

## HISTORY OF ARMSTRONG COUNTY

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The French and Indian War started not too far from Armstrong



An illustration depicts the young colonial soldier, George Washington. Artwork courtesy of Leechburg Area High School senior Izabella Reed

By ops@our-hometown.com

County.

At the time, both the French and British laid claim to the land where Armstrong County now sits and were attempting to establish a permanent presence in the Ohio Valley.

None other than our first American President, George Washington, then a Virginia Militia Officer, was tasked, along with 40 colonial soldiers and 12 Native Americans, to protect a British crew in the process of building a fort in what is now modern day Pittsburgh.

However, prior to Washington's arrival to the confluence of the three rivers, a much larger French Canadian contingent drove off the British construction crew.

En route to the river's confluence, then-Lt. Col. George Washington ran into a small French force commanded by Second Ensign Joseph Coulon de Villers Jumonville near present day Uniontown, Pa., on May 8, 1754.

In this chance encounter, Washington's colonial and Native American forces skirmished with Jumonville's group killing Jumonville and several of his men in what is known as the Battle of Jumonville Glen.

Since Britain and France were not officially at war at this point, this event was seen as the catalyst for the French and Indian War, and later the much larger

Seven Years War (1756-1763) that would spread across the Europe.

Washington's victory at Jumonville Glen was shortlived.

After the battle, Washington backtracked to Great Meadows, Pa., where he and his men built Fort Necessity knowing of a probable French counterattack.

On June 28, 1754, Jumonville's brother, Louis, brought a contingent of 600 French Canadian and Native American forces and defeated Washington's soldiers at Fort Necessity.

In the terms of surrender, written in French, and poorly interpreted to Washington, he unknowingly admitted to assassinating Louis's brother, Joseph, as well as some of his men.

After the surrender, Washington, and his surviving men, were allowed to leave the battlefield under arms and return home.

Fast forward to 1755, Major General Edward Braddock from England, landed at Hampton, Va., on Feb. 20, with two regiments of British soldiers, or about 2,000 men.

Braddock was charged with both attacking and repelling the French at Fort Duquesne (modern day Pittsburgh).

One of the colonial officers under Braddock's charge was George Washington, who served as his aide de camp.

General Braddock forged his way across Virginia which includes parts of modern day West Virginia on through to Pennsylvania building a road along the way as he did.

Current day U.S. Route 40 follows roughly the same route, thus its name Braddock's highway.

On July 9, 1755, as General Braddock's forces were closing in on Fort Duquesne, he was attacked by French Canadian and Native American forces just after they had crossed the Monongahela River and started climbing out of the valley.

The initial contact favored the British with French commander Captain Daniel Lienard de Beaujeu killed.

Undeterred, the French mounted a successful counterattack flanking the British forces.

The battle saw more than 900 British soldiers killed or wounded.

Gen. Braddock himself was mortally wounded in the battle (the Battle of the Monongahela) and died three days later.

George Washington had two horses shot out from under him with bullet holes in his uniform but was otherwise uninjured from the battle.

Gen. Braddock was buried in the middle of the road during the retreat.

This battle was a disastrous defeat for the British in its efforts to regain control of the Ohio Valley. George Washington was credited for taking leadership and organizing the retreat.

Starting in October 1755, shortly after the British defeat at the Battle of the Monongahela, Native American warriors, in coordination with the French, started sending raiding parties into eastern Pennsylvania.

These raiding parties both attacked and captured British settlers.

Two of the key Native American warriors leading these attacks were named Shingas and Capt. Jacobs.

The base of operations for these raiding parties was out of the Native American village of Kittanning.

In a raiding expedition led by French Commander Louis Coulon Jumonville and Native American warrior Capt. Jacobs, Fort Granville, near present day Lewistown, Pa., was attacked on July 30, 1756.

The attack was initially repelled by the British but ultimately lost.

With commander killed, the second in command surrendered the fort which included its women and children, who were taken prisoner.

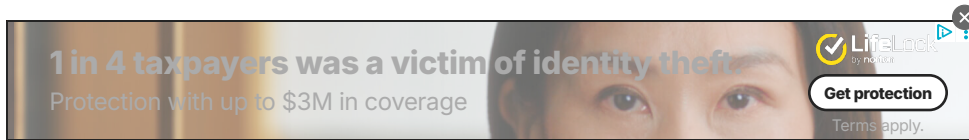
The commander killed that day was Edward Armstrong, John Armstrong's brother.

Upon hearing of the news, John Armstrong immediately started organizing an expedition to Kittanning in retaliation to the attack.

This is where we will leave off for the week.

Next week we will learn about Lt. Col. John Armstrong's Kittanning Expedition. Research information made available courtesy of the Armstrong County Historical Society. Feel free to contact the author, Maj. Anthony Shea, at: [ashea247@comcast.net](mailto:ashea247@comcast.net) — with any questions or requests to speak.

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