

# At the Great Meadows, 1754

Reading George Washington's Words



## Original

*“He [George Washington] began his March in the Month of May in order to open the Roads, and this he had to do almost the whole distance from Winchester...for the especiall purpose of siezing, if possible, before the French shd arrive at it, the important Post at the conflux of the Alligany and Monongahela; with the advantages of which he was forcibly struck the preceeding year;...he had but just ascended the Lawrel Hill 50 M: short of his object: after a March of 230 Miles from Alexa. when he received information from his Scouts that the French had in force, siezed the Post he was pushing to obtain ... The object of his precipitate advance being thus defeated...it was thought advisable to fall back a few miles, to a place known by the name of the great meadows—abounding in Forage more convenient for the purpose of forming a Magazine & bringing up the rear—and to advance from (if we should ever be in force to do it) to the attack of the Post which the enemy now occupied; and had called Du Quesne...*

*“...previous to this junction the French sent a detachment to reconnoitre our Camp to obtain intelligence of our strength & position; notice of which being given by the Scouts G. W. marched at the head of a party, attacked, killed 9 or 10 & captured 20 odd. This, as soon as the enemy had assembled their Indian allies, brought their whole force upon him;...*

*“About 9 Oclock on the 3d of July the Enemy advanced with Shouts, & dismal Indian yells to our Intrenchments, but was opposed by so warm, spirited, & constant a fire, that to force the works in that way was abandoned by them—they then, from every little rising—tree—Stump—Stone—and bush kept up a constant galding fire upon us; which was returned in the best manner we could till late in the aftern when their fell the most tremendous rain that can be conceived—filled our trenches with water—wet, not*

## Adaptation

George Washington began his march in May in order to open the roads, almost the whole way from Winchester [Virginia]. The object was to attempt to take the important post at the meeting of the Allegheny and Monongahela rivers [the Forks of the Ohio] before the French got there. He had just ascended the Laurel Hill 50 miles short of his object after he had marched 230 miles from Alexandria [Virginia] when he received word from his scouts that the French had forcefully seized the post he was hoping to obtain. Because the object of his march was defeated, it was thought advisable to fall back a few miles to a place known as great meadows [Pennsylvania]. Here was a good place to find grass for the horses, and it was a good place to set up a fort. It was also a good place to advance from if we ever had to attack the French fort—called Duquesne—where the enemy now was...

The French sent a group of soldiers to survey our camp and to see our strengths and position. When his scouts told him this, George Washington marched at the head of his party and attacked, killing nine or ten and capturing about twenty. The enemy assembled their Indian allies and forcefully counterattacked.... About 9 o'clock on July 3, the enemy advanced with shouts and dismal Indian yells to our fort and entrenchments, but they were met by warm, spirited and heavy fire. They soon abandoned their idea of running over the entrenchments and taking the fort that way.

## Becoming GEORGE WASHINGTON

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*only the ammunition in Cartouch boxes and firelocks, but that which was in a small temporary Stockade in the middle of the Intrenchment called Fort necessity erected for the sole purpose of its security, and that of the few stores we had; and left us nothing but a few (for all were not provided with them) Bayonets for defence. In this situation & no prosp [ec] t of bettering it [,] terms of capitulation were offered to us by the ene<my. wch with some alterations that were insisted upon were the more readily acceded to, as we had no Salt provisions, & but indifferently supplied with fresh; which, from the heat of the weather, would not keep; and because a full third of our numbers Officers as well as privates were, by this time, killed or wounded—The next Morning we marched out with the honors of War, but were soon plundered contrary to the articles of capitulation of great part of our Baggage by the Savages.”*

They then attacked us with constant fire from every hill, tree, stump, stone, and bush. We tried to counterattack in the best way possible until late afternoon when a heavy rain fell and filled our trenches with water. The rain also wet the ammunition that was in cartridge boxes and muskets as well as what was in a small temporary stockade called Fort Necessity. Fort Necessity was built to keep things secure and to house our supplies. All we had left to defend ourselves were a few bayonets.

We had no hope to improve our situation. The enemy offered us terms of surrendering. We insisted on a few changes which they readily agreed to. We had no salt, provisions, and little meat, which would not keep because of the heat. Also a third of our officers as well as privates were killed or wounded. The next morning we marched out with certain privileges. Despite the terms of surrender, were attacked by American Indians They took a lot of our supplies and equipment.

## Guided Reading Questions

- 1 What were Washington's goals in taking troops from Virginia into the Ohio country?
- 2 Why did he fall back to the Great Meadows?
- 3 What caused the French to attack Washington at the Great Meadows?
- 4 What was the weather like on July 3, 1754?
- 5 Where were Washington and his men situated? Where was the enemy?
- 6 What happened when it rained?
- 7 What happened at the end of the battle?
- 8 How many men did Washington lose?
- 9 What happened on the morning of July 4?

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# The Battle of the Monongahela, 1755



Reading George Washington's Words

## Original

*"...no officer who did not immediately derive his Comn from the King could command one who did – This was too degrading for G.W. to submit to; accordingly, he resigned his Military employment; determining to serve the next campaign as a Volunteer; but upon the arrival of Genl Braddock he was very particularly noticed by that General – taken into his family as an extra-Aid..."*

*"In this capacity he commenced his second Campaign and used every proper occasion ...to impress the Genl, & the principal Officers around him, with the necessity of opposing the nature of his defence, to the mode of attack which, more than probably, he would experience from the Canadian French, and their Indians on his March through the Mountains & covered Country but so prepossed were they in favr of regularity & discipline and in such absolute contemp <t> were these people held, that the admonition was suggested in vain...."*

*"About 10 Oclock on the 9th, after the Van had crossed the Monongahela the second time...the front was attacked; and by the unusual Halloing and whooping of the enemy, whom they could not see, were so disconcerted and confused, as soon to fall into irretrievable disorder. The rear was forced forward to support them, but seeing no enemy, and themselves falling every moment from the fire, a general panic took place among the Troops from which no exertions of the Officers could recover them...Before it was too late, & the confusion became general an offer was made by G.W. to head the Provincials, & engage the enemy in their own way; but the propriety of it was not seen into until it was too late for execution [...] after this many attempts were made to dislod<ge> the enemy from an eminence on the Right but they all proved eneffectual; and fatal to the Officers who by great exertions and good examples endeavoured to*

## Adaptation

No officer who did not receive his commission from the King could command one who did. This was too degrading to George Washington to accept so he resigned from the military. He was determined to serve the next time as a volunteer. However, when General Braddock arrived, he was noticed by the general and accepted into his circle of advisors as an extra aide.

In this role he began his second military operation and used every opportunity to inform the general and the important officers around him with the right way to defend themselves. He told them about the way the Canadian French and their Indian allies would probably attack them in his march through the mountains and forests. But Braddock and his officers were in favor of regularity and discipline and would not be persuaded. His warning was not even considered.

About 10 o'clock on the 9th [of July] after the lead units of the army had crossed the Monongahela the second time, the front was attacked. The unusual hollering and whooping of the enemy, whom they could not see, was so disconcerting and confusing to them that they fell into disorder. The troops in the rear advanced to help them out, but they too couldn't see the enemy and were themselves being attacked by musket fire. A general panic took over the troops. The officers could not help them. Before it was too late and the confusion took over all the troops, George Washington offered to head the troops and fight the enemy like the enemy was fighting them. But by the time the plan was accepted, it was too late to execute it.

After this many attempts were made to move the enemy from controlling the right but all of them failed and were fatal to the officers who tried hard to

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*accomplish it. In one of these the Genl recd the Wd of which he died; but previous to it, had several horses killed & disabled under him. Captns Orme & Morris his two Aids de Camp having received wounds which rendered them unable to attd G. W. remained the sole aid through the day, to the Genl; he also had one horse killed, and two wounded under him – A ball through his hat – and several through his clothes, but escaped unhurt....*

*“No person knowing in the disordered State things were who the Surviving Senr Officer was & the Troops by degrees going off in confusion; without a ray of hope left of further opposition from those that remained; G. W. placed the Genl in a small covered Cart,...and in the best order he could, with the last Troops (who only contind to be fired at) brought him over the first ford of the Monongahela;...he rode forward to halt those which had been earlier in the retreat... The shocking Scenes which presented themselves in this Nights March are not to be described...*

*“at an Incampment near the Great Meadows the brave, but unfortunate Genl Braddock breathed his last. He was interred with the honors of war, and as it was left to G. W. to see this performed, & to mark out the spot for the reception of his remains... Thus died a man, whose good & bad qualities were intimately blended.”*

accomplish them. On one of these attempts the general [Braddock] received the wound that would kill him. Before this he had several horses killed and wounded under him. Captains Orme and Morris, his two aides, received wounds which made them unable to help the general. George Washington was the only aide to the general throughout the day. He also had one horse killed and two wounded under him, a musket ball through his hat, and several through his clothes, but he escaped unhurt.

In all this disorder nobody knew who the surviving senior officer was. The troops also were leaving in a state of confusion. Sure that he would not be opposed in his actions, George Washington placed the general in a small covered cart. As well as he could – with the rest of the troops who continued to be fired on – he brought Braddock over the first crossing of the Monongahela. He rode forward to stop those who had retreated earlier.

The shocking scenes in that night march cannot be described.

At a place near the Great Meadows, the brave but unfortunate General Braddock breathed his last. He was buried with the honors of war. It was left to George Washington to see this performed and to mark the spot where his remains were placed. Thus died a man in whom both good and bad qualities were blended.

## Guided Reading Questions

- 1 Why did Washington resign his commission? How did he serve General Braddock?
- 2 What did Washington try to warn Braddock about? What was Braddock's reaction and why?
- 3 What happened when the British front lines were attacked?
- 4 What did George Washington offer to do and why? Was he successful?
- 5 What happened to Washington's horses, hat, and clothes?
- 6 What happened to General Braddock in the battle? What did Washington do?
- 7 What was George Washington's opinion of General Braddock?

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