

THE ROAD TO THE REVOLUTION

By Alan Myers

We are all fairly familiar with what basically happened just prior to July 04, 1776. However, I believe most of us do not know much about what lead up to this historic moment in time. To help with this condition, I will endeavor to write articles about the key events that drove our North American ancestors to declare Independence from Britain. Future articles will discuss key events such as The Townsend Acts, Boston Massacre, Boston Tea Party, The Coercive Acts and Concord & Lexington. This article will discuss some history about the beginning of The Road To The Revolution, The French and Indian War.

The French and Indian War was a conflict between the British and the French that took place in North America from 1754 to 1763. What may make the name of this War a bit confusing is that this was a conflict not only between British colonist and French colonists, but each side had Native American tribes or nations as allies. The signing of the Treaty of Paris in February 1763 officially ended the War between Britain, France and all their allies.

The Native American tribes that were allies of the French included the Algonquin, Lenape, Wyandot, Ojibwa, Ottawa, Shawnee, and the Mi'kmaq. While the Iroquois Confederacy supported the British. This War was a clash of empires, people, and cultures and, in part, began a process that would lead to what would become America.

The Ohio River Valley was rich in valuable resources that included fertile farm land, timber, waterways and fur-bearing animals. These are just some of the natural resources Britain wanted to control in the Ohio River Valley.

Both the British and the French claimed the Ohio River Valley as their territory and did not think it belonged to the Natives. Battles were fought across the northeastern US and eastern Canada. Before the War, several smaller events took place in the region.

First, there was a skirmish that began near Fort Necessity. A bit later, on July 3, 1754, the fight for Fort Necessity began which became the flash point for the French and Indian War. This happened to be the only battle George Washington ever had to surrender. By the way, apparently it was a Lieutenant Colonel George Washington who initiated a surprise attack on a French party at Jumonville Glen that actually began what became The French & Indian War.

There were many reasons or incentives as to why the Native Americans entered the conflict. The Natives would use their European allies to further their own control of resources and to obtain captives. Many of the Tribes sided with the French in order to obtain a wide range of manufactured goods including firearms, metal weapons & cloth.

Edward Braddock was a career soldier with 45 years of military service when he became commander-in-chief of all British forces in North America. In 1755. He had a

plan for what to do. It did not go according to plan. On July 13, 1755, Braddock was mortally wounded and died after the Battle of Monongahela, which is near Pittsburgh. For the next 3 years, the Ohio Country was controlled by the French and their Native allies.

Given there were so many officers injured during this battle, George Washington took charge and was key in carrying out Braddock's orders for retreat. George Washington's next duty put him in charge of Virginia's forces to defend the Virginia frontier from raiding French and Indians.

During this War, William Pitt was the wartime operations political leader of Britain. He had a single-minded devotion to British victory because he believed that North America was critical to England's global domination. To accomplish his goal and conquer Canada, he sent his main expeditions to America.

Pitt knew that if the Royal Navy was to be able to sail up the St. Lawrence River and attack Quebec, the British first needed to capture the Fortress of Louisbourg from France. By July 1758, the siege of Louisbourg was successful and the British took the Fortress. Next step in conquering what was called New France was the taking of Quebec. France surrendered Quebec by September 1759. Next stop, Montreal. This city was taken by the British in September 1760. The short life of New France ended in a bloody fashion.

The terms of the Treaty of Paris left France with nothing. The British kept all French territory on the mainland of North America which included Quebec and the Ohio Valley. The port of New Orleans and the Louisiana Territory west of the Mississippi were ceded to Spain for their efforts as a British ally.

Great Britain acquired an enormous amount of land in North America at a significant cost. According to records, the British national debt was 75 million pounds in 1756 and seven years later, in 1763, it was 133 million pounds. Interest payments on this massive amount of debt were a huge portion of the national budget. Adding to this never ending need for funding was the need to keep a military presence in North America. All of this added up to a constant drain on scarce funding which meant Britain needed to find new ways to refill its bank accounts.

What made the colonists discontented and very unhappy were the disputes over future frontier policies and having new taxes imposed on them to help pay off the War debt. These very unwanted actions taken by Britain and dumped on the colonies seem to be the first bricks laid in The Road To The Revolution.

What all this shows me is how absolutely greedy the British monarchy was back then. Take all that you can, from whomever you can, at whatever price must be paid by others to bring about Britain's global dominance of the world. And make sure that Britain has the military forces needed and at the ready to accomplish this worthy and honorable goal.