

The Papers of George Washington. Colonial Series. Volume 3: April-November 1756. Edited by W. W. Abbot, with Dorothy Twohig, assoc. ed., Philander D. Chase and Beverly H. Runge, asst. eds.

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Pp. xx, 488. Notes, maps, index. \$25.00.)

Professor Abbot and his editorial staff have assisted historical scholarship by making available in reliable form the extensive documentation of Washington's defensive campaign of 1756. Except for a brief inspection of Fort Cumberland in July, a few days at Mount Vernon in September, and a tour of the defenses of southern Virginia in October, Washington remained at Winchester the entire campaign. As commander of Virginia's forces, he was subordinate only to Governor Dinwiddie and the British commander in chief, but he had to act in agreement with the assembly. Therefore, he exchanged long letters with John Robinson, the speaker of the House of Burgesses and treasurer of Virginia. Washington usually wrote these with the same content and tone as letters he was writing to the governor. Robinson and others kept him aware of the climate in the legislature. There was no sign of a break between Washington and Dinwiddie. Both agreed that the chain-of-forts strategy of defense that the assembly had imposed would never produce a secure perimeter because the assembly had not authorized enough soldiers or provided adequate inducements for enlistment. Out of loyalty, both colonel and governor tried to make the system work, but they were convinced that only another expedition to the Ohio would resolve Virginia's plight.

Washington was not present at any of the twenty skirmishes of 1756. He emerges from the correspondence as a severe disciplinarian and an adroit supervisor of manpower and munitions. He complained often, but except when he was denouncing cowardliness, his criticisms were aimed at a system, not its individuals. Not only had the assembly refused to authorize enough men to garrison the forts, but it had weakened the wording of the Mutiny Act. When county militia units were ordered to the frontier to supplement the Virginia Regiment, their miserable performance made a mockery of military standards. The flight of civilians from the area of the defensive line struck Washing-

ton as detrimental to both the economy and the personal interests of frontier inhabitants.

These papers show a mutual respect between Washington and his captains: Peter Hogg, Thomas Waggener, Lt. Col. Adam Stephen, and Robert Stewart. A class of reliable field grade officers was emerging. Criticism of the regiment from the outside, culminating in "Virginia-Centinel No. X," published on September 3, dampened their spirits because the criticisms were in vague and exaggerated terms.

Washington tended to ask for councils of war to decide such ticklish questions as the disposition of Fort Cumberland at the climax of the campaign. He was empowered to destroy the structure after consulting with a council of officers, but that council took an equivocal position, and on November 5 Washington deflected the problem onto the governor and the next assembly. In the end, the fort was preserved even though it was vulnerable to any form of siege artillery.

There are no descriptions of combat or of the enemy's activities. Washington was not present to observe them. Only once, on the southern tour, was he personally in danger. Military casualties for Virginia during the campaign were about one hundred from the regiment — which stood at 709 in October — and its militia supplements. Since the Virginia Regiment was not tested in any major engagement, it is difficult to measure Washington's accomplishments. Perhaps his real triumph lay in perpetuating a viable military system in the face of adverse circumstances, an achievement similar to his situation during the more dismal years of the Revolution.

The editorial work appears flawless. The location of the military storehouse at Conococheague has been placed near the confluence of Conococheague Creek and the Potomac, on the Virginia side, correcting the note in Volume 2 (p. 37) that placed it slightly east of Winchester. Three maps of the campaign area provide an excellent guide for locating sites mentioned in the text. Prudently, where precise locations of forts cannot be determined they are shown at their approximate locations. ■

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