BOOK REVIEWS


Three brochures, prepared by author-historian Robert C. Alberts for distribution through the National Park Service, bring to park visitors accurate and readable accounts of major events in our nation's early history.

A Charming Field For An Encounter

This brochure, prepared for the Fort Necessity National Battlefield, Farmington, Pennsylvania, describes twenty-two-year-old George Washington's 1754 first experience under fire as the yet undeclared French and Indian War (not declared until 1756) broke out into armed conflict in the mountains of southwestern Pennsylvania.

"Readable" is the word for Alberts's work, for his well-researched account is tasty under his factual pen. In dramatic sequence the reader follows youthful Washington from Virginia to Great Meadows (Fort Necessity National Battlefield), and then on with a small command to Jumonville Glen on top of Chestnut Ridge. There a small scouting party from French Fort Duquesne is surprised and in the resulting skirmish its leader, Coulon de Jumonville, killed.

Next is the retreat to Great Meadows where Fort Necessity is hastily constructed in fear of French reprisal. Finally comes the capitulation of Colonel Washington's less than 400-man regiment to a superior force of French and Indians, and, through misunderstanding, admission by Washington in the articles of capitulation of the "assassination" of Jumonville.

Rounding out the brochure is a brief summary of the next year's (1755) unsuccessful Braddock campaign to capture Fort Duquesne, the archeological exploration in 1953 that established the circular
shape of Fort Necessity, and the history of the battlefield subsequent to 1755. Two appendixes reproduce the Articles of Capitulation at Fort Necessity, and give history's judgment that Jumonville was not assassinated on a diplomatic mission but rather was killed in a military engagement.

George Rogers Clark and the Winning of the Old Northwest

Another brochure, prepared for the George Rogers Clark National Historical Park, Vincennes, Indiana, describes the daring, almost epic, 1778 successful raid of twenty-six-year-old Major George Rogers Clark to capture British outposts in the Old Northwest — the Illinois country — in order to bring security to the western frontier by eliminating Indian raids at their source.

Leaving the Falls of the Ohio (Louisville) in late June 1778, Clark with 175 militia captured, in early July, Kaskaskia on the Mississippi River 100 miles above the mouth of the Ohio and Cahokia another 40 miles up the Mississippi.

Then in February 1779, Clark marched across country 240 miles from Kaskaskia for a surprise attack on Fort Sackville at Vincennes, capturing Lieutenant Colonel Henry Hamilton, the hated "hair buyer" from Detroit and British commander in the northwest.

Describing this last exploit Mr. Alberts is at his best. The reader suffers along with the exhausted troops as they make the winter hardship march across drowned country from overflooded rivers, facing triple threats of weather and starvation and Indians.

With only Kentucky militia experience as a military background, Clark emerges in heroic proportion as a master of strategy, ingenuity, public relations, civil government, Indian diplomacy, and above all, leadership. Displays in the attractive memorial building in the George Rogers Clark National Historical Park tell the story of this extraordinary hero who in his single moment on the pages of history added immeasurably to the security of the western frontier, the outcome of the Revolution, and the growth of America.

Mount Washington Tavern

This quickly read, most attractively illustrated, and enjoyable brochure, tells in Mr. Alberts's simple and factual English the "Story of a Famous Inn, a Great Road, and the People Who Used Them." History and nostalgia happily are combined.

The inn is the Mount Washington Tavern, erected on the old National Road (now U.S. 40) in the late 1820s, and now a unit of
Fort Necessity National Battlefield; the great road is the National Road, the first national highway in America; and the people who used them are an imaginary immigrant family who traveled the National Road in 1836 and stopped at many of its taverns, including the one at Mount Washington.

The brochure begins with the odd fact of history that George Washington came to own the land on which he fought his first battle, purchasing the site in 1769. Later he was unsuccessful in selling the property even though he prophetically advised his agents, "It is an excellent stand for an innkeeper."

As we travel westward with the immigrant family we learn about the famous highway on which work commenced at Cumberland, Maryland, in 1811. It was completed to Wheeling, West Virginia, in 1818 and finally terminated at Vandalia, Illinois, in 1839. We learn of taverns and tollhouses, and of almost endless lines of Conestoga freight wagons and passenger coaches, and of droves of farm animals. We learn that on this road America traveled west and the west sent produce east until shortly after 1850, when the railroads reached the Ohio River. Then steam became king and major east-west roads became local roads until the present century.

_**Pittsburgh**_  

Niles Anderson


This informative bicentennial publication of the National Park Service commemorates the Constitution and those men who were the founding fathers of the United States of America. _Signers of the Constitution_ is at the least a concise reference book for beginning students of history and, at the most, a pleasant collection of gossip and memorabilia for all Americans and others interested in the inception of a democratic republic. Should this taste of historical origins whet the appetite for more, the editor has supplied a short but excellent list of further suggested reading.

The format of the book is of a marvelously utilitarian design — as if drafted by an engineer. The first and main part of _Signers of the_