Invasion*, 13-68, all chronicle the disastrous loss of influence by the English among the Western Indians.



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Scale 1:2,500,000 One inch = 40 miles U.S. Geological Survey

experienced Canadian officer was named commander of the expedition and Michel Jean Hughes Péan, a wealthy officer whose wife was Bigot's mistress, was appointed second-in-command.<sup>7</sup> On February 1, 1753, the first detachment of 250 men left Montreal for Niagara to begin preparations for the expedition.<sup>8</sup>

Before the first detachment reached the Chautauqua portage, Duquesne changed his mind about the route of the expedition. On the advice of a famous voyageur, he ordered the force to use the portage at Presque Isle (now Erie, Pa.) forty miles further to the west. According to his information this would allow a quicker descent to the Ohio by way of the Rivière aux Boeufs (now French Creek).<sup>9</sup> What he did not know was that the twenty-mile portage became practically impassable at the slightest rain and that French Creek was navigable only for a short period following a rain. These factors combined with disease defeated Marin's thrust into the Ohio area in 1753. During the spring and summer there was only enough rainfall to make the Presque Isle portage miserable and not enough to raise French Creek to a navigable level.<sup>10</sup>

The French first constructed forts at Presque Isle and at the head of French Creek (Fort Le Boeuf at present-day Waterford, Pa.) to protect the portage from Lake Erie. By the time these were completed in early summer, 1753, it was obvious to Captain Marin that the difficulties involved in the portage were making impossible the success of the expedition. As illness, brought on by diet deficiencies depleted his manpower, Marin became more and more irritated at the lack of rainfall which prevented an advance to the Ohio. He expressed this irritation

<sup>7</sup> Marquis Duquesne to the Minister, October 21, 1752, printed in Sylvester K. Stevens and Donald H. Kent (eds.), *Wilderness Chronicles of Northwestern Pennsylvania* (Harrisburg, 1941), 38; François Bigot to the Minister, October 26, 1752, *ibid.*, 39-43.

<sup>8</sup> Duquesne to Claude-Pierre Pécaudy de Contrecoeur, February 1, 1753, in Fernand Grenier (ed.), *Papiers Contrecoeur et autres documents concernant le conflit Anglo-Français sur l'Ohio de 1745 à 1756* (Quebec, 1952), 19-20; Jean-Victor Varin de La Marre to Contraeoeur, February 4, 1753, *ibid.*, 20-21. Grenier of the Laval University of Quebec, had done a great service by editing the Contrecoeur papers in the Quebec Archives. Donald H. Kent of the Pennsylvania Historical Commission advised Grenier on the selection of documents to publish. Especially helpful are Grenier's excellent notes.

<sup>9</sup> Duquesne to Contrecoeur, March 23, 1753, *ibid.*, 28-31.

<sup>10</sup> Duquesne to the Minister, October 7, 1754, *Wilderness Chronicles*, 62-63.

in verbal attacks on his subordinates and finally his own health broke under the strain. Rather than return in disgrace to Montreal with most of his troops, he remained at Fort Le Boeuf with the garrison when the approach of winter brought an end to the year's effort. There he died on October 29, 1753, unaware of the successes of the coming two years in the Ohio region, successes largely due to the groundwork laid in the 1753 campaign.<sup>11</sup>

The main achievements of the French thrust in 1753 were the securing of the line of supply into the Ohio area by the construction of Forts Presque Isle and Le Boeuf, the occupation by a token force of the Indian trading village of Venango (now Franklin, Pa.) at the junction of French Creek and the Allegheny, and the neutralization of the Iroquois tribes of the upper Ohio, traditional allies of the English.<sup>12</sup> These limited achievements must be compared, however, with the cost in manpower to New France. Throughout the summer scurvy and other diseases claimed lives at the rate of four to five men per day and the survivors returned to Montreal in an extremely debilitated condition.<sup>13</sup> Influenced by these factors, Duquesne reduced the scale of the force for the 1754 campaign, sending only fresh troops and reducing the number of new forts to be constructed to the one at Logstown.<sup>14</sup>

One further result of the 1753 move was a first response by the English colonies to the French attempt to possess the Ohio region. Disturbed by reports from the frontier, Lieutenant-Governor Robert Dinwiddie of Virginia sent twenty-one-year-old

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, for the problems faced by Marin and his death. See Sylvester K. Stevens, Donald H. Kent, and Edith E. Woods (eds.), *Travels in New France by J.C.B.* (Harrisburg, 1941), 32-33 for the outbreak of scurvy. The publication of *Papiers Contrecoeur* allowed Donald H. Kent to identify J.C.B. as Jolicoeur Charles Bonin, a gunner listed on a roll of "canoniers" in the Ohio expedition of 1755. See *Papiers Contrecoeur*, 279. Bonin must be used with care as he is often off in his dates by a year, but the month and day are usually close. For Marin's attacks on his subordinates see Duquesne to Marin, August 27, 1753, *Papiers Contrecoeur*, 45; Marin to Captain Jean-Daniel Dumas, August 26, 1753, *ibid.*, 42-43; Dumas to Marin, August 27, 1753, *ibid.*, 46-48; and Marin to Duquesne, August 28, 1753, *ibid.*, 49-50.

<sup>12</sup> Philippe Thomas de Joncaire to Marin, September 1, 1753, *ibid.*, 52-53.

<sup>13</sup> Bonin, *Travels in New France*, 32-33; Duquesne to the Minister, November 29, 1753, *Wilderness Chronicles*, 60-61.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, and Duquesne to Marin, November 7, 1753, *Papiers Contrecoeur*, 78-79.

George Washington with a letter to the commander of forces invading "the King of Great Britain's territories" requesting the peaceful departure of the French.<sup>15</sup> Washington noted on his way that the junction of the Allegheny and Monongahela Rivers was an ideal situation for a fort.<sup>16</sup> Arriving at Fort Le Boeuf on December 11, 1753, Washington delivered the message the following day to Captain Legardeur de Saint-Pierre, appointed temporary commander of the Ohio region on the death of Marin. Washington, while waiting for Saint-Pierre's reply, carefully noted the strength of the garrison, the fort's armament and design, and the fact that 220 canoes were ready to carry troops and supplies down the river in the spring.<sup>17</sup> He returned to Williamsburg on January 16, 1754, with Saint-Pierre's answer that, "I am here in virtue of my General's orders."<sup>18</sup> The stage was now set for the confrontation of 1754.

Saint-Pierre moved quickly to forestall any English moves, sending five-canoe-loads of soldiers under the Sieur de la Chauvignerie to occupy Logstown on January 15, 1754. Using a combination of presents and threats, La Chauvignerie tried to woo the Shawnees who responded with a secret plea to the governors of Pennsylvania and Virginia to come to their aid.<sup>19</sup> Already Dinwiddie had sent out an advance party to begin construction of a small fort at the junction of the Allegheny and Monongahela. By March 4 Captain William Trent and 41 men were busy working on a storehouse and stockade.<sup>20</sup> La Chauvignerie, at Logstown, could only sit and observe the English construction on his line of supply while waiting for the spring thaw to allow the descent of the 1754 expedition.<sup>21</sup>

Meanwhile careful preparations had been made for the campaign by Governor-General Duquesne. Supplies were to be sent

<sup>15</sup> Lieutenant-Governor Robert Dinwiddie to Legardeur de Saint-Pierre, October 30, 1753, *New York Colonial Documents*, X, 258.

<sup>16</sup> Don M. Larrabee (ed.), *The Journals of George Washington and His Guide, Christopher Gist, on the Historic Mission to the French Forts in 1753* (n.p., 1950), 11-12.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 18-19.

<sup>18</sup> Saint-Pierre to Dinwiddie, December 15, 1753, Public Record Office: CO: 5/14, C.O. 121-124.

<sup>19</sup> "George Croghan's Journal, 1754," in Reuben Gold Thwaites (ed.), *Early Western Journals 1748-1765* (Cleveland, 1904), 74-80; Sieur de La Chauvignerie to Saint-Pierre, February 10, 1754, *Papiers Contrecoeur*, 99-100.

<sup>20</sup> La Chauvignerie to Contrecoeur, March 11, 1754, *ibid.*, 106-107.

<sup>21</sup> La Chauvignerie to Contrecoeur, March 11, 1754, *ibid.*, 109-110.

first to the storehouse on the Chautauqua portage. From there they could be sent down to the Ohio either by using that portage or the one at Presque Isle depending on the weather and the water level in French and Conewango Creeks. The governor-general gave command of forces on the Ohio to Captain Claude-Pierre Pécaudy de Contrecoeur, one of the most experienced officers in Canada, former commander at Fort Niagara and second-in-command on the 1749 expedition of Céloron de Blainville.<sup>22</sup> Contrecoeur was ordered to descend the Ohio (the French considered the Allegheny to be merely a continuation of the Ohio) with his 600 men and the entire winter garrisons of Presque Isle, Le Boeuf, and Venango, leaving only 30 soldiers to guard these posts. Duquesne felt the impact on the Ohio Indians of such a mass arrival would more than compensate for the risks involved. If the forks in the Ohio, reputed to be twenty miles upstream from Logstown, were actually in a better position to block the route of English traders "from Philadelphia," Contrecoeur was given the option of building the new fort there.<sup>23</sup> Leaving Montreal in the dead of winter, Contrecoeur and his men carried their supplies on sledges to Fort Le Boeuf.<sup>24</sup>

Captain Contrecoeur reached Venango by March 29, 1754, and waited for Captain François Le Mercier to arrive with the rearguard from Fort Presque Isle.<sup>25</sup> This year there was enough rain throughout the spring and summer to allow full use of French Creek. This fact contributed to the French having both supplies and men in key places at the proper time.<sup>26</sup> Descending the Allegheny in full force with a month's supplies, Contrecoeur's expedition must have presented an awesome spectacle to the small group of English at the forks as it swept down on them on April 17. Captain Trent having returned to Virginia for urgently-needed supplies and to plead for quick support by two Virginia companies under Lieutenant Colonel George Washington, Ensign Edward Ward was left in the unenviable position of receiving an ultimatum to surrender within an hour to overwhelming num-

<sup>22</sup> Duquesne to Contrecoeur, December 25, 1753, *ibid.*, 89-91.

<sup>23</sup> Duquesne to Contrecoeur, January 27, 1754, *ibid.*, 92-97. These are Contrecoeur's official orders.

<sup>24</sup> Bonin, *Travels in New France*, 54-55.

<sup>25</sup> Duquesne to Contrecoeur, May 9, 1754, *Papiers Contrecoeur*, 123.

<sup>26</sup> Duquesne to the Minister, October 7, 1754, *Wilderness Chronicles*, 62-63.

bers of French.<sup>27</sup> The next day Ward and his men began their return to Virginia as Contrecoeur's troops demolished the small stockade and started construction on Fort Duquesne.<sup>28</sup>

The French force spent the next two months constructing a fort large enough to hold a permanent garrison of between 200 and 300. Working under the guidance of the expedition's engineer, Captain Le Mercier, Contrecoeur's men completed the basic construction of the 150 foot-square earth and wood edifice by the middle of June.<sup>29</sup> The north and west sides of the fort, those facing the rivers, were protected only by a wooden stockade; whereas the landward sides were defended by a ditch and twelve-foot high earthen wall. The entire armament consisted of eight small cannon, five of which were mounted in the southeast bastion.<sup>30</sup>

Learning of the approach of a force under George Washington, Contrecoeur sent out a party of thirty-five men under Joseph Coulon de Villiers, Sieur de Jumonville, on May 23 with a summons to the English to withdraw from the lands of the Ohio.<sup>31</sup> Early on the morning of May 28, Washington and his forty men surrounded and surprised Jumonville on Laurel Mountain about 60 miles southeast of Fort Duquesne. In the ensuing conflict Jumonville and nine of his men were killed and twenty-four captured. Only one Frenchman escaped, a Canadian named Monceau who had left camp to relieve himself.<sup>32</sup> On the 30th Washington sent his prisoners with an escort of twenty men to Virginia to await exchange.<sup>33</sup> Thus the French and English fight for the Ohio region began with a minor victory for the British.

<sup>27</sup> "Summons of Contrecoeur to the English," April 17, 1754, *Papiers Contrecoeur*, 117-119.

<sup>28</sup> Bonin, *Travels in New France*, 56; "Deposition of Ensign Ward," June 30, 1756, in Kenneth Bailey, *Ohio Company Papers* (Arcata, Ca., 1947), 26-31.

<sup>29</sup> Duquesne to Contrecoeur, July 18, 1754, *Papiers Contrecoeur*, 218-219; Map of Chaussegros de Léry, *Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine*, XV (1932), 238-239.

<sup>30</sup> "Plan of Major Robert Stobo," in Winthrop Sargent (ed.), *The History of an Expedition against Fort Du Quesne in 1755* (Philadelphia, 1855), following 182.

<sup>31</sup> "Summons of Jumonville signed by Contrecoeur," May 23, 1754, *Papiers Contrecoeur*, 130-131.

<sup>32</sup> Bonin, *Travels in New France*, 57-59. This encounter has been carefully analyzed by the French-Canadian historian Marcel Trudel in a paper published in the *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française*, VI, No. 3 (December, 1952), 331-373.

<sup>33</sup> "Journal of Major Washington," May 30, 1754, *Papiers Contrecoeur*, 161.

This was to be the last English success in the area for over two years.<sup>34</sup>

From May 30 to the beginning of July, 1754, Washington hesitated between advance on Fort Duquesne and falling back to Wills Creek (now Cumberland, Md.) on the Potomac River. Knowing the French to be superior to his combined total of somewhat over 500 men, he still felt that a surprise attack could defeat them. Reason prevailed over wishful thinking though, when Washington learned on June 29 that Contrecoeur had received strong reinforcements and that a large body of French and Indians was on its way toward the English. The British retreated from an advanced position on the Monongahela to the hastily-constructed Fort Necessity where from the first of July they awaited the French attack.<sup>35</sup>

In the meantime Captain Contrecoeur had sent orders to a detachment of 300 men which he hoped had arrived at the Chautauqua portage from Montreal to march immediately to his aid.<sup>36</sup> On June 16, in response to this order, the Sieur de Carqueville and 200 men began the descent from Chautauqua carrying supplies with them. About 125 Indians under the command of Captain Louis Coulon de Villiers, brother of the slain Jumonville, came down the Allegheny with de Carqueville.<sup>37</sup> These reinforcements arrived at Fort Duquesne on the 26th, bringing French strength at this crucial point to something over 1,100 men.<sup>38</sup> Contrecoeur gave command of an expedition to throw back the English to de Villiers because of his experience and his obvious personal interest in revenge. Captain de Villiers started up the Monongahela with 500 French and about 200 Indians on the morning of June 28 and reached Fort Necessity early on July 3, 1754.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>34</sup> The next English success on the Ohio was the attack on the Indian village of Kittanning by a force of Pennsylvanians in September, 1756.

<sup>35</sup> "Journal of Major Washington," June 21, 1754, *Papiers Contrecoeur*, 178. Also see Gipson, *The Years of Defeat*, 22-43, for a critical account of Washington's campaign and the difficulties imposed by poor planning and lack of cooperation between the colonies.

<sup>36</sup> Sylvester K. Stevens and Donald H. Kent (eds.), *Journal of Chaussegros de Léry 1754-1755* (Harrisburg, 1940), June 13, 1754, 16.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, June 16, 1754, 18.

<sup>38</sup> "Journal of the Campaign of M. de Villiers against Fort Necessity," *Papiers Contrecoeur*, 196.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 196-200.

Washington capitulated to de Villiers around eight o'clock in the evening following a day-long battle in which the English position became increasingly more hopeless.<sup>40</sup> In return for permission for his men to retain their arms, Washington agreed to stay out of the Ohio region for a year and a day and left two hostages, Captains Robert Stobo and Jacob Van Braam, to be exchanged for the men he had taken on May 28.<sup>41</sup> Washington, not knowing French, was unaware that in signing the capitulation he was admitting to the "assassination" of Jumonville. This "confession" would be used by the French in justifying their position to the courts of Europe.

Following the Battle of Fort Necessity, de Villiers and his men returned to a joyful welcome at Fort Duquesne as Washington slowly led the remains of his little army back to Virginia.<sup>42</sup> Neither side, however, was under any illusions about the decisiveness of the battle and each began preparations for the clash which was to come the following year.

The French build-up at Fort Duquesne continued through the first half of July. Men and supplies which had been set in motion continued to arrive until almost 1,500 men were overflowing the fort.<sup>43</sup> This strength could not be maintained for any length of time; so, with the English threat no longer an immediate danger, Contrecoeur gradually sent over 1,000 of his men back north during the last half of July, 1754.<sup>44</sup>

Regardless of the reduction in strength at Fort Duquesne which left Contrecoeur with only 200 men available at any given time (half of his men were involved in bringing supplies from Presque Isle), the French were able to maintain pressure on the English frontier through their Indian allies.<sup>45</sup> Throughout the months of July and August, 1754, bands of Indians passed through

<sup>40</sup> Of the many accounts of the Battle of Fort Necessity, Gipson's is the most succinct and least given to "might-have-been's." There was no possible way for Washington to win.

<sup>41</sup> "Capitulation of Fort Necessity, July 3, 1754," *Papiers Contrecoeur*, 202-205.

<sup>42</sup> "Journal of the Campaign of M. de Villiers against Fort Necessity," *ibid.*, 202; Bonin, *Travels in New France*, 63-64.

<sup>43</sup> *De Léry Journal*, June 24 and July 9, 1754, 21 and 33.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, July 21 and 27, 1754, 42 and 47; "Letter from Major Robert Stobo, July 28, 1754," Pennsylvania (Colony), *Pennsylvania Colonial Records* (16 vols., Harrisburg, 1851), VI, 161-163.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

the post on raids against English settlements.<sup>46</sup> These raids, however, were primarily made by Indians who had long been French allies. The increased prestige of the French among the Indians of the Ohio, particularly the Shawnees of Logstown, since the Battle of Fort Necessity and the judicious use of presents by Captain Contrecoeur were not yet enough to cause these to actively take up the hatchet. Only after the Battle of the Monongahela would these Indians feel sure that they were on the winning side in joining the French.<sup>47</sup>

Taking advantage of the relative quiet which had settled on the Ohio valley, Captain Contrecoeur continued construction on Fort Duquesne from August 13 to November 27, 1754. Using 150 men until the end of September and then a reduced force of 87 in October and November, he cleared trees from around the fort and built several cabins for Indians, a small barracks, and a hospital outside the walls. Work also continued on the powder magazine and the bakery within the fort. Generally speaking, the fort was put in good defensive shape for the winter.<sup>48</sup>

On September 23 Contrecoeur wrote Governor-General Duquesne that reports by English deserters indicated the English were gaining in force at Wills Creek preparing to attack Fort Duquesne. According to these reports, the English would soon march with three thousand men. Therefore, Contrecoeur was retaining, until winter made it impossible for the British to march, the rearguard of 200 men under the Sieur de Repentigny, which Duquesne had ordered to start for Montreal on September 7, 1754.<sup>49</sup> Since Contrecoeur exaggerated the deserters' report, he probably retained de Repentigny's men in order to speed construction on the fort.<sup>50</sup> Suspecting Contrecoeur was not being entirely candid with him, Duquesne wrote on October 21 and again on the 29th urging Contrecoeur to send de Repentigny to Montreal as soon as possible so that he and his men would not

<sup>46</sup> Bonin, *Travels in New France*, 67.

<sup>47</sup> "Council of Shawnees, July 17, 1754," *Papiers Contrecoeur*, 216-218.

<sup>48</sup> "Expenditures for the Construction on Fort Duquesne from August 13 to November 27, 1754," *ibid.*, 229-245.

<sup>49</sup> Duquesne to Contrecoeur, August 14, 1754, *ibid.*, 249; Duquesne to the Minister, November 3, 1754, *Wilderness Chronicles*, 84-85.

<sup>50</sup> "Deposition of the English Deserters," September 20, 1754, *Papiers Contrecoeur*, 258-259.

have to winter at Fort Presque Isle and use up supplies needed for next year's campaign.<sup>51</sup>

The departure of de Repentigny's company on November 27 left Contrecoeur with 258 officers and men at Fort Duquesne. In addition, about 100 Canadian Indians wintered there serving as scouts for the fort. Another 207 officers and men spent the winter at Venango, Le Boeuf, and Presque Isle.<sup>52</sup> Thus the 1754-55 winter force in the Ohio theater of operations totaled 565 French and Indians.

The reverse suffered by Washington at Fort Necessity increased the feeling among the English colonies and the British government that military action on a large scale would be required to defend British rights in the Ohio region. From September to November, 1754, the British cabinet under the Duke of Newcastle with the advice of the Duke of Cumberland, England's foremost soldier, gradually evolved a course of action to be taken in North America. Two regiments of foot soldiers were to be sent from Ireland to America where they would be raised in strength from 500 to 1,000 men each. Major General Edward Braddock, a veteran officer with a reputation as a strong disciplinarian, was given command of all British forces in America. Beginning with an attack on Fort Duquesne, Braddock was to enforce British rights in the areas disputed with France. After the fall of Fort Duquesne, he would move against Forts Niagara and Crown Point in New York and finally take Fort Beauséjour in Acadia, thus making good English claims to these areas. All this was to be done while negotiations continued with the French over the disputed territory.<sup>53</sup>

Braddock's force embarked from Cork on January 15, 1755, and arrived at Hampton Roads, Virginia, during the first half of March. With the addition of colonial militia, the army reached a total of around 3,000 men by early May when Braddock reached Wills Creek, his base of operations for the campaign.

<sup>51</sup> Duquesne to Contrecoeur, October 21, 1754, *ibid.*, 265; Duquesne to Contrecoeur, October 30, 1754, *ibid.*, 267.

<sup>52</sup> "Garrisons on the Belle Rivière (Ohio)," June 25, 1755, *Wilderness Chronicles*, 64-65.

<sup>53</sup> "Orders of General Braddock," Stanley M. Pargellis (ed.), *Military Affairs in North America 1748-1764* (New York, 1936), 34-36; "Secret Instructions of General Braddock, November 25, 1754," *New York Colonial Documents*, VI, 920-922.

Braddock soon discovered that progress from Wills Creek to Fort Duquesne would be extremely slow due to the rough terrain crossing the Appalachians, the numerous bridges that would have to be built across creeks and swamps on the Ohio side of the mountains, and the inadequate number of horses and wagons provided by the colonials for the campaign. He further discovered that a dispute between Lieutenant-Governor Dinwiddie of Virginia and Governor James Glen of South Carolina had destroyed any chance of help from the Indians of the south, the Cherokees and Catawbas. With the majority of the Ohio Indians still sitting on the fence waiting to join the winning side, he was left dependent on a mere party of eight Indians to scout for the army.<sup>54</sup>

Upset at delays in the advance, Braddock held a council of war on June 16 and decided, on the advice of George Washington, to take a flying column supported by artillery on toward Fort Duquesne before expected French reinforcements could arrive. On the morning of the 18th the lighter and swifter force of 1,460 men moved forward from the vicinity of Fort Necessity. By the evening of July 8, 1755, Braddock's army was encamped some twelve or thirteen miles from Fort Duquesne with every expectation of arriving before the fort in overwhelming force on the morning of July 10.<sup>55</sup>

In preparing for the campaign of 1755, the Marquis Duquesne was well aware of the crucial nature of the coming confrontation. He therefore carefully initiated measures in the fall of 1754 calculated to ensure the success of French arms on the Ohio. His first thought was to appoint a new commander for Fort Duquesne, since Contrecoeur had requested to return to Quebec. Duquesne chose the 44-year-old Captain Daniel-Hyacinthe-Marie Liénard de Beaujeu, a former commandant of Detroit and Niagara,

<sup>54</sup> A bibliographical essay on the literature of "Braddock's Defeat" would require a lengthy article. Some of the more important printed sources outside of Washington's papers are the following: Sargent, *Expedition against Fort Du Quesne*, which contains the "official" account of the campaign in Captain Robert Orme's journal as well as the journal of a seaman with the expedition; Carson I. A. Ritchie (ed.), *General Braddock's Expedition* (n.p., 1962), which has a better version of the seaman's journal; and Charles Hamilton (ed.), *Braddock's Defeat* (Norman, 1959), composed of the "Journal of Captain Robert Cholmley's Batman," "The Journal of a British Officer," both newly uncovered in 1958, and "Halkett's Orderly Book."

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.* This skeleton summary of British moves leaves much untold.

to replace Contrecoeur and notified the latter that Beaujeu should arrive by June 20.<sup>56</sup> Next, Duquesne thought to secure the aid of Indians from the upper Great Lakes since Contrecoeur was having little success among the Shawnees and Iroquois of the Ohio. Therefore he requested from Paris the rank of ensign for Charles Langlade, the victor at Pickawillany, in order "to arouse his zeal when he is needed."<sup>57</sup> In November Duquesne wrote to the French government explaining the threat from the British colonies and the need to finance another strong expedition down the Ohio.<sup>58</sup>

By the time Duquesne's report reached Paris, the French ministry knew the situation was even more serious than the governor-general had imagined. Aware that two regiments had been sent to support the British colonies, the government prepared to send reinforcements to Canada. The ministry warned Duquesne in February, however, that French troops would not arrive in time to affect the English thrust toward Fort Duquesne. Therefore the colony was left to defend this post as well as it could. In so doing, Duquesne was authorized to make full use of all Indian allies.<sup>59</sup> Thus on March 15, 1755, Charles Langlade was commissioned an ensign.<sup>60</sup>

Weather did not favor the French in 1755 as it had the year before. The severe winter delayed the spring thaw until the middle of April and the lack of rainfall kept French Creek too low to allow its use for most of the spring and summer.<sup>61</sup> The success of the previous year caused Duquesne to ignore the Chautauqua portage in plans for 1755. Therefore men and supplies reached Fort Duquesne much later than in 1754. On March 6 Duquesne sent out an advance detachment of 51 gunners and

<sup>56</sup> Duquesne to Contrecoeur, October 30, 1754, *Papiers Contrecoeur*, 266; La Jonquiere to Monseigneur, September 23, 1750, Archives Nationale, C11 a Vol. 95, 201.

<sup>57</sup> Duquesne to Jean-Baptiste Machault d'Arnouville, October 10, 1754, Theodore C. Pease and Ernestine Jenison (eds.), *Illinois on the Eve of the Seven Years' War 1747-1755* (Springfield, 1940), 904-905.

<sup>58</sup> Duquesne to Machault, November 3, 1754, *ibid.*, 915-920.

<sup>59</sup> Minister to the Duc de Mirepoix, February 3, 1755, A. E. Angl., 438, ff. 76-80 (Private collection of Wilbur R. Jacobs); Machault to Duquesne, February 17, 1755, *New York Colonial Documents*, X, 276-277.

<sup>60</sup> *Wisconsin Historical Collections*, XVIII, 149.

<sup>61</sup> Governor-General Pierre Regaud de Vaudreuil-Cavagnal to Machault, July 24, 1755, *New York Colonial Documents*, X, 307; Duquesne to Contrecoeur, April 11, 1755, *Papiers Contrecoeur*, 308.

laborers on the ice to deliver six-pound cannon which he had sent as far as Fort Niagara in the fall.<sup>62</sup> This force did not reach Fort Duquesne until the middle of April, bringing the effective strength of the garrison up to only 300 men.<sup>63</sup> Not until April 23 was Captain Beaujeu able to depart Montreal with the first significant reinforcements for the threatened fort.<sup>64</sup>

From April 23 to May 28, 1755, a series of detachments totalling 766 French and 170 Indians left Montreal for the Ohio region, each group carrying provisions for four months. On the way to Fort Duquesne, Beaujeu and his men had orders to fortify the storehouses at Venango, thus creating Fort Machault.<sup>65</sup> French Creek being too low for navigation, the Presque Isle portage had been effectively lengthened to 90 miles. Therefore, Beaujeu remained on the supply route during the months of May and June to coordinate efforts to get men and supplies to Fort Duquesne.<sup>66</sup>

Although Captain Contrecoeur had a total of 1,282 French and 270 Indians under his command by the first of June, 1755, his effective force at Fort Duquesne before the first of July was never more than 300 men, most of whom were busy working to improve the fort's defenses, because of the tremendous effort required to get supplies from Presque Isle to Fort Duquesne.<sup>67</sup> A quick march to the fort by the English in May or June would have certainly brought an immediate surrender by the garrison. Furthermore, Contrecoeur received less information about the march of the English from his 270 Indians than Braddock gained about the state of affairs in Fort Duquesne from his eight scouts.<sup>68</sup> Thus before the battle of the Monongahela, Contrecoeur and Beaujeu thought that Braddock's entire force of 3,000 men was about to descend upon them.

<sup>62</sup> "Garrisons on the Belle Rivière," June 25, 1755, *Wilderness Chronicles*, 65.

<sup>63</sup> Contrecoeur to Philippe Douville, April 14, 1755, *Papiers Contrecoeur*, 310.

<sup>64</sup> "Garrisons on the Belle Rivière," June 25, 1755, *Wilderness Chronicles*, 65-66.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> Contrecoeur to Beaujeu, May 18, 1755, *Papiers Contrecoeur*, 347; Beaujeu to Contrecoeur, June 1, 1755, *ibid.*, 353-355.

<sup>67</sup> "Garrisons on the Belle Rivière," June 25, 1755, *Wilderness Chronicles*, 67; "Expenditures for the Construction on Fort Duquesne," March 20 to August 27, 1755, *Papiers Contrecoeur*, 284-304.

<sup>68</sup> Contrecoeur to Vaudreuil, June 21, 1755, *Papiers Contrecoeur*, 365.

On the eve of the decisive encounter, about 800 Ottawas, Potawatomis, and Hurons under the command of Ensign Charles Langlade arrived from the vicinity of Detroit.<sup>69</sup> However Contrecoeur and Beaujeu, who reached the fort during the critical first days of July, could muster a maximum of only 300 soldiers and militia at the crucial moment. Believing themselves outnumbered better than two-to-one even counting the Indians and there being no way to defend the fort against Braddock's siege artillery, the French captains decided to attack the English as they crossed the Monongahela on July 9 in the frail hope that Braddock might be forced to halt until reinforcements could reach Fort Duquesne.<sup>70</sup>

On the morning of July 9, 1755, Captain Beaujeu led 192 French and 637 Indians, all that could be persuaded or shamed into joining the seemingly hopeless attack, toward the approaching enemy. Contrecoeur remained at Fort Duquesne with 100 men to destroy it if Beaujeu failed.<sup>71</sup> The last hope of the French appeared to be gone when Beaujeu discovered the English army already across the Monongahela and advancing in regular order only nine miles from the fort.

Leading his men in an immediate attack on the advance guard under Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Gage, Beaujeu was killed in the third volley from the English. At that moment the Indians turned to flee and the French began to waver; but, a resolute charge led by Captain Jean-Daniel Dumas, Beaujeu's second-in-command, broke the English advance guard which fell back on the main body of the army without seriously attempting to take a small hill on the right which commanded the field of battle. The French and Indians then rallied and began to encircle the confused British. By nightfall the English were in headlong retreat with a mortally-wounded commander and the French were masters of the battlefield.<sup>72</sup>

In spite of the tremendous efforts made by the Quebec government to insure a successful occupation of the Ohio region over a three-year period, at the crucial moment in the 1755 campaign

<sup>69</sup> *Wisconsin Historical Collections*, VII, 130.

<sup>70</sup> Sargent, *Expedition against Fort Du Quesne*, 409.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 411.

<sup>72</sup> For analyses of the Battle of the Monongahela, see Stanley M. Pargellis, "Braddock's Defeat," *American Historical Review*, XLI (1938), 251-259, and Gipson, *The Years of Defeat*, 92-96. Pargellis is too hard on Braddock; Gipson rightly censures Gage for critical errors at the onset of the battle.

it was the British who had superior forces at the point of conflict. Only a supreme stroke of luck capitalized upon by Captain Dumas converted the effort from ignominious defeat to glorious victory. This victory guaranteed French domination of the Ohio for three years more and opened up the western settlements of Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia to savage attacks as the Indians of the Ohio area now proceeded to jump on the French bandwagon. During the terrible winter of 1755-56, few English colonists could imagine that the French and Indian War would conclude in the total elimination of France from North America.