Clash of Empires: The British, French & Indian War 1754 – 1763

CHAPTER 4

# The Great Warpaths

EWS OF THE FRENCH AND INDIAN VICTORY AT FORT NECESSITY reached Albany, New York, during a treaty conference between representatives of several northern British colonies and the Iroquois Confederacy. "Brethren," the Mohawk leader Theyanoguin (known as Hendrick) told the colonial delegates, "the Governor of Virginia and the Governor of Canada are both quarrelling about lands which belong to us, and such a quarrel as this may end in our destruction; they fight who shall have the land."

This struggle spread in 1755 to the borderlands between Canada, New York, New England, and Iroquoia. For five years, fighting centered on control of two strategic corridors. A north-south route linked Montreal and New York by Lake Champlain and the Hudson River. An east-west passage ran between Lake Ontario and Albany, following the Mohawk Valley. Tens of thousands of combatants clashed in these campaigns before the surprising conclusion of the conflict in 1760.

## BRITISH MANEUVERS

The long, narrow body of water known as Lake St. Sacrament to Canadians and as Lake George (after 1755) to British colonists flows north from the fringes of the Adirondack Mountains into Lake Champlain. During peacetime, hunters and trappers, traders and smugglers used this route between Canada, Albany, and New England. During the frequent colonial wars, raiding parties and armies, captives and plunder traveled up and down the placid waters.

From their bases at Fort Carillon (Ticonderoga) in the north and Fort William Henry in the south, British, French, and Indian forces struggled desperately for control of this strategic lake. For a few months each year, the camps and garrisons along its shores made the region the most densely populated place in North America.

The British war effort brought together tens of thousands of men (and thousands of women and children) from across the Atlantic World. Only a third of British soldiers in North America were native-born. Two-thirds were Scots and Irish, with the remainder a mixture of Germans, Swiss, and other Europeans (including Hungarians and Norwegians), as well as American colonists. In some British camps, visitors were as likely to hear Scottish Gaelic or German as English. A few American Indians even carried arms and wore the red coats of the British army.

# BRITISH SOLDIERS HAD MUCH TO LEARN

"You might as well send a Cow in pursuit of a Hare," Virginia provincial officer Adam Stephen observed in 1755, "as an English Soldier loaded in their way with a Coat, Jacket &c. &c. after Canadians in their Shirts, who can shoot and run well, or Naked Indians accustomed to the Woods." A fully loaded British soldier on the march carried at least 63 pounds of clothing, arms, and equipment. But during the American war, British commanders quickly adapted to the challenges of forest campaigning, teaching their soldiers to take cover behind trees like their Canadian, Indian, and American counterparts. Specially raised units of rangers and "light infantry" with lighter clothing, arms, and equipment specialized in skirmishes and irregular warfare.

Two bloody actions have long captured the imagination of historians and novelists, tourists and moviemakers. In August 1757, a force of French, Canadian, and Indian fighters under Louis-Joseph de Montcalm besieged Fort William Henry for three days. When the defeated British and Americans began to march off according to terms negotiated without Montcalm's Indian allies, angry warriors seized prisoners. Some who were sick, wounded, or those who resisted were killed. This incident inspired James Fenimore Cooper's novel *Last of the Mohicans* (1826), perhaps the best-known story about the French and Indian War.

The British returned in 1758 with 16,000 British and American soldiers. On July 8, a force of only 3,600 French soldiers defeated this powerful army at Fort Carillon when the British commander ordered a direct assault on Montcalm's fortified position. The carnage of this day moved Scottish writer Robert Lewis Stevenson to pen the poem "Ticonderoga: A Legend of the West Highlands" (1882).

# A FRENCH OR CANADIAN WAY OF WAR?

The two leaders responsible for defending New France, Canadian Governor General Pierre de Rigaud de Vaudreuil and French commander Marquis de Montcalm, argued passionately about tactics and strategy. Vaudreuil understood that Canada had for generations held out against the British colonies by employing Indian allies and guerilla tactics to attack their settlements.

Canadian militia and the *Troupes de la Marine* excelled in this kind of warfare, which kept their enemies on the defensive and unable to invade New France. To a European professional such as Montcalm, these tactics were uncivilized. Montcalm's French regulars were too few to dismiss his Canadian and Indian allies, but he increasingly settled into a static defense against British assaults. When large British expeditions finally reached the St. Lawrence Valley in 1759-60, Canada capitulated. THE GREAT WARPATHS



View of the Lines at Lake George, 1759 Thomas Davies Signed "T.D. 1774" in lower left corner Oil on canvas, 25-1/2 x 30-3/8 inches Collection of the Fort Ticonderoga Museum

THIS LOVELY LANDSCAPE is the earliest-known painting of the southern end of Lake George, called Lake St. Sacrament by the French. British artillery officer and artist Thomas Davies (c. 1737-1812) accompanied Major General Jeffery Amherst's successful 1759 campaign against the French Forts Carillon (Ticonderoga) and St. Frederic (Crown Point). His work depicts the tent encampment of Amherst's army stretching from the ruins of Fort William Henry in the left rear to the rising ground on the right where William Johnson and Hendrick's provincial and Iroquois forces encamped in 1755. Clash of Empires: The British, French & Indian War 1754 – 1763

THEYANOGUIN (1692-1755), or Hendrick as he was known to the British, lived in the Mohawk community of Canajoharie west of Albany, New York. Hendrick traveled to London to meet King George II in 1740, an occasion that may be commemorated in this engraved portrait. In 1755, Hendrick led several hundred Iroquois warriors – mostly Mohawks – in support of a British campaign against the French Fort St. Frederic at Crown Point.



The brace of Sentrick the great S. I. THEN or Chief of the Molawit Indians. one of the Six Wations now in Miance with & Subject to the King of Great Britain . Sett by Chief Backwell opposite the him time in fightile .

The brave old Hendrick the great sachem or Chief of the Mohawk Indians..., c. 1740 Etching and engraving, 15-1/8 x 10-3/4 inches Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. **British Shot Pouch**, c. 1755 Leather, 7 inches Collection of Charles Thayer



ON THE MORNING OF SEPTEMBER 8, 1755, Massachusetts provincial soldier Lemuel Lyman was wounded in an ambush known as the "Bloody Morning Scout" when a bullet struck his hand, shattered the stock of his musket, and passed through this leather pouch. Ambushed by a force of French-allied Indians, Canadian militiamen, and elite French grenadiers under the command of French commander Jean-Armand Dieskau, Baron de Dieskau, the provincial and Mohawk force fled to their camp at Lake George. A participant called the ensuing battle "the most awful day that my eyes ever beheld, & may I not say that ever was seen in New England."

### The Great Warpaths

POWDER HORNS, LIKE THIS ONE engraved by African-American provincial soldier John Bush, served a practical purpose but also might commemorate the owner's military experiences, places visited, or battles fought. **Powder Horn**, 1756 Attributed to John Bush

Inscribed "Colo Nathan Whiting Esqr / His Horn made at Fort Wm henry / The 11th of Octbr, AD 1756 / when Bows and weighty Spears were us'd in / Fight. Twere nervous Limbs Declrd. A man of might / But Now Gun powder Scorns such strength to Own / And heroes not by Limbs but Souls are Shown / War" Cow horn, pine, iron, 16 x 3 (plug end) inches The Connecticut Historical Society Museum, Hartford, Connecticut

Wine Cup, 18th century Engraved with the coat-of-arms of Louis-Joseph Montcalm, Marquis de Montcalm, Marked "I.B.L." Silver, 6 x 6.5 cm McCord Museum of Canadian History, Montreal, Gift of David Ross McCord



THIS SILVER WINE CUP, made in France during the early 18th century, was part of French General Montcalm's field equipment during his campaigns in North America. After a series of victories against British and American forces, Montcalm was mortally wounded at the Battle of Quebec, September 13, 1759.



THIS BAYONET WAS USED BY A SOLDIER in the British 50th Regiment, a unit of American recruits from New England and the middle colonies (Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia) led by British officers and commanded by Massachusetts Governor William Shirley. It is marked with a regimental, company, and "rack" or individual soldier's number (50th. Rt./f/32), and may have been captured by the French at the siege of Oswego in 1756.

**British Bayonet**, Early Land Pattern, 1740s (issued 1754) Engraved "50th Rt./f/32" Iron with steel point, 21-1/2 x 2-1/2 inches Private Collection



A study for John Bush: Massachusetts Soldier at Lake George, 1756 Gerry Embleton, 2005

11

onorable Sir," an aged George Bush wrote in a September 1758 plea for help to the colonial governor of Massachusetts, "I have a Son In Captivity at Cannaday if he be Living that was Taken Last year at Lake George.... His naime is John Bush." George Bush, a free Black farmer and ex-slave from South America, had already lost two sons in the war; now another was missing. Thirty-year-old John Bush had served in the colony's militia and provincial forces since 1747, spending the winter of 1755-56 at Fort William Henry. He was captured when the fort fell to French and Indian forces in August 1757. Bush died

Literate and possessing a steady hand, John Bush fashioned exquisitely engraved powder horns on the Lake George frontier in 1755-56. His work inspired other artists to develop a unique style of powder horn engraving that flourished in New England through the end of the American Revolution.

the following year aboard a ship carrying prisoners to France.

The Great Warpaths



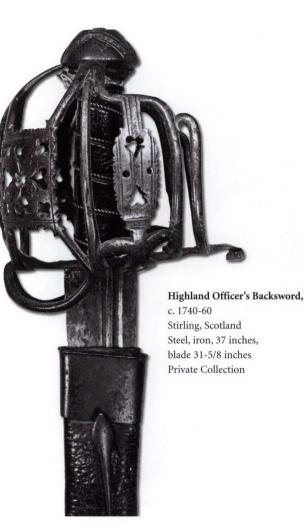
*Lieutenant Colonel Nathan Whiting*, c. 1768 Attributed to John Durand Oil on canvas, 43 x 31 inches The Connecticut Historical Society Museum, Hartford, Connecticut

LIKE MANY NEW ENGLAND OFFICERS in the French and Indian War, Connecticut native Nathan Whiting (1724-1771) served as a young man on the expedition that captured the French fortress Louisburg on Cape Breton Island in 1745. Whiting returned to service in 1755, taking command of a Connecticut regiment on the expedition against Fort St. Frederic. Present at the Bloody Morning Scout, he skillfully organized a fighting retreat to the provincial camp. Promoted to Colonel in 1756, he served through the end of the war, and was given a British commission before being reduced to half-pay when peace came in 1763.



*Lieutenant General James Abercromby*, c. 1760 Allan Ramsay Oil on canvas, 30-1/2 x 25-1/2 inches Collection of the Fort Ticonderoga Museum

MAJOR GENERAL JAMES ABERCROMBY (1706-1781), one of many Scottish officers in the British army, arrived in North America in 1756 as deputy to British Commander-in-Chief John Campbell, Earl of Loudoun. As Loudoun's successor in 1758, Abercromby led a force of more than 16,000 British and American troops against the French Fort Carillon, known to the British as Ticonderoga. In a surprise defeat that was as stunning to the outnumbered defenders (four to one) as it was to Abercromby's army, the Anglo-American force suffered horrendous casualties while assaulting a fortified position protected by French regulars led by Louis-Joseph, Marquis de Montcalm. This portrait was painted after Abercromby was recalled to Britain at the end of 1758, and passed down through his descendents as part of a group of family portraits. THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT MET THE DEMANDS OF THE SEVEN YEARS' WAR by recruiting thousands of non-English-speaking Protestants into the army. In addition to German-speaking recruits from Europe and the American colonies, the British recruited heavily in the Scottish Highlands, an economically depressed region from which soldiers had long been an export. One inducement for enlisting in the Highland battalions was the opportunity to wear traditional dress and arms, including tartan kilts and basket-hilted swords that had been banned by the British government following the Jacobite uprising of 1745-46. Ensign James Grant of the First Highland Battalion (62nd, later 77th Regiment), a native of Kinmachlie, Banffshire, Scotland, carried this sword in the French and Indian War.



ALONG WITH HIS BASKET-HILTED BACKSWORD, James Grant carried this steel-framed pistol through the widespread campaigns of the French and Indian War. After landing in Charleston, South Carolina, in 1757, Grant's regiment served on the 1758 expedition

> against Fort Duquesne, and on the Lake George frontier

Cherokee Indians in South Carolina (1760-61); French and Spanish forces in the West Indies (1761-62); and French forces in Newfoundland (1762). In 1763, Grant was among the sickly remnants of the corps who relieved the besieged Fort Pitt, fighting at the battle of Bushy Run in August 1763. Demobilized in 1764, Grant settled in Dutchess County, New York. His descendents carefully preserved his sword, pistol, and military papers for more than 200 years.

the following year. Elements of the regiment went on to battle



THE GREAT WARPATHS



General Johnson Saving a Wounded French Officer from the Tomahawk of a North American Indian, c. 1764-68 Benjamin West, (1738-1820) Oil on Canvas, 129.5 x 106.5 cm Derby Museums and Art Gallery, UK

THIS PAINTING, ONE OF PENNSYLVANIA-BORN ARTIST Benjamin West's earliest historical works, is believed to commemorate an incident during the 1759 British siege of the French Fort Niagara. On July 24, 1759, British, provincial, and Iroquois fighters intercepted a relief force attempting to reinforce the besieged French garrison. Recent cleaning for the *Clash of Empires* exhibition has revealed a fallen French soldier among the trees on the far left, his head upside down near the roots and four jacket buttons.

