

**A BGES Americana Field University Program:
Setting the World on Fire: George
Washington and the French and Indian War
from the Shenandoah to Western
Pennsylvania**

Presented by Scott Patchan
July 26–30, 2022; from Winchester, Virginia

The journey of George Washington to his destiny as the “Father of His Country” is so immense as to demand seven volumes and nearly 5,000 pages of text from one of the world’s most significant biographers and countless lesser works that have spread from the late 18th century to modern day. Indeed, this is the first of three Washington-themed tours we are featuring this year.

George Washington was an ambitious British citizen living in the Colony of Virginia. His family had long been in the second tier of English society even before it immigrated to Virginia. Even worse, as the youngest son, he was not destined to inherit his family’s estate under the mores of the time. Undeterred, he set out to achieve the prosperity and social status he longed for. As a teenager, he started out as a surveyor in the employ of that ubiquitous land baron of Virginia Lord Fairfax, surveying the distant frontiers of the Old Dominion and becoming familiar with the land and its peoples. Raw ambition and political connections gained him a commission as a major in the Virginia militia, whetting his appetite to wear the coveted the scarlet tunic of a British officer.

In 1753, French forces moved into the “Ohio Country,” now western Pennsylvania. At the time, the territory was loosely defined as the lands along the Ohio River and its many tributaries extending northward to Lake Erie. This ground had long been claimed by both the French and the British. The Virginia Colony, in particular, had established the Ohio Company, chartered by the Crown for the express purpose of settling and developing that massive territory. French encroachment upon these lands alarmed the powers in Williamsburg, and Virginia Gov. Robert Dinwiddie sprang into action. He summoned young Washington and entrusted him to deliver a message to the offending French demanding that they leave the British lands. Of course, the French believed just as firmly the land was theirs and did not heed the English warning. In response, Dinwiddie readied for war, although the Crown had not authorized such a course. The Governor appointed Washington second in command of the nascent Virginia Regiment, which he largely recruited and organized. Urged on to the Forks of the Ohio (modern Pittsburgh) by Dinwiddie to eject the experienced French force that had expanded their foothold in the region, Washington suddenly found himself serving as the point of the spear that Dinwiddie had thrust at the French.

In that role, the inexperienced, sometimes immature, and frequently naïve 22-year-old Washington unwittingly “set the world on fire” in 1754 when his actions in the backwoods of America initiated a global conflict. In the end, he marched away defeated and embarrassed by the French at Fort Necessity. Even worse, he became the subject of international controversy. He would soon be replaced by British regular Gen. Edward Braddock, whom Washington reluctantly served as an aide, but the results were even more disastrous.

In the wake of Braddock’s shocking 1755 death and defeat in the Battle of the Monongahela, Washington resumed command of the Virginia Regiment and served as the front line of defense in western Virginia and Maryland. In this role, he displayed some of the leadership qualities that made him famous during the Revolution. He evolved from the self-centered young man into a leader who saw the greater cause and the plight of the people whose lives depended upon his actions. While his immaturity and arrogance still surfaced at inopportune moments, Washington closed his service under Gen. John Forbes in the successful but inglorious campaign that drove the French from Fort Duquesne in 1758. Although the North American theater war did not end until 1760, Washington retired to Mt. Vernon, which he leased from his deceased brother’s widow until her death in 1761, when he inherited the estate. His experiences in the French and Indian War did not deliver the glory he had initially sought, but it provided him with deep-rooted experiences, both as a man and military leader, that served him well as commander of the Continental Army during the American Revolution.

Read this “[Tour Talk](#)” from July 31, 2021, featuring an interview with Scott Patchan and Gary Ecelbarger on “Washington’s Desperate Gambit.”

On June 22, 2021, Len, Scott, and Gary had an animated discussion about “The Washington Gambit.” Click [here](#) to watch that show.

Tuesday, July 26, 2022

7:30 PM. Assemble at the headquarters hotel in Winchester, where Scott Patchan will introduce you to the study of George Washington and the places that made the young man a household name in the colonial government and a militaristic politician prepared to lead in the field. Collect your name tag and handouts.

Dinner is on your own.

Wednesday, July 27, 2022

7:45 AM. With your bags on board by 7:30 AM, we depart at 7:45 AM. Winchester has a long legacy of historic events in American history, and our departure will use this

launching point to go in a direction entirely different from later wars. In doing so, we will follow young George Washington in his earliest public service assignment. Washington's route carries us through the mountains of what is now West Virginia, via Cumberland to Fort Necessity.

This day focuses on Washington in 1754 in his attempt to move to the "Forks of the Ohio," now Pittsburgh, to reinforce a small force that was constructing a fort to control this critical point in the Ohio Country. Acting on the orders of Virginia Lt. Gov. Robert Dinwiddie, Washington set out from Alexandria via Winchester to Willis Creek (Cumberland), where the Ohio Company had constructed a blockhouse known as Fort Ohio. We will also visit the site of Fort Cumberland, constructed after the Fort Necessity campaign of 1754, and discuss its role in the 1755 Braddock Expedition. We will also visit Washington's headquarters cabin site. Then, we follow young Washington as he leads his small force of about 150 Virginians into what is now southwest Pennsylvania through the mountains and over rivers, building the road that would be used by Maj. Gen. Braddock one year later. En route, Washington learns the French have driven the small English party away from the forks of the Allegheny and Monongahela Rivers and constructed a major fortification there: Fort Duquesne. Our overnight is in Uniontown, Pennsylvania, where your hotel is prepaid. We will provide lunch and dinner today.

Thursday, July 28, 2022

7:45 AM. Have your bags out by 7:30 AM for our 7:45 departure. Day two focuses on Washington's actions in Western Pennsylvania after he has learned about the large French presence at Fort Duquesne. We will follow Washington as he meets with Half-King, key leader of the Iroquois Nation in the region. They are allied with the English. Half-King informs Washington about the presence of a French military expedition. This party had already destroyed English settlements in the area. Half-King tells Washington they are camping in a nearby but isolated hollow. Washington surrounds the encampment and attacks. In the ensuing melee, nearly a dozen French are killed, including the French commander Jumonville. This French command was on a dual-purpose mission: to scout English settlements in the region and report back, and to deliver a diplomatic message telling the English to leave the "disputed" territory.

After the death of Jumonville, Washington returns to Fort Necessity, a small fortification at the Great Meadows, unaware he is about to become deeply involved in a diplomatic controversy with the French.

The brother of Jumonville, Capt. Coulon DeVilliers, has gathered a force of 400 French Marines from Fort Duquesne and some allied Native warriors to exact revenge for his brother's death. DeVilliers attacks Fort Necessity. Outmanned, Washington surrenders his command. Washington naively signs a surrender document admitting his "errors." That damning admission would ignite an international incident. Today, we will journey to Ohiopyle Falls on the Youghiogheny River and explore the obstacles that Washington encountered along his route.

As we head toward our hotel in Greensburg, this afternoon we will visit sites related to the 1755 Braddock Campaign, including his Braddock's grave and other key sites along the Braddock Road.

Your breakfast, lunch, and dinner are included, as well as your hotel.

Friday, July 29, 2022

Following the English setback at Fort Necessity, the Crown dispatched Gen. Edward Braddock and 2,500 British regulars to the New World in 1755. Although the colonists sought protection from the French and their Native American allies, Braddock received only scant cooperation from them. Nevertheless, Braddock led his force through the rugged mountains of what is now western Maryland and southwest Pennsylvania toward the French enclave at Fort Duquesne. With Braddock's overwhelming force, success seemed inevitable, but a relatively small band of Native Americans and French attacked Braddock's column a short distance from the fort and inflicted a bloody and decisive defeat, using tactics that were unfamiliar to the British regulars and their colonial reinforcements. Braddock was mortally wounded, and Washington emerged as a leader of men, guiding the shattered remnants of the army to safety.

Our tour today will take us to sites associated with Braddock's 1755 and Forbes' 1758 campaigns in western Pennsylvania. In the morning, we will proceed to downtown Pittsburgh to visit the Point State Park, where the Allegheny and Monongahela Rivers converge to form the Ohio River, or *la belle rivière*, as the French called it. This was the objective of the English expeditions and the key to controlling the Ohio Country. Here, the French had constructed Fort Duquesne, and later the British later built Fort Pitt on the same land. We will visit the Braddock Battlefield History Center, now engulfed by modern industrial and residential development.

The French maintained control of Fort Duquesne until 1758, until the Campaign of Gen. John Forbes. Forbes approached the fort overland through Pennsylvania, along the rough track of today's U.S. Route 30 (the Lincoln Highway). Although Forbes was successful, Washington had unsuccessfully advocated that Forbes follow in Braddock's footsteps. Following his own track, Forbes moved forward and constructed Fort Ligonier 50 miles east of the French fort. We will visit Fort Ligonier and discuss the successful 1758 Forbes' Expedition and Washington's role in it. Here is a summary.

In September, Forbes sent a force of the 77th Regiment of Highlanders backed by Colonial Militia, all under the command of Maj. James Grant (familiar name? He commanded the British forces marching to Concord on April 19, 1775) on a reconnaissance toward the Forks. That pursuit ended in disaster at the battle of Fort Duquesne, when the French sallied forth and routed the British forces, killing and wounding over 300, with the loss of less than 20 French and Indians. Although the French had soundly defeated Grant, they held the fort with only several hundred French troops, who were greatly outnumbered by Forbes' force of many thousands.

Furthermore, events elsewhere conspired against the French at the Forks. In late August, the British had captured Fort Frontenac, which allowed them to intercept French supplies intended for French forces in the Ohio Country, including Fort Duquesne. In October 1758, the British agreed to a treaty (the Treaty of Easton) with key Native American tribes that had been allied with the French in the Ohio Country. The Forbes campaign came to a quick conclusion in November, when the French abandoned the Forks and burned the fort. With this decisive action, the French and Indian War had essentially ended in North America, and Washington soon resigned his commission. The war in North America conclusively ended in 1760 after the British capture of the major French cities of Quebec and Montreal.

We will return to Winchester this evening, stopping at the historic Jean Bonnett Tavern, circa 1762, for supper in Bedford, Pennsylvania. Breakfast, lunch, and dinner are provided, BUT YOUR HOTEL IS NOT INCLUDED IN WINCHESTER—you must make your own reservations and pay for your own room.

Saturday, July 30, 2022

8:00 AM. Our final day leaves us with some more orientation and pre-revolutionary history to share with you. We are back in the northern Shenandoah Valley. From 1754 through 1758, Washington spent much of his time as commander of the Virginia Regiment in this region. After the 1755 Braddock debacle, Washington assumed command of the Virginians and was responsible for the defense of the valley and northwestern Virginia, which was besieged by French and Indian raiding parties that forced British loyalist settlers to flee to Winchester or the east side of the Blue Ridge for protection.

We will visit Washington's headquarters in town and the remains of Fort Loudoun, built under Washington's direction. We will also tour the sites where Washington established a string of forts. Our discussions will focus on Washington's struggles to organize, equip, and train his troops and his dealings with his commanders. During this period, we will see the development of many skill sets in young Washington that would later serve him well as commander of the Continental Army during the Revolutionary War. We will also witness the hard lessons that the proud young Washington learned in dealing with the British military and political hierarchies. That, too, would serve him well in the future. Lunch is included, and the tour will end by 5 PM. You will have seen much to ponder about this remarkable man.

About the Faculty:

Scott Patchan is a first-rate presenter of history programs in both the Revolutionary War and Civil War eras. He first became interested in history as a young boy when he visited Fort Necessity, which was near his grandparents' home in Uniontown. Impressed by the aura of standing in the very spot where George Washington stood more than 200 years

earlier, and where one of the foundational events in American history took place, stayed with him, and this tour is a manifestation of his years of research. Indeed, you are seeing the tour that marries with his new book, *George Washington in the French and Indian War*. That book is scheduled to be released by History Press this year.

Scott is a graduate of James Madison University, and he has authored many articles and books including, *The Forgotten Fury, The Battle of Piedmont; Shenandoah Summer: The 1864 Valley Campaign; Second Manassas: Longstreet's Attack and the Battle for Chinn Ridge; and Worthy of Higher Rank, The 1864 Shenandoah Valley Campaign Journal of Colonel Joseph Thoburn*.

Hotel Information:

This program will be based in Winchester, Virginia. The hotel will be posted on this site. The headquarters hotel room block will likely be in the \$125 a night range, plus tax. We will notify you of the hotel selected and the date it is open for reservations. Your registration also includes your hotel in Uniontown, Pennsylvania, and Greentown, Pennsylvania. The hotels in Winchester ARE NOT INCLUDED. You may stay at the headquarters hotel or make other arrangements.

Transportation:

The servicing airports are Washington Dulles (IAD) and Washington Reagan (DCA). If you fly, you will surely need to rent a car or arrange a limo.

Recommended Reading:

You will be provided with maps upon arrival. The following books are suggested to enhance your readiness for the program. Amazon.com has a program to support non-profits IF YOU SIGN UP to support Blue and Gray Education Society (EIN 54-1720582) at [AmazonSmile](#). When you sign up there rather than the normal Amazon site, one-half of one percent of your purchase price will be provided to BGES as a donation from Amazon. This will apply not only to this purchase but others you may make at other times. Thank you.

Norman L. Baker: [*The French and Indian War in Frederick County, Virginia*](#)

[_____ : *Braddock's Road: Mapping the British Expedition from Alexandria to the Monongahela*](#)

David Clary: [*George Washington's First War: His Early Military Adventures*](#)

Douglas Cubbison: [*The British Defeat of the French in Pennsylvania, 1758: A Military History of the Forbes Campaign Against Fort Duquesne*](#)

Francis Parkman: [Braddock's Defeat. 1755. The French and English in America](#)

David Preston: [Braddock's Defeat: The Battle of the Monongahela and the Road to Revolution](#)

Peter Stark: [Young Washington: How Wilderness and War Forged America's Founding Father](#)

Matthew C. Ward: [Breaking the Backcountry: The Seven Years' War in Virginia and Pennsylvania, 1754-1765](#)

Registration Form

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Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Registration includes two nights' lodging, four lunches, two dinners, maps and handouts, the academic program, all admissions, support of a professional historian, a tour director and transportation appropriate to the registration. We will also provide snacks, bottled water, and a limited selection of sodas.

_____ Registration \$1295; double occupancy \$2300

_____ Current BGES member \$1225; double occupancy \$2160

_____ I am not a member but would like to join so that I can get the member's rate; or I am a member who is past-due to renew. Please accept my donation of \$ _____ (must be \$75 or more, which is tax-deductible).

_____ I am sending a deposit of \$300 plus full payment for any memberships. Total enclosed is \$ _____.

_____ I will pay the balance due before the event.

_____ Check enclosed

Charge my (circle one) MC VISA AMEXP Discover \$ _____

Exp: _____ CVV: _____

Signature: _____

Mail to BGES Seminars, P.O. Box 1176, Chatham, VA 24531; or fax credit card registrations to 434-432-0596. You may also register online at www.blueandgrayeducation.org.